



First Session - Thirty-Seventh Legislature

of the

Legislative Assembly of Manitoba

**DEBATES
and
PROCEEDINGS**

**Official Report
(Hansard)**

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Speaker*



MANITOBA LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
Thirty-Seventh Legislature

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ALLAN, Nancy	St. Vital	N.D.P.
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ASPER, Linda	Riel	N.D.P.
BARRETT, Becky, Hon.	Inkster	N.D.P.
CALDWELL, Drew, Hon.	Brandon East	N.D.P.
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DACQUAY, Louise	Seine River	P.C.
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GILLESHAMMER, Harold	Minnedosa	P.C.
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LATHLIN, Oscar, Hon.	The Pas	N.D.P.
LAURENDEAU, Marcel	St. Norbert	P.C.
LEMIEUX, Ron, Hon.	La Verendrye	N.D.P.
LOEWEN, John	Fort Whyte	P.C.
MACKINTOSH, Gord, Hon.	St. Johns	N.D.P.
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PENNER, Jim	Steinbach	P.C.
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TWEED, Mervin	Turtle Mountain	P.C.
WOWCHUK, Rosann, Hon.	Swan River	N.D.P.

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Wednesday, December 1, 1999

The House met at 1:30 p.m.

PRAYERS

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

TABLING OF REPORTS

Hon. Tim Sale (Minister of Family Services and Housing): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to table today the Annual Report for 1998-99 for the Child and Youth Secretariat; the Annual Report for the Department of Family Services for 1998-99; and the Annual Report for the Department of Housing, the Housing and Renewal Corporation and the Housing Authority for 1998-99.

Hon. Jean Friesen (Minister of Inter-governmental Affairs): Mr. Speaker, I have some reports to present. I beg leave to present the Annual Report of the Department of Rural Development; the Annual Report of the Manitoba Water Services Board; the Annual Report of the Surface Rights Board; the Annual Report of the Municipal Board; the Annual Report of the Conservation Districts of Manitoba; and the Annual Report of the Food Development Centre.

Hon. Oscar Lathlin (Minister of Conservation): Mr. Speaker, I am also pleased to table the '98-99 Annual Reports for the Department of Natural Resources; the Department of Environment; the Sustainable Development Innovations Fund; The Manitoba Habitat Heritage Corporation; Pineland Forest Nursery; Venture Manitoba Tours Limited, copies of which have been previously distributed.

Hon. Steve Ashton (Minister of Highways and Government Services): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to table the 1998-99 Annual Report of Government Services and Emergency Expenditures. I am also pleased to table the 1998-99 annual reports for the special operating agencies

under my jurisdiction, including the Fleet Vehicles Agency, Materials Distribution Agency, Land Management Services Agency, Mail Management Agency. All of the 1998-99 annual reports were released prior to September 30 of this year, in accordance with intersessional procedures.

MINISTERIAL STATEMENTS

World AIDS Day

Hon. Dave Chomiak (Minister of Health): Mr. Speaker, I have a ministerial statement.

Mr. Speaker, today is World AIDS Day, and I am pleased to have an opportunity to make a statement in the House. In 1998, when the province launched an education strategy, I was present and attended sessions where the tragedy of the disease was explained to all of us. At that time we were made aware that we were in the middle of an epidemic. In 1994, when I was an MLA, we again participated as a Legislature and as a society in a rededication of our efforts to deal with this disease and the effect it was having on our community. Today, we come together again to reflect on both the tragedy and some of the heroic efforts that have been undertaken by individuals and groups to fight this epidemic that we are all facing.

In 1999, the last year of the millennium, every Manitoban has been touched in some way by the effects of this terrible disease. Many sons and daughters, mothers and fathers, brothers and sisters have lost their lives in this disease and many thousands of others are desperately working together to try to combat the effects. We have come together as a province to fight floods and to fight to save the economic collapse of our farms. We have come together as a province to fight breast cancer. Recently, we came together as a province to launch a program to deal with prostate cancer.

* (1335)

To fight this disease and to join with our fellow Manitobans, we should do no less on this World AIDS Day to recognize both the accomplishments and the tremendous obstacles we face. It is a time to reflect on this tragic disease the way it has affected our world. Available statistics tell us that there are over 33 million on this planet currently living with HIV AIDS. Last year alone nearly 14 million died of this disease and approximately 6 million more people were infected. While only a fraction of those numbers represent Manitobans, our share of that special population is still terrifyingly high.

Recently a study conducted in our very own city found that HIV infection prevalence amongst injection drug users in Winnipeg has increased from 2.3 percent in 1986-90 to 12.6 percent in 1998. The study is called the Winnipeg Injection Drug Epidemiology study or the WIDE Study. Copies of the study are available to all members of this House.

In Winnipeg, we have the Street Connections program for needle exchange. However, this study has shown that injection drug use is a problem across the city.

This afternoon, I will have the honour of officially assisting in the opening of a centre based on our community-based health care system to combat AIDS. The Nine Circles Community Health Centre will go a long way towards bringing together the services we offer in our society in a variety of means under one roof and one centre. I would like to commend all those involved in the development of the Nine Circles Community Health Centre and all the participating groups such as Village Clinic, Kali Shiva AIDS Services, AIDS Coalition of Manitoba, the Manitoba aboriginal AIDS Task Force and the WCA Public Health Sexually-Transmitted Disease Team.

I would also like to pay my respects to the former government for its involvement in and commitment to providing for this centre.

As we go forward today, I look forward to a renewed commitment from all of us to work together on the implementation of the many strategies and plans that have been circulated

over the years. Many worthwhile projects have been undertaken and many more must be launched in a renewed spirit of a preventative health care and caring commitment.

I would like to close my comments by commending all of those in the community, both those who are infected with HIV AIDS and those who work, help and love them, for all their work and caring commitment. I believe I carry with me the commitment and pledge of every single member of the Legislature that we renew our commitment to fight for the eradication of this disease and for a brighter future where the HIV AIDS menace will no longer threaten our children and loved ones. Thank you very much.

Mrs. Bonnie Mitchelson (River East): Mr. Speaker, I would like to join with the Minister of Health and thank him for his statement today on World AIDS Day and indicate that the issue of AIDS and HIV has been an issue that I think all of us in this Legislature have taken very seriously over the last number of years. I know that the community out there that works so tirelessly on behalf of supporting those that are either inflicted with this disease or those that are there as the support circles for those that are infected with HIV or AIDS all have to take some comfort in knowing that there is significant concern.

I know that very often it is really necessary for the community to come together, and I have always said that, in fact, when the community comes up with the ideas and the suggestions on how we can best work together to implement programs and policies that can improve the lives of those who are affected through disease, it is important that government facilitates those community efforts. So I think we, as a government in the past, have taken the recommendations from the community very seriously, and the result of the centre opening today is the result of those efforts by the community. So I have to say to the community thank you for a job well done. I know there is much, much more to do, and I think it is important that all of us together work in a co-operative approach to try to ensure that those families and those individuals that are involved with HIV or AIDS have the opportunity to benefit from continuing joint efforts for all Manitobans. Thank you.

Mr. Speaker: Is there leave? [agreed]

Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights): I rise also to support those who have AIDS and those who are working very hard in our community and in others to improve the treatment and the care and the compassion for patients who have this very debilitating condition. I think that this should be an all-party effort, because it is an important concern.

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 fifty Grade 5 students from Linden Christian School under the direction of Mr. Manfred Glor and Ms. Brenda Klassen. The school is located in the constituency of the honourable member for Fort Whyte (John Loewen).

Also we have ten Grades 7 to 9 students from Isaac Newton School under the direction of Mr. Marvin Koop. The school is located in the constituency of the honourable member for Burrows (Mr. Martindale).

And we also have twelve Grade 11 students from Immanuel Christian School under the direction of Mr. Jeff Dykstra. This school is located in the constituency of the honourable member for Radisson (Ms. Cerilli).

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

* (1340)

ORAL QUESTION PERIOD

Winnipeg Police Service Funding Agreement

Mr. Gary Filmon (Leader of the Official Opposition): Mr. Speaker, there has been a good deal of discussion and debate in the media about a proposal by the mayor of the City of Winnipeg to reduce the Winnipeg police force complement. I know that on CJOB last week the Justice minister indicated that he would maintain the Winnipeg Police Service's conditional funding agreement with the government of

Manitoba. That agreement does not call for the provincial government to fund 40 members of the police force but rather calls for that agreement to fund 40 additional members so that a certain minimum complement is maintained. I wonder if the First Minister can tell us if the city is fulfilling the terms of that agreement and thereby ensuring that the Winnipeg Police Service is at the agreed upon complement level.

Hon. Gary Doer (Premier): I thank the Leader of the Opposition for that question. We certainly felt in 1995 when we put forward the proposal for additional police in Winnipeg and other centres in Manitoba that it was important to let the public know that we were all concerned about the safety and security of people in our communities. I am not aware of the existing complement of staff in terms of how it relates to the supplement versus the complement of staff, but we would be very concerned that the support of the provincial government is not allowed to erode in any way, shape or form.

Mr. Filmon: Yes, and of course in 1995 our government was very pleased to propose that agreement and to ensure since then that the agreement has been fulfilled.

* (1345)

In a recent Winnipeg Sun article—I hesitate to promote the media today, I will try and think of something nice to say about the Free Press in my next preamble—it indicated that the current complement of the police service in Winnipeg is 1,173 instead of the 1,180 required to fulfill the terms of the conditional funding agreement. I wonder what steps the Premier has taken to ensure that the city increases the number of police officers to the required level.

Mr. Doer: It did not come up at our first couple of meetings with the mayor that I had with the Deputy Premier (Ms. Friesen) and the Minister of Finance (Mr. Selinger). I note that the Leader of the Opposition has raised this question. We are trying to work in a co-operative way with the City of Winnipeg. There are a number of issues we feel are very important to deal with in a partnership with the City of Winnipeg as our largest urban centre in Manitoba. There are a number of issues that we are facing: the

ambulance impasse that we have with the city; the issue of CentreVenture; the issue of Capital Region planning. But certainly, if the complement is lower, I will certainly raise that with the Attorney General (Mr. Mackintosh) in terms of the commitment the province has made to this fund.

Mr. Filmon: I thank the Premier for that response.

Clean Environment Commission Appeal-Process-Conservation Minister's Role

Mr. Gary Filmon (Leader of the Official Opposition): My next question is to the Minister responsible for Conservation (Mr. Lathlin). As the minister responsible as well for the—as part of his department—natural resources in our province, his department is the proponent in the case of any proposals to utilize Crown land, for instance, for something such as a cottage lot development. Depending on the size and the scope of the development, some of those proposals would require a Clean Environment Commission hearing, a decision of course of the director of the environment section of his department, and any decisions by the Clean Environment Commission are appealable to the minister, and any rejection of the requirement for a hearing is appealable to the minister as well. I want the minister to indicate how he would assure that any appeals are carried out in an objective and unbiased fashion when his department is both the proponent and, in the end, he is the judge and jury.

Hon. Gary Doer (Premier): Mr. Speaker, I made the decision to put the departments together as part of the reduction in the size of cabinet. I made the decision to combine the departments because I felt, in the long run, it would be better for the people of Manitoba, and we certainly hope that the opposition will judge us by our action. We have heard the argument made before about this role. The minister—[interjection] Well, the members opposite would license a plant; they would license a plant before they decided whether any trees could be cut. We want to have a more comprehensive approach.

An Honourable Member: I do not need any lectures from—

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

Mr. Filmon: Well, I appreciate the arrogance of the member for Thompson (Mr. Ashton), who believes that he cannot learn anything from anybody else. That is the kind of attitude I am sure that—

Point of Order

Hon. Steve Ashton (Deputy Government House Leader): A point of order, Mr. Speaker. First of all, the Leader of the Opposition is not following our rules in terms of questions. The comments had nothing to do with that, and quite frankly, all I said from my seat was that we did not have a heck of a lot to learn from the previous government when it came to their handling of the environment. That is what I said, and I would put that gladly on the record.

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

Mr. Speaker: The same point of order.

Mr. Laurendeau: The honourable member definitely does not have a point of order. He did not refer to his arrogance; it just spoke to his arrogance.

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. On the Deputy Government House Leader's point of order, it is not a point of order; it is a dispute over the facts.

* * *

Mr. Filmon: Speaking of the trees and the forests that the Premier (Mr. Doer) referred to, I have another question for the Minister of Conservation (Mr. Lathlin). In the current review of the forest management licence for Pine Falls Paper, the forestry officers of his department will provide expert advice to the Clean Environment Commission and act as advocates for the proposal. Any appeal, of course, to the outcome of those CEC hearings will go to this minister.

How can he be both advocate and judge on the proposal?

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Speaker: Order, please.

Mr. Doer: I guess we get howls of derision from members opposite because the former First Minister could not remember or did not know about 650,000 files going missing from our licence numbers.

It was my responsibility and decision to reduce the size of cabinet, and I feel accountable to this House to the questions raised by the Leader of the Opposition.

We felt that we had to take a different approach to stewarding our resources and conserving our resources over the longer haul. We felt often that the decision was made by people in government to extract resources, license the plant and not connect the two together. For example, in the Louisiana-Pacific case, we made a decision, under the former government's process, of licensing a plant before we decided whether there was enough allowable cut of trees, and once the plant was built, how are you then going to deal with the issue of the allocation of the resource?

We have appointed Mr. Brandon as the Deputy Minister of the Department of Conservation, and we are hoping that we can conserve our resources—[interjection] Well, we know we will do a better job than members opposite. We are trying to practise sustainable development and conservation at both ends of the decision making so that Manitobans will be well served.

* (1350)

Mr. Filmon: I love the arrogance. Bring it on, as they say; I love it. The Premier has indicated that he has reduced the size of cabinet. He might as well reduce it one further if he is not going to let the Minister of Conservation (Mr. Lathlin) answer.

Point of Order

Hon. Steve Ashton (Deputy Government House Leader): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. Beachesne is quite clear that when

questions are raised it is indeed up to the government to determine who will respond. In this particular case, the First Minister (Mr. Doer) made what we on this side and I think most Manitobans feel was a logical move to reduce the number of ministers and combine within one ministry functions that work well together. Indeed, that is why the First Minister was answering the question.

This First Minister made that move, and it is a move that is supported by most Manitobans, even if the now Leader of the Opposition could not see its merit for 11 years.

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

Mr. Marcel Laurendeau (Opposition House Leader): It is on the same point of order, which is not a point of order again. It is very clear the Leader of the Official Opposition was posing a question to the Premier.

Mr. Speaker, the honourable member is correct that the Leader of the Opposition has the right to pose a question, and a minister has a right to refuse to answer it or another minister can rise. The Leader is about to pose a question; I believe he should be allowed to do so.

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. On that point of order, the government has the right to name whichever minister they wish to answer the question.

* * *

Mr. Filmon: Mr. Speaker, since the Premier is not going to let the Minister of Conservation answer any questions, my final question then is to the Premier. He has placed his minister in an inherent conflict of interest, where his department is both the advocate and proponent on various different development proposals, and at the same time he is the only source of appeal for any decisions that are made. He becomes, therefore, the proponent and the judge and jury. Will he remove him from this inherent conflict of interest?

* (1355)

Hon. Oscar Lathlin (Minister of Conservation): When I was asked by the Premier to assume the responsibility of the new Department of Conservation, of course I was honoured and proud to accept the assignment. The Premier has told the House that he had decided to join the departments together, Environment and Natural Resources, into one department, a move that I myself support and that I can work with.

I think the way the previous administration worked with the groups in Manitoba, and the Premier has given several examples—I am quite willing, and I think I am prepared, to take on the responsibility to make sure that everyone is treated fairly.

R.M.s of Woodlands/St. Laurent Property Damage Assistance

Mr. Harry Enns (Lakeside): Mr. Speaker, I do not want to ask a question of the Minister of Conservation. I want to ask the other minister, the minister of natural resources, a question. About a month ago in this province we experienced exceedingly high winds throughout the province, record high winds, causing a considerable amount of flooding and property damage in the R.M.s of Woodlands and St. Laurent. Has the minister or has his office received any specific requests for assistance from those property owners?

Hon. Oscar Lathlin (Minister of Conservation): I want to assure the honourable member that as members of the public come into my office to make presentations, I will deal with them as they come. Since I have been the Minister of Conservation, I have had several groups come in to visit me. I have met with many, many groups.

When I was in Brandon I met several groups, and I have actually gone into the communities and met with many other groups. So when it is time to deal with the group that the member is referring to, I will do so at that time.

Mr. Enns: Mr. Speaker, it has been brought to my attention that his director of Water Resources, indeed, had a meeting at St. Laurent with the aggrieved property owners, and I was

assuming that perhaps by now some information would be on the minister's desk with respect to what kind of response this government would have for those who experienced severe flooding and property damage, and who had met with senior officials of his department over a week ago.

Mr. Lathlin: Mr. Speaker, let me assure the honourable member that I will get to that file and want to assure the people from Woodlands that I will, in a very short while, be responding to the request that they will be making.

Mr. Enns: A final question to another minister, the minister responsible for the operations of the Emergency Measures Organization in the province. I am also aware, Mr. Speaker, that senior personnel from that shop met with the affected property owners at St. Laurent with respect to the concern that they have for some disaster assistance. Can the minister responsible for the Emergency Measures Organization enlighten me or give my constituents at St. Laurent and in the R.M. of Woodlands any reasonable hope that this government is listening to their problems?

Hon. Steve Ashton (Minister of Highways and Government Services): Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the question. This issue was raised with me, in fact, by a member of the Legislature. We are aware of this. In fact, EMO staff has been meeting not just the community but other affected communities as well. I will certainly get back to the member. We are concerned about it. There were a number of property owners who suffered quite severe damage in that particular windstorm. So I thank the member for raising the question.

Pine Falls Paper Company Expansion

Mr. Darren Praznik (Lac du Bonnet): Mr. Speaker, my question is to the Minister of Conservation. Both I and the member for Rupertsland (Mr. Robinson) share a large area of this province where the Pine Falls Paper Company operates. This company has been actively pursuing a \$200-million expansion of their operation which could see the establishment of a number of First Nations

sawmills. It could see securing, of course, the existing jobs in the mill in the woodlands. As well, it would create the economic opportunity to advance the east side road project and bring all-weather road access to a number of isolated First Nations communities in northeastern Manitoba. The key to that plan, of course, is the minister's department providing additional unallocated forest areas in northeastern Manitoba to the Pine Falls Paper Company.

* (1400)

I would like to ask the minister today: is he, as minister responsible for, in essence, the old Natural Resources department, actively working with the Pine Falls Paper Company to promote and see this plan happen for the benefit of Manitobans?

Hon. Gary Doer (Premier): The minister was at a ministers' meeting yesterday. I met with the CEO of the proposal and met with some of the officials from Tembec. We met to review the potential investment. We reviewed the size of the area and the independent data that they had on the possible fibre sources that are there. We discussed the issues of the First Nations in the adjacent area and other questions dealing with the road, the road issue either way. We talked about the potential for a sawmill, and obviously, with a new government, they understand that it is important, even though things were not resolved prior to the change in government, that there are some issues that we have to address and get independent advice on. I know that I was going to brief our minister after he came back from the ministers' meeting this last couple of days.

The Minister of Highways (Mr. Ashton) has also met with officials, and obviously we want to make sure that the economic opportunities are definitely looked at. We also want to make sure that we have the proper processes in place. One of the things I would say to the member is one of the things I said to the people: we have to make sure that we do not go back to the old ways of licensing a plant before we know how many trees are available.

Mr. Praznik: Mr. Speaker, I would remind the First Minister that that same mill that we sold

also was spewing all types of sewage when it was managed by the government of which he was a part.

Mr. Speaker: Question, please.

Mr. Praznik: Mr. Speaker, the First Minister should not have such a lack of confidence in his minister. I know that he has already toured the mill—

Mr. Speaker: Order, please.

Point of Order

Hon. Steve Ashton (Deputy Government House Leader): As a former Opposition House Leader, I would like in this particular case to draw to the attention of the former Government House Leader that questions beyond the first question require no preamble. That is very clear in Beauséjour. In fact, I would suggest that the member who I think may have on occasion drawn our attention, when we were in opposition, to that citation—perhaps if he could follow those particular provisions of Beauséjour.

Mr. Speaker: On the same point of order?

An Honourable Member: Mr. Speaker, I feel that I found the member for Thompson's notes on how—

Mr. Speaker: Order, please.

Mr. Praznik: Thank you again, Mr. Speaker, I will put my question again to the Minister of Conservation. This is a very important—

Mr. Speaker: Order. I was recognizing you for a point of order. I had not recognized you prior to that. Are you up on a point of order?

On the point of order, there is no preamble for supplementary questions, so I would advise all members to please follow that.

* * *

Mr. Praznik: My question to the Minister of Conservation: as the minister responsible for this department, will he commit to the House to

be an active proponent for this very important project for northeastern Manitoba?

Hon. Oscar Lathlin (Minister of Conservation): I want to tell the member that I am aware of what is happening on the east side of Lake Winnipeg, Pine Falls and First Nations and the different stakeholders who live in that area. I myself met with the Pine Falls people together with aboriginal leaders from that area I think two or three days after I was sworn in as minister. But the one thing I want to tell the member is that we want to make sure that we hear from the aboriginal people, people who live on the northeast side of Lake Winnipeg, and also the industry. We want to make sure that we look at everything before we make any final decisions.

Mr. Praznik: Mr. Speaker, my question, my supplementary to the Minister of Conservation: will the Minister of Conservation tell us today which group of First Nations people he will stand by, those on the east side like at Berens River and other places who want the road or those out of Winnipeg who are opposing it?

Mr. Lathlin: I want to advise the member that I hope that, as I go through my new job as Minister of Conservation, I will be able to deal with all groups in a fair manner, and I hope that I will not come to a point where I am purposely siding with one group, particularly the aboriginal people. We will listen to the aboriginal people. I want to assure the member that I will not go into the aboriginal community and try to divide and conquer the aboriginal communities as has been done by this previous government before.

Bulk Removal of Water Legislation

Mr. Larry Maguire (Arthur-Virden): Mr. Speaker, notwithstanding what the Premier has indicated to us and what the minister has mentioned already, I would like to just say that I am pleased to see that the Minister of Conservation has returned from the meetings of the Council of Ministers of the Environment, and I understand that you discussed the issues of bulk removal of water from Canada. In fact, this was a matter you addressed in your recent throne speech where you stated that your government will, quote: take immediate steps to protect our

water resources and preserve our lakes, rivers and streams and that new legislation will be introduced to protect water quality throughout Manitoba and to ban the bulk removals of our water.

You have indicated today that you will be introducing legislation to ban the bulk removal of water. Can the Minister of Conservation tell us: what is the Manitoba government's plan for protecting our water supply, when do you plan to implement it, and how will that plan be superior to the accord that has been brought forward by the federal government?

Hon. Oscar Lathlin (Minister of Conservation): I want to advise this House that the Manitoba government is not in favour of bulk removal of water for Manitoba. I want to make that very clear. I made it very clear at the meeting in Kananaskis to the federal minister and also to the other provincial ministers.

The Manitoba government will speak for Manitobans. The Manitoba government will speak for the Manitoba environment. The Manitoba government will speak for Manitoba resources. And again I repeat, the Manitoba government will speak for the people of Manitoba in terms of preserving our fresh water in Manitoba.

Mr. Maguire: Mr. Minister, what will be the nature of these consultations, and when will they begin, given that Manitoba was one of the five provinces that rejected the proposals that reserved its decision on the national accord?

Mr. Lathlin: The position taken by the Manitoba government is this. We will protect Manitoba waters for the people of Manitoba. We could not endorse the accord that was proposed by the federal Minister of Environment because of the fact that we felt that there were not enough safeguards. We felt that the minister could have been more aggressive in his proposal to protect the waters of Canada, so therefore we have asked for more time to look at the issue to make sure that we look at all angles, that we look at all the dimensions and make sure that we do not miss anything out.

I particularly do not have much confidence in the accord because it is silent on the trade

issue. It speaks about the environment, but it is silent on the trade issue. We also know that treaties and agreements that are being signed between Canada and the United States are not often honoured, so we are going to need more time to consult with the people of Manitoba to make sure that all areas are covered.

* (1410)

Mr. Maguire: How do you respond then, Mr. Minister, to the federal Environment minister's criticism that not endorsing the accord could leave Canada's situation vulnerable when it comes to protecting our valuable water resources?

Mr. Lathlin: I think if we just blindly follow the federal minister on his accord, then we would indeed be vulnerable to the Americans coming into Canada and taking our water. We are going to just take a little bit more time and make sure that all areas are covered to ensure that the waters of Manitoba are protected.

New Holland Plant Government Initiatives

Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights): My question is for the Premier. As the Premier knows, I have spoken out concerning the loss of Nortel and the jobs that were associated. Today I want to ask the Premier, given the fact that there is another major Manitoba company, the New Holland plant, former Versatile plant, which is in an uncertain situation—this is a company which had 600 employees under the former government. It has been reduced to 200 employees in Manitoba but is a major Manitoba enterprise. What is the Premier doing to make sure that we have these jobs and the enterprise in Manitoba?

Hon. Gary Doer (Premier): In fact, I am meeting later today with one possible purchaser of the company. I did raise this issue with—well, there are four people that may be bidding or may not be bidding for the company. We did raise this issue when we were in opposition with the former Premier.

We were very concerned the day we heard about this merger. We were concerned that the

workforce had already been reduced because of the agricultural crisis from about 1,100 down to 400 and, in fact, 200 of those 400 were on rotating layoffs and that this was a serious situation.

We are concerned that the federal government has put R & D money into the original proposal. In fact, there was a considerable amount of federal investment made. We believe the federal government should make sure that the merger does not take that technology and that investment away without leaving that in the community.

We are concerned that the employees and their pension plan are involved in any proposed takeover. We are working with the federal government, with the employees and any proponent or any possible purchaser of the plant to make sure that the reduced workforce that is left there can be maintained with the technologies that are at the plant.

Mr. Gerrard: My supplementary to the Premier is: was there significant provincial support given over the years to this plant, and could it in fact be used to make sure that the plant and the activity stay in Manitoba?

Mr. Doer: Well, it is my recollection, and I think I am correct, that most of the investment has come from Mr. Epp in 1987 and then another support from Mr. Duhamel in subsequent years. So, yes, there are public community rights to deal with the takeover of this plant, but those rights hopefully have been properly negotiated by Mr. Duhamel in his latter agreement and Mr. Epp in his previous agreement, and we certainly want to hold them to that.

Mr. Gerrard: My supplementary to the Premier: with the change in support for business environment, what will the government do to ensure that their approach is more effective than has occasionally been the case in the past in keeping the jobs, the employment, the manufacturing high-wage economy here in Manitoba?

Mr. Doer: Part of our approach, Mr. Speaker—to make sure that the agricultural economy which has been, I think, really, really hurt by

both bad weather and the fact that the Americans and Europeans are subsidizing at a great level beyond the Canadian federal government—is to work very hard to make sure that producers in Canada, particularly in western Canada, are able to have the disposable income to proceed with decisions that would benefit the plant here in Winnipeg.

Obviously, as agriculture goes, to a large extent so do the implement dealerships in our local communities, one of which has just gone bankrupt, I understand, in southwest Manitoba, which is very, very tragic, and so do the manufacturing plants, particularly the ones that reside here in Canada.

We see that as one part of the solution for the viability of the plant. We certainly will work with the federal government to make sure that the public investment from the Canadian taxpayers is protected, something that we raised last year in June or last session in June.

We will continue to work with the employees to try to get the best takeover of the plant by a concern that will keep the operation going. In fact, we would like to see the operation expand. Certainly it is in a survival situation right now, partly due to the agricultural crisis and partly due to this merger decision.

If any member has any idea on this, we are open to it. We have been getting advice from employees, from possible take-over partners. We do need help from the federal government to make sure the taxpayer investment is supported.

Health Care System Bed Openings

Mrs. Bonnie Mitchelson (River East): My question is for the Minister of Health. Last week the Minister of Health sent a directive to hospitals indicating that they must have 82 temporary beds physically in place by today. My question is: are those 82 beds physically in place today, and where are they?

Hon. Dave Chomiak (Minister of Health): I thank the member for that question. As the member is aware, this year what we have tried to do is to try to do something that has not been

done in this province for some time, and that is to provide funding to the institutions and direction to the institutions as to the capacity and the ability they have to deal with both the bed shortage that has been of a chronic nature in this province for the past five years, as well as the potential for the fluctuation that occurs as a result of peak periods normally attributed to respiratory illnesses and the like.

So, as a consequence, as the member knows, we announced and we met with the CEOs of all of the hospitals, and we directed the health authorities to ensure that there was capacity and availability of beds available, not just in the springtime when we are anticipating the opening of additional beds because of personal care home openings, but from this period on until the springtime that beds will be available to deal with any potential difficulties.

I might add, Mr. Speaker, the member might be aware, and I am prepared to provide it for her, that there was recently a report from the Centre for Health Policy and Evaluation that was in fact asked for by the previous Health minister with respect to dealing with bed shortages which indicated the timely nature for the opening of beds.

Mrs. Mitchelson: Mr. Speaker, my question, which was not answered previously in the previous answer—[interjection]

Mr. Speaker: Order, please.

Mrs. Mitchelson: Mr. Speaker, I look forward, from the minister's first answer, to his providing me with a detailed list of where the beds are, because my understanding is he directed them to be opened today.

Bed Openings—Staffing

Mrs. Bonnie Mitchelson (River East): My question is: how many nurses have been hired to staff the 82 beds that were opened today as a directive of the Minister of Health?

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Speaker: Order, please.

* (1420)

Hon. Dave Chomiak (Minister of Health): Mr. Speaker, as you are aware and as members of this House are aware, for some time, when we were opposition, we had been imploring, almost begging the government to do something about our nurses' crisis. In fact, as long ago as three years ago we asked the government to take steps in order to deal with the nursing crisis, and you know—[interjection] I will provide an answer if members opposite will only hush in their seats for a second or two.

Mr. Speaker, as the member knows, there has been a crisis in terms of nursing in this province, and we undertook to resolve this crisis. We have undertaken to announce programs to retrain and retain nurses, and we will be announcing shortly a comprehensive—

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Speaker: Order, please.

Mr. Chomiak: Mr. Speaker, to help in the education of the member opposite, I would like to table a report that was released in Canada that showed for the past 10 years Manitoba is 10 out of 10, the very bottom, on full-time nurses employed. We have directed the hospital authority and the hospitals to employ full-time nurses, and that will be undertaken under this regime.

Mrs. Mitchelson: Mr. Speaker, the quick-fix Minister of Health obviously has not been able to fix anything. Given that the Minister of Health stated just last week, and I quote, "We made the resources available," has he put the money or the funding for the beds, and the staff, that were promised to be opened today, December 1, in the wish list that they presented to Deloitte and Touche?

Mr. Chomiak: Mr. Speaker, I would like to assure members opposite that this government not only asked that full-time physician managers be placed in the hospitals, but we funded it, rather than announcing it and not funding it as the previous government did. We also funded, effective immediately, the geriatric hospital teams that this government announced and did

not fund. I have a memo to that effect. We also funded, which the government announced and did not do, psychiatric nurses in the hospital.

We also announced and funded \$12 million—that that government did not announce—for immediate use to deal with the bed shortages, to deal with the crisis in the hospitals. While the other government talked and people lay in the hallways, we provided that funding. We went through Treasury Board. We went to Deloitte and Touche, and it is there to prevent difficulties in the hallways, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: The time for Oral Questions has expired.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

Evening for Seniors

Ms. Nancy Allan (St. Vital): Mr. Speaker, I would like to take this opportunity to recognize a very special event that I attended last night in the St. Vital community. It was at Dakota Collegiate. It was an evening of song, music and refreshments, and it was organized by a very special group of people. It was an evening for seniors in their community.

It was a very special evening organized by the parent council, which was one of the groups that organized it. The co-chairs were Diane Ranka, Pam McKay, with help from Deb Henderson and Joanna Blais. Two community liaison officers who are students in the school also helped with this event, Leslie Later and Linda Watson.

The Dakota Collegiate has a very special program. It is the Black and Gold Society, and it is a group of students who do community service work as volunteers and who were very active in organizing the event.

The entertainment was fabulous. The junior and senior jazz choirs performed, directed by Marlene Treichel, and the choral group was directed by Bill Quinn.

I would also like to thank the city councillor for St. Vital, Mr. Al Golden, who provided the

transportation for over 110 seniors to attend this event.

The reason for this event was to bridge the gap between the young people at the collegiate and the elders, the seniors in the community, to break down perceptions that young people are perhaps not as desirable in the community as they would like. It was a dream of the parent council to have this first-time event happen in the community and in the school, and it was so successful that they are already talking about next year's event.

In following up, I would just like to congratulate once again everybody at the collegiate—the students, the staff and the parents—for organizing this wonderful event. Thank you.

Election Financing

Mrs. Myrna Driedger (Charleswood): Mr. Speaker, I would like to return to one of the issues raised during yesterday's Question Period. I feel that the issue is pertinent because it clearly shows a lack of integrity of the members opposite. The issue, of course, is that of the NDP asking for corporate and union donations before moving on promised legislation to ban them. This promise was clearly a last-minute election maneuver. Still, the NDP—[interjection]

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. The member for Charleswood is making a member's statement.

Mrs. Driedger: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Still, the NDP should stand by the promises that they made to the people of Manitoba who elected them based on their election platform. In the throne speech, the government said: The Manitoba government has committed to eliminate corporate and union contributions to political parties. The government should be accountable for their own promises. Obviously, moral integrity gets thrown out of the window in the face of economic benefits.

With the NDP's tables of eight selling for \$1,400 and half-tables selling for \$700, it appears that the NDP are attempting to get one last influx of revenue before changing the rules. The First Minister (Mr. Doer) and his colleagues

are either against corporations and unions donating to political parties or they are for it.

Perhaps NDP actually means no definite position. Perhaps the NDP should develop a position and then tell the people of Manitoba exactly what it is. Mr. Doer was quoted by his own publication on September 10 as saying: this is a fresh start for Manitoba politics going into the next century. It may mean less money available for the main parties, but it is a good price to pay, I believe, to help reduce the widespread cynicism and disgust we hear every day from Manitobans.

I heard quite a bit of cynicism yesterday during Question Period, and I am sure that we all felt disgust. If this is the government's solution to restoring trust in government, then the public can hardly be blamed for having no trust in this government that makes decisions based on convenience, as opposed to conviction.

* (1430)

The Sun Christmas Cheer Fund

Mr. Scott Smith (Brandon West): As I had mentioned in my opening statements in this House, Brandon is well recognized as a community that hosts some great events and has some great events because of the many good volunteers that we have in our community. I would like to draw members' attention to one of those particular events. It is a positive one that is going on in my community right now.

It has a huge impact on the constituency, and it is the Sun Christmas Cheer Fund. The Sun Christmas Cheer Fund are people in Brandon and the Westman area who open up their hearts at this time of year through November and right up until Christmastime for a Christmas dinner for those who are less fortunate. They also provide the ability for Santa Claus to provide a gift to those children and those families. Once the food and the presents are purchased, there is an army of volunteers who assemble in the basement of St. Matthew's Cathedral to assemble the hampers and deliver them to those who are disadvantaged.

Many, many people give a great deal of their time and their resources to this worthwhile cause. However, there is one person that I would like to mention who does such a large part in this, Mr. Speaker. That person is Brian Marshall. Brian Marshall is well known for his involvement in worthwhile causes within the community and within the constituency of Brandon West. Brian also happens to be the managing editor of The Brandon Sun, the local newspaper.

Starting in November he runs an ad once a week with reminders to those of the running total of the funds raised to the present time. As well, he gives credit in a long list to the many people who assist this worthy cause. This year he has set a goal of \$70,000 in the community, and through the exposure he provides the Sun Christmas Cheer Fund, I am sure, as in years gone by, that goal is well achievable. Mr. Speaker, \$23,000 has already been raised to date. Because of the good people and their efforts, the less fortunate benefit in our community greatly. Thank you.

Headingley Reeve John Curry

Mr. Frank Pitura (Morris): Mr. Speaker, this afternoon I share some sad news with the Legislative Assembly. Earlier today, the member for Charleswood (Mrs. Driedger) and I attended the Celebration of Life funeral service for Reeve John Curry of Headingley. John Curry was 47 years of age and died suddenly last Friday, November 26, 1999. He leaves behind his family, Marilyn, his wife of 26 years; his children, Tyler, Jennifer and Andrew, and parents, Ed and Grace Curry. John was a graduate from the Vincent Massey High School in Fort Garry, and from the University of Manitoba he graduated with a degree in agriculture.

John was an exceptionally dedicated volunteer. John received the Volunteer Recognition Award for Outstanding Service in 1996, and the list of his volunteer commitments was extensive and varied. For the past 22 years, John has been a vibrant member of the Headingley United Church. He served as board chairman, as trustee, as a faithful Sunday school teacher, and even as a dastardly villain and a dashing hero in

the church dinner theatres. John was indeed a true and devoted friend to the community of Headingley. John also spent innumerable hours coaching various levels of minor hockey and was a mentor for countless young people. John had a very special love and respect for nature. John Curry was both a man of honour and responsibility, of honesty and fairness and of deep Christian faith.

At the time of his passing, John was serving the Rural Municipality of Headingley as reeve, and that is how I have come to know him. He was first elected reeve in the fall of 1995 and was re-elected to a second term in 1998. John was also chairman of the Mayors and Reeves Committee of the Capital Region. I say, Mr. Speaker, that John will be dearly missed for his practical common-sense approach to the issues facing the Capital Region. So, on behalf, I think, of all members in this Assembly, we would like to extend our sincere condolences to John's wife, Marilyn, and the children, Tyler, Jennifer and Andrew. Thank you.

Headingley Reeve John Curry Doug Kuhl

Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights): Mr. Speaker, I rise to pay tribute to two outstanding Manitobans who passed away during the last week. John Curry, reeve of the R.M. of Headingley, died suddenly last Friday. He was 47 years of age. I, too, was at the funeral. John, in his second term of reeve, was a rising star as chairman of the Mayors and Reeves Committee of the Capital Region. A farmer and a remarkable man, John will be sorely missed. Our children grew up together, played hockey together and went to church together. As a personal friend for many years, John has been an outstanding and continuing source of inspiration. Always generous and ready to volunteer, John's community spirit is an example to all of us.

Doug Kuhl, a River Heights resident and former president of the Liberal Party, also died last Friday. He was 48. Doug, our Liberal candidate in Rhineland in 1986, was always interested in and concerned about our province. As an entrepreneur, Doug played a major role in the family business, The Southern Manitoba Potato Company. As a musician, Doug had a

rare talent for playing haunting and evocative melodies. He was a friend over many years and always a source of creative ideas and warm support.

Let me end this tribute with a personal recollection of John Curry, the man who has been called the heart of Headingley. In the mid-1980s, John Curry, always interested in nature, joined together with me and others in a research project at a northern lake. In this project, looking and banding eagles, we came across a towering tree some 70-80 feet up, where the nest was 70 feet above a bay. John insisted on climbing up, and I remember him still, standing on top of that nest, waving with a warm smile to us down below. He stands still as an inspiration. His legacy will continue. Let us in his memory rededicate our efforts to a team approach to build a strong Capital Region for Manitoba.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

THRONE SPEECH DEBATE (Second Day of Debate)

Mr. Speaker: To resume debate on the proposed motion of the honourable member for St. Vital (Ms. Allan), standing in the name of the honourable Leader of the Official Opposition (Mr. Filmon).

Mr. Gary Filmon (Leader of the Official Opposition): Mr. Speaker, it is always a thrill and an honour for me to be able to address the Speech from the Throne. I was trying to count how many times that I have had the privilege of doing this. I know that it is in excess of 20 because I have been here for 20 years, and there have been some years, this being one of them, in which we have two throne speeches, so somewhere along the line there is a number. I can always say it is something I look forward to. It is one of the great privileges of being a member of this House, to be able to rise and to be able to speak and, particularly in the case of the throne speech in the budget, to have the latitude to speak on a whole range of issues, all of which are important to our constituents and to the people of this province and its future.

I want to begin by offering my most sincere and generous congratulations to you as you

assume the high office as the chief presider over this Chamber. You are the first person to be elected to that role, so I think your new responsibilities carry with it a special mark. We all know that Speakers are very highly respected, and their portraits are hung on the walls on the second floor of this building in recognition of the significant honour with which we regard them and their role. Yours is a particularly honourable circumstance being the first elected Speaker and, as well, somebody who comes here with the special background of an Inuit heritage.

* (1440)

I had the great honour to meet members of your family earlier this year when we had the group from Kiiivilik to a trade mission here. As you know, you and I stood together as I admired the creative work of your mother and the clothing that she had made that was on display there, very beautiful handwork. I had the pleasure, as well, with you of meeting your brother John, the deputy minister in the new government of Nunavut. I know that each of them will be exceedingly proud along with your other siblings and the rest of your family of this high office that you have assumed and the great honour that you certainly are bringing and the great credit to your family.

I tell you, Mr. Speaker, as I have said in comments to the media, that I have always regarded you as being an honourable and a fair-minded person and that I look forward to serving with you. I am confident that you will serve in this Chamber with great dignity and with great distinction. I sincerely wish you well. I know that I look forward to working with you in the future.

I wanted to add also my words of welcome back to the table officers who have the honour of serving this Legislature. Among them, of course, is our Clerk of the Assembly, a Clerk who has served us for I believe it is 16 years.

An Honourable Member: Seventeen years.

Mr. Filmon: Seventeen years. I am corrected. In those 17 years, we have gotten to know the Clerk well. I am not sure I had any influence on it, but the Clerk has in the past couple of years

joined the parish church to which I have belonged for more than 30 years, and so I have seen him more outside the Chamber in recent years. I know that he too has a great record of distinguished service to not only our Chamber but that of the Northwest Territories.

When I was at the Northwest Territories at Yellowknife for the Western Premiers Conference last year, I know that I saw his photographs, a very much younger version of our distinguished Clerk, but they remember him well there. They probably would join with me in extending to him the very best wishes for a healthy and a very challenging and interesting retirement. I know that he will have that, and we will have an opportunity next week to officially pay our respects to him.

I also want to greet the new pages who join us this year. A long line of young people who come from high schools around the province to serve us in this Legislature and to be able to perform the various little tasks to ensure the well-being of the members during the period of time that we are in session, but I believe that they also learn a good deal about the democratic process, about government, about this Chamber, in the course of their service here.

I have over the years on numerous occasions run into people who have been former pages. I know that this past year when we were giving out awards to members of the Civil Service in Manitoba for particular accomplishments, it was during the week in which we hosted that major conference, a public service conference in June, and one of the people who received an award in the Department of Agriculture was a former page in this Chamber.

Just a couple of weeks ago, I was shopping for some Christmas lights at Canadian Tire out in Westwood and was surprised as I arrived at the cash register to be greeted by one of last year's pages. So we see them in all walks of life after they leave here. I hope that you, as pages, will enjoy your experience and will benefit from it.

I also want to say a particular thank you to the civil servants who support the work of government, who over the last 11 and a half

years have supported us, those of us who had the privilege of serving in government. I know that for the most part, they carry on with the change of government, and we will continue to see many of them in the course of our responsibilities as members of the opposition as we deal with things like the Estimates or the bringing in of new bills and the review of annual reports. We will see these civil servants, and we will feel comfortable and confident knowing that the work of the people of this province remains in good hands because of the loyalty, experience and dedication of the many thousands of civil servants who serve our province.

I want to, Mr. Speaker, also congratulate the Premier (Mr. Doer) as he assumes his new role in this Chamber. People have been having a little fun at both our expenses over the last few weeks as we adjust to our respective changed roles. It is a little different after 11 and a half years and the routines that you establish to try and make an instant, overnight adjustment to calling somebody by a different title or even to going to the right seat in this Chamber. Old habits die hard, as they say, and I just want to say that we will try and ensure that he does not get into his habits too deeply before he has to change in the future.

I want to sincerely congratulate him. It is a great honour and a privilege to serve. Although the hours are long and the stress is high, I think he will be seen as somebody who has indeed earned his role through the hard work of 11 and a half years as Leader of the Opposition. I am sure that he will enjoy the fruits of his labour as he serves as Premier.

I also want to congratulate the members of cabinet. I used to make the point when I appointed a new member of cabinet that there have probably been fewer than 500 people in the history of this province who have served in the cabinets of this Legislature over the last 129 years, I guess it is, that we have been in Confederation. That is a very small number, and you are in a very select category as a member of cabinet. It is a privilege, it is an honour, and it carries with it great responsibility. We here, of course, definitely acknowledge your right to govern. After a little while, we may be suggesting that you take the responsibility to

govern but at the same time—that is after the first envelope wears out—we acknowledge and congratulate you on assuming your new positions.

I also want to congratulate all of those who have been elected in this Chamber, both those who have been re-elected, and for them—gosh, I was trying to remember how many times the member for Lakeside (Mr. Enns) has been elected. I think it is at least 12. It is an amazing record. When I read his comments in the paper, it was vintage Harry as he looked forward to the change in government and the new circumstances with as much vigour and as much enthusiasm as he had to taking office when the change took place in 1988. I also know that he is a person who puts first and foremost the service of his constituents, and that is why he has remained here in this Chamber for some 33 years, a remarkable, remarkable achievement.

I just add one little sidebar to that, saying that when we were honouring the member for Lakeside with a get-together in his constituency for his 25th anniversary of his election to office, at that time Douglas Campbell, the former Premier, was still alive. On an impromptu basis he got up to speak, and everyone was absolutely thrilled with it because he continued, even at that time, I think at 95 years of age or 96 years of age, to be absolutely clear and concise and humorous in his presentation. He made the comment that he, Mr. Campbell, had served Lakeside for 47 years and now Mr. Enns was there for 25 years. In the space of 72 years, they only had two members. He said the people of Lakeside are very loyal. He said once they get someone they like, they are reluctant to let him go. So now we have 47 and 33, we have 80 years of continuous service by two members in the same constituency. So there is somebody who can give everyone in this House lessons and information about service to the people of his constituency.

* (1450)

So it cannot possibly be the same and it should not be for the newcomers. I know for the newcomers it is an extremely special moment to first walk into this Chamber as a member, to feel the regal nature of your surroundings, to look

and observe the various Latin phrases, the various images that surround this Chamber and to know that you are indeed in hallowed halls, that this is an honour and a privilege that is beyond any that many of us could have expected. I do not think there is anything that exceeds the thrill and the exhilaration that you feel, and I say that to members both on our side of the House and members opposite, that this is something that you will remember for the rest of your lives.

This Chamber is steeped in history. You only sit back and remember some of the major decisions that were made here, some of the wonderful speeches that were given here. I like to think that when I entered this Chamber I was among giants of the time. I sat in the back row in my first session, and I listened to people like Sterling Lyon, Sid Green, Warner Jorgenson, the two Sauls—Saul Miller, Saul Cherniack—and I marvelled at their ability to stand up and without many notes to just carry on for it seemed hours on end. In those days, some of the speeches were that long. We always used to dread when certain people were left in the order of speakers on particular issues and the Leader had not used his prerogative of unlimited time. We always knew that if, for instance, Sam Uskiw was available, that Sam could go for four hours without even having a sip of water.

It is a privilege and an honour, and I hope that you feel that same sense of exhilaration as I did in my first opportunity to serve in this Legislature. I think it is even more so for many of you who like me had no family background or history in politics, because I know that there are some who come here with family history. My colleague for Kirkfield Park, his father was a member of Parliament and so on. Some grew up with it. In my case, I have often said that growing up in the north end of Winnipeg, my parents were very private about their political beliefs, and they probably more often than not voted for the person rather than for the party, and I have to acknowledge that probably it was not the party that I ran for.

But having said that, we all grow up with our own strong views. I look across at the member for Thompson (Mr. Ashton) and know

that he carried a card in our party at one time. That may be the case with others.

Point of Order

Hon. Steve Ashton (Minister of Highways and Government Services): A point of order, I think it would be important to note that I have been a card-carrying New Democrat since I was 17 years old. In fact, I joined the party in 1973. I have only belonged to one political party, the correct political party, the New Democratic.

Mr. Speaker: The honourable member for Thompson, it is not a point of order. It is a dispute over the facts.

* * *

Mr. Filmon: Well, Mr. Speaker, we will accept the comment from the member for Thompson unless I can find the records. But I remember when I first ran in River Heights that I found him on a membership list, but it could have been an error, I suppose.

I now want to speak about the throne speech. In speaking to the throne speech, Mr. Speaker, I must say that my immediate reaction sitting and listening to it was that, yes, it was brief, briefer than most throne speeches that I have heard. I do remember some shorter, but there were particular reasons why at that time there was a short throne speech, often not from a new administration.

Secondly, it was in more clear and concise language. I must admit I am very happy with the move toward new, clear language. That is I think something that is here to stay, much of it from the initiative of the Minister of Justice (Mr. Mackintosh) who is the Government House Leader. Many of our resolutions and presentations in this House are in new language which is more clear and concise. I think that, too, is an idea whose time has come, and I compliment the government on that.

But it was not the brevity of the speech in terms of the words, the volume, but it was the brevity in terms of vision that I was concerned about. There really was no vision in the throne speech. There was no plan. Clearly there was

an attempt to mention every special interest that is important to the government, but, you know, government has to be more than a collection of special interests. It cannot just be that you mention everybody who is going to be rushing to the throne speech to see whether or not you mention them. It has to be the substance of it, the co-ordinated vision, the plan for the future that is going to get us from where we are today to a better place, hopefully, in the future for our province. As I said, it seemed like a rehash of the election promises and a whole series of eight-second clips, and you cannot run a province on eight-second clips.

There was not any detail. I remember the members opposite always saying when our throne speech came out, the first comment would be there is no detail there. Well, there certainly was not any detail in this throne speech, so that is one area in which they have not been able to improve on us. I can say that, Mr. Speaker, but worse than that there was no substance. I mean, we try and look at what they are going to do that is going to be substantive and there was almost no substance to any of it. A lot of empty slogans, and I think that is trouble.

You know, there have been some comments from various different business groups, ones that often were critical of our government. They are critical of everybody who is in government, but the comment was made that there was no mention of the economy. I was reminded of that debate between Clinton and Bush in 1992, in which he said: It is the economy, stupid. I do not know, but I would venture a guess that if you canvassed the people in this province that they would still think it is the economy that is important to their lives, although there are many, many other issues that they will talk about. But to not even talk about the economy in the throne speech, I think has to be a huge, huge mistake in judgment—huge mistake in judgment, Mr. Speaker—[interjection]

Well, the member for Thompson (Mr. Ashton) says it is here. Yes, it is. It says: Today, the best economy policy for any province is a strong education policy. I think they have it backwards. The fact of the matter is that if you do not have a strong economy, then all you are

doing is educating your people to go somewhere else to be able to apply their skills and their knowledge.

* (1500)

Mr. Speaker, if there is anything that we did right over the last decade, it was to ensure that there were growing and increasing opportunities year after year after year, to the point that members opposite then said that the big criticism was we were not training people fast enough for the jobs that were there—a good problem to have. I would tell you that, time and time and time again, my colleagues, the other premiers from across Canada said that is a problem I would give my eyeteeth to have. They said you guys have got the economy going on all cylinders, and they said you know, that is a situation that every province is envious of. Indeed, we have been seeing that over and over again.

There was no mention of taxes. There was no mention of taxes other than to carry out the commitments that we had made and that had been passed in this year's budget, the 1.5 percent additional reduction in personal income taxes to continue to move us to be competitive with all of the jurisdictions around us. In that respect—[interjection]

Well, you know, the member opposite says they are giving a \$75 property tax credit. We were going to be removing the education support levy off property taxes, which would have given every Manitoban a greater reduction, every Manitoban a greater reduction in the taxes that they paid on their property. So what a minimalist approach. If indeed the problem is high property taxes, \$75 is not going to help people anywhere near the level that they would have been helped by the policies of this administration. You know, the irony of all of this is that all that you have to do is look around North America and find out what is on the minds of people everywhere in North America, whether they are in other provinces in Canada or whether they are in the United States, whether they are in provinces run by any party in Canada.

You take a look at Newfoundland. They are going to be reducing, they just announced last week, their personal income tax rate from 69

percent of the federal rate to 52 percent of the federal rate. Still higher than ours I might say, but that is a very major jump for a province like Newfoundland that has always been considered one of the have-not provinces of Canada. And then you look at this article in last week's National Post: Saskatchewan NDP looking at large tax cuts, and the NDP Finance Minister Eric Cline from Saskatchewan has announced that they are going to go to the second lowest personal income tax rate in Canada. Second lowest in Canada, he said. Major, major, major reduction.

They have an idea of what the people are looking for in this province and every other province in Canada. The only people who are out of touch, who have no idea of what is going on in the real world, are the NDP in Manitoba—Today's NDP. That is a serious, serious issue. Looking at the throne speech, of course, as well, Mr. Speaker, only the NDP would announce a summit to convince the business community that they are not antibusiness, and that is precisely why they have to hold a summit with business, to try and encourage them and ensure them that they are not antibusiness, because everybody knows that with every passing day you get the antibusiness sentiment now coming out from the members who have been elected. Because, why? They have this great sense of confidence.

It is wonderful, wonderful to see members opposite like the member for Thompson (Mr. Ashton) saying we have nothing we can learn from members opposite, and he has an attitude. He does not think he can learn anything from anybody because he knows best, and then his colleague just down the road, the new member for Brandon East (Mr. Caldwell), he stands up there, of course, and he says: I do not have to tell you anything about what we are doing. You lost the election; we won the election. We are in charge, and you have nothing to say about it.

Mr. Speaker, the new government also, of course, committed to review the minimum wage. No problem with that. The Premier (Mr. Doer) said though at his news conference that they were going to increase it every year. That is what he is quoted as saying. That is what the news media told us, and we will see if that happens.

I just say to him, there may be reasons to increase the minimum wage. We as a government increased the minimum wage several times that we were in office, and so there are reasons why. The problem with annual increases is that a lot of small businesses have to adjust their price lists every time there is an increase in the minimum wage, and so you are burdening them with an increased cost of operation to reprint all of the menus of all of the restaurants in the province of Manitoba, to change all of the price lists for all of the small businesses in Manitoba every time it is done. If you do it more often, then it becomes a very costly part of the process.

It is not just the fact that they have to adjust their wages. They are prepared to do that as long as their businesses are going well, and they are able to carry on in business. They will share the proceeds of their business success with their employees. But there are certain things that become impractical, and that is the kind of thing we are concerned about, because we see impractical solutions to straightforward issues across the way.

The proposal that was made during the election campaign about mandatory leave for employees was one of those knee-jerk impractical solutions. The proposal that came out of the annual meeting last year of the New Democratic Party to go down to a 32-hour work week was one of those impractical solutions that comes out of the New Democratic think tank, and that is an oxymoron, New Democratic think tank.

Mr. Speaker, the throne speech talks about a commitment to living within their means but you know, they have already thrown up their hands and said that they are not going to be able to balance the budget this year. They have taken a quick snapshot. They announced it two days after taking office before they even had the snapshot. They waited until eight days before they released this financial review. Eight days ahead of releasing the financial review, they appointed Deloitte and Touche to do the review. You tell me who can do any kind of a thorough review of any numbers in eight days, especially when you have \$6-billion worth of spending. But they had already arrived at their conclusions.

I watched the Premier (Mr. Doer) on Insight, on cable television, and he was already talking, this was two weeks before the review was released. It was before even Deloitte and Touche had been appointed. He was already saying what the conclusions were. He was on cablevision because he wrote the conclusions. We know what the game plan was. We knew what the game plan was the day that the transition team was appointed and it consisted of Mr. Schroeder and Mr. Kostyra, the two former Finance ministers. The fix was on. They were going to ensure that they ran up the deficit to the greatest extent possible and then hung it on the previous government.

* (1510)

That was the preconceived decision, and we know that they did that in 1981, in 1981-82 when they took office, and I remember that well. It was November 30 of 1981 that the transition took place. That is when I last moved out of my ministerial office. They took a budget—and nobody ever accused Sterling Lyon of over-spending—with a deficit that was projected and passed at \$220 million and they had four months left in the fiscal year and they ran it up to \$252 million. What did they do? [interjection] We are talking 1981-82. Wake up. They ran it up in four months.

What did they do? Within the first month they were in government, they increased by 16 percent the welfare rates in this province, and blew up all of the expenditures. This province became a magnet for social allowance recipients from all over the area. That is why, from that point forward until 1996, we had a continuous increase in the number of people on social allowance, in good times and in bad, they continued to grow.

Even as the economy improved in the '80s, the number of people on social allowance kept going up and up and up. The only time that it started to go down was after 1986 when my colleague from River East implemented programs of welfare reform that gave greater incentives for people to get into jobs and get out of welfare. That 21,000 people have been taken off welfare and into the workforce between 1996

and this year. There were improvements that were going to be made this year with the passage of legislation to ensure even more that people would be required to go into the workforce rather than chronically be on welfare. The fact of the matter is that, foolishly, the member for Crescentwood-Fort Rouge it is called now, sorry—he stands up and he says: I have never met anybody who wants to stay on welfare. Well, he is not living in the real world because if you ask people in any part of this province, you ask people in your areas, and you will not find people who agree with that statement.

The members opposite are living in a dream world if they believe what the member for Fort Rouge (Mr. Sale) says about people on welfare, that they all, every single one of them, want to be in the workforce. The fact of the matter is that people, because of the policies of the New Democrats in the '80s, have been encouraged that they could stay on welfare as long as they want, no matter what their circumstances. They have been made to be dependent on government, and they pass that attitude of dependence on from generation to generation. Nothing will break it, other than strong policy by government to try and make sure that there are disincentives for people to stay on welfare and incentives for them to get into the workforce. That is reality, and the member for Fort Rouge does not understand reality.

An Honourable Member: I have worked a lot longer in the inner city than you ever have.

Mr. Filmon: I lived in the inner city.

I once had a debate with the member for Fort Rouge by virtue of correspondence when he had his Sunday school class send a letter to every member of City Council, 50 members it was in those days, saying that the problem with the inner city was that City Council was not spending enough money on the inner city. I sat down and got all of the facts and figures from every department in the civic service and demonstrated to him that we were spending more, on a proportionate basis, on a per capita basis, in the inner city than anywhere else in the city of Winnipeg. We were building arenas that were not being used. We were maintaining all sorts of public facilities from libraries to

playgrounds to other things. We were rebuilding entire blocks. We were tearing down houses. Those were the days in which the federal government had those massive programs in which they put up 75 percent of the cost, in some cases 90 percent, and they were building, and we were spending tens and hundreds of millions of dollars in the inner city.

I said to him: we have brand-new houses. We have brand-new neighbourhoods. We have new landscaping, new ornamental lighting. We have everything new there. Ask your teacher why he lives in Fort Garry and preaches to the people about the problems of the inner city.

Then I listed for him—because, like him, I am a practising Anglican—all of the parishes of the Anglican church that were in the inner city. I listed the housing addresses of each of the rectors. Not one of them lived in the inner city. They lived in Fort Garry, like he did. They lived in River Heights. They lived in Crescentwood. They lived in all these other areas, but not one of them lived in the inner city. I said ask what it would take for him to move his family into that core area that he believes is in need of renewal. If we built him a new house, if we made a new street, if we gave better community centres, if we gave a new rink around the corner, what would it take? Well, of course there was no answer because he prefers to live in the suburbs and preach to the people in the inner city about all of the things that should be done. He talks the talk, but he does not walk the walk, Mr. Speaker. That is the problem. Well, if the new Premier (Mr. Doer) is taking responsibility for the weather we have had this November, I am going to accept that, because I am going to talk to him about it in February too.

I found it interesting, Mr. Speaker, as we listened to the cocky arrogance of the members opposite, particularly, and I am sorry he is not here—I am sorry, I cannot refer to that. Excuse me. I found it interesting and particularly I paid attention to some of the comments made by the member for Brandon East (Mr. Caldwell) last week and all of the arrogance that he displayed about his knowledge and his understanding and his lack of respect for members on this side and so on.

* (1520)

Mr. Speaker, I remember coming into this House in 1988 with another group of people who were very, very cocky and arrogant. They were a group led by Sharon Carstairs. The member for River Heights (Mr. Gerrard) will perhaps relate to that, because there were 20 of them elected in 1988. They were very public about how good they were.

An Honourable Member: Sale was their adviser.

Mr. Filmon: Oh, I am told that their policy adviser was the member for Fort Rouge (Mr. Sale). They came into this House and Mrs. Carstairs made a speech to the effect that if they want to know how easy it is going to be for them to take over and govern, all they have to do is look around them and see all the dead wood that was around them and they would know that they are going to be in government in a very, very short period of time. She imbued them with that attitude. There is not one of them here today. In fact, more than half of them were gone within a couple of years. But they used to come in here with the attitude that they knew everything. They did not need to take advice from anybody else in this Chamber on either side, and they are a long gone piece of history in this Legislature. So I am very, very encouraged to hear the cocky arrogance of many members opposite who have been newly elected and know that that is the first step towards their walk out of this Chamber for the last time.

I think one of the reasons why the new members opposite are going to have difficulty is that there is not one of them who has any real business experience. None of them have— [interjection] Well, okay. That is right. The member for Elmwood (Mr. Maloway) has a small business which he owns. His major source of income, though, is a Crown corporation, so even there he is a little bit sheltered in terms of his understanding of how business really works. But he has no, they have no understanding of how people who have to work in the private sector, and that is the vast majority of people— [interjection] Well, the member for Brandon West (Mr. Smith) is giving me some signs there, and he has had actually a fair bit to say with his chirping in Question Period as well.

He is a good example of exactly the difference. You see, I once heard a speech by a person who said that you can break the people into three categories. You have tax avoiders, those people who do not pay taxes at all, and then you have taxpayers, and obviously there are a lot of taxpayers. Then you have tax consumers, and those are the people who collect their living, who make their entire living by spending taxpayer money all the time. If you look in those rows, that is precisely what you have got. Virtually every person has only made their living by consuming tax dollars.

Mr. Speaker, the member for St. Vital (Ms. Allan) wants to be an exception, and I will make an exception of her, and the member for Elmwood (Mr. Maloway), I will make an exception of him, but everybody else has the attitude that, oh, the taxpayer will not mind paying a little more.

When it comes to making a choice between whether their interests are those of the taxpayer or those of the group that they belong to that consumes taxes, where will their loyalties be? Well, the member for Brandon West (Mr. Smith), of course, made that decision when he was a member of city council, protector of the taxpayer supposedly in that role, but he was a member of the firefighters' union and he went and counselled the firefighters to ask for more money because he believed that the city could afford it.

So when it comes down to making that choice as to which side do they stand, they do not stand with the taxpayer. They stand with the tax consumer because they believe every time that the tax consumer is the principal one that they serve. That is a long-term concern. That is a long-term concern. [interjection] Well, the veteran backbencher for Dauphin-Roblin is giving us some advice over there, Mr. Speaker. [interjection]

Well, Mr. Speaker, we have many, many things that we can take issue with the members opposite on, but we do know many things about them by just the few comments they have made. The Minister of Education and Training (Mr. Caldwell), of course, has already said, and it is a quote from the November 19 Brandon Sun:

NDP Education Minister Drew Caldwell said the new government has no plans to start cost-cutting.

No plans to start cost-cutting, Mr. Speaker. That is a concern. He, of course, is the same person who on the one hand is protecting children against the evils of YNN because of its commercialization, but he is letting all sorts of other commercialization go on in the schools. That was pointed out very well by the member for Minnedosa (Mr. Gilleshammer), by the member for Fort Garry (Mrs. Smith), by many of our members opposite. There is commercialization everywhere throughout the schools.

You know, even Coca-Cola has some principles in that they are not going to go and advertise on the World Wrestling Federation now because they do not like the content. These guys here have no principles. On the one hand, they say that they are going to stop YNN because the teachers' union is opposed to it. On the other hand, they are going to promote all sorts of other commercialization in the schools. Well, Mr. Speaker, that is going to start to catch them up time after time after time. There is no principle. All there is is political decision making, and it is going to be a problem.

The members opposite should be concerned. I think that there is, out of the entire throne speech—and I said that it was brief, but it was not so brief that it could not have spoken about rural development and rural Manitoba. There are two references in the throne speech for a whopping four sentences on rural Manitoba.

Now, given the crisis that is facing our rural community, Mr. Speaker, I think it is incredible that there would only be two references and four complete sentences on rural Manitoba. Now members opposite did, throughout the election campaign, imply that we had spent too much time being concerned about rural Manitoba. We took the attitude that no matter where development took place it was good for all Manitoba. We took the attitude that if you got a plant like Maple Leaf Foods in Brandon, it was good for all Manitoba. If you got a strawboard manufacturing plant in Elie, it was good for all Manitoba.

We took the attitude that if you had an expansion to the biggest book-publishing firm in Canada, in Altona, it was good for all Manitoba. Why? Well, Mr. Speaker, when the New Democrats were last in government they did an economic study of what happened when major investments took place. They did the analysis for the Limestone plant way, way up North, and what did they find out? Out of that investment, hundreds of kilometres up North, forty cents out of every dollar accrued to businesses in Winnipeg. Why? Because the engineers, the suppliers, the service people, all of the construction people came from Winnipeg, and so it did not matter where it took place in the province, Winnipeg benefited out of it.

* (1530)

We took the attitude that it was best for the entire province that we had development everywhere in the province. That is why Winnipeg is growing and thriving with a lot of high-tech electronic businesses, why there have been expansions to a lot of our manufacturing businesses, why there have been additions of software developers and all sorts of other things taking place in the city of Winnipeg. At the same time, we had major investments going on throughout the province in rural Manitoba, but rural Manitoba is a special entity in the sense that its opportunities, its characteristics, its advantages are all different than you might find in the city of Winnipeg.

It is different to try and locate a business in a small community of a couple of thousand or a few hundred people. You have to have particular things going for you. You have to know what advantages, whether it is location, whether it is resources. All those things. So it does require a special effort; otherwise you will go back to the days that were there under the New Democrats before where nothing happened in rural Manitoba, and we cannot afford that. We are concerned. All Manitobans should be concerned. With only two references in the throne speech they do not understand the problem, and that is what we are faced with.

There are references in the throne speech to strengthen our Home Care system on page 5. Mr. Speaker, it was our government that more

than tripled funding to the Home Care program. Our last budget provided an additional \$20.5 million, a 16 percent increase to the total funding to our Home Care program to \$147 million.

It says that they are committed to take whatever steps are necessary to ensure that the federal laws prohibiting the possession of child pornography remain enforceable, including resorting to the notwithstanding clause. Mr. Speaker, we agree with that. We support the government. It was our position on that issue, and we hope that the process that we had initiated of seeking intervenor status at the Supreme Court will be proceeded with, and that the government of Manitoba will take the strongest possible stand on that particular issue.

Mr. Speaker, the whole issue that we have been discussing at some length already in this session, balanced budgets, is a key issue. It is a very key issue to all things that we do in this province in future. I believe that this is one of the most important achievements that our government had made. Because there were 23 years of chronic dependence on unbalanced budgets that finally culminated in our first balanced budget in the 1995-96 fiscal year. After that the budgets were not only balanced but indeed in surplus position on an audited basis in each successive year.

But we are not out of the woods by any stretch of the imagination. Any thought of returning to deficits is absolutely abhorrent, I would say, to most Manitobans. Why? Because we are still spending \$490 million a year of interest on the debt, most of which was accumulated during the Pawley years in this House. The net tax-supported debt tripled in six and a half years under the Pawley government. Who did they put in charge of the transition but the two Finance ministers from that particular era of the Pawley administration. Who did Today's NDP look to for advice on the most critical issue facing them? Yesterday's NDP, the guys that put us into the deep hole that we have been working so hard to dig our way out of.

Now, of course, they are starting to find all sorts of excuses and reasons why they must run a deficit budget this year, Mr. Speaker. That, when they are faced with a situation that no

other government in the history of this province has taken office with, and that is \$270 million in the bank account, the Fiscal Stabilization Fund. As my colleague for Kirkfield Park has said, budgets do not just take care of themselves, budgets have to be managed. People know that.

Only people who have never worked in the private sector believe that you do not have to manage a budget. People who work on the farms know that they get unexpected expenses. They may have to do another round of spraying that they did not anticipate in the budget that they prepared for that particular year for their farm. People who are in a small business know that all of a sudden something happens to them. There is a fire, they have to pay the deductible their insurance is not adequate to cover. They have to adjust their budget to be able to survive and to make ends meet. People who are in their own homes know that something happens. A child's clothing gets lost or destroyed, and they have to come and adjust their family budget. Everybody knows that that happens in everybody's budget.

We have made adjustments as much as \$300 million and more in fiscal years in the last few years and made the adjustments and balanced the budget, Mr. Speaker. Only the members opposite, who are going to embarrass their Leader (Mr. Doer), are going to start by throwing up their hands and saying, no, we cannot do it, it is impossible, they made us do it, and they are going to try and blame it. Well, they are not going to get away with it, because Manitobans know that they have the responsibility, they have the authority, and they have the ability to balance the budget if they want to.

Mr. Speaker, I want to make one other comment to the members opposite when it comes to talking about the balanced budget, because I was even more concerned last Friday when in Question Period the Premier (Mr. Doer) refused to commit to not removing all of the basic principles of the balanced budget legislation. Now, he wanted to talk about adding to it a provision that they could not sell a Crown corporation and put the proceeds in, but I want to know from him whether or not they are committed to not remove and change markedly any of the provisions of the legislation, because

he was already, again on CJOB and again on cablevision, on Insight, talking about the fact, well, the Provincial Auditor has given comments about it. You know, I want to address that.

The Provincial Auditor is an independent authority. He was hired by our government on a nonpartisan basis, and he has comments to make. I might say that the comments are very similar to the comments that were made by the member for Fort Rouge (Mr. Sale) when he was arguing against balanced budget legislation, and he called it silly. What he said was that you are going to put yourself in a fiscal straitjacket, that you would put yourself in a position where in order to balance that budget you would have to do dramatic changes and reductions to services in order to keep the budget balanced if you ran into an emergency like the flood of the century or the forest fires or any unforeseen consequence like the southwest Manitoba situation in farming.

We said no. This balanced budget legislation has a number of different provisions that ensure that you can keep the budget balanced. It is like a three-legged stool. One of those, of course, is the Fiscal Stabilization Fund, and it is there to ensure that when you are faced with a dramatic, unexpected situation, you can take money from the Fiscal Stabilization Fund, and you can therefore keep it balanced.

* (1540)

So when the Auditor says this does not go along with generally accepted accounting principles, that is true, because under any other circumstances in other organizations, people show a deficit on their budget. They say: we made money this year, we lost money last year, it all follows that. But if you want to ensure that you can have unforeseen consequences, unforeseen circumstances like the flood of the century or the farm disaster and still take care of it and still balance the budget, you need to have a fiscal stabilization fund. It is part and parcel of the reason why the balanced budget legislation works. It is part and parcel of why the people on Wall Street have said that it is the best that they have seen in North America, and as long as they recognize that it only works if you have all elements of it there, you have the cost controls, you have the Fiscal Stabilization Fund, and you

have all elements of it there, you have the referendum on tax increases, that is all part and parcel of the discipline that needs to be there.

Mr. Speaker, if they start unravelling it one step at a time, then Manitobans will not have what they voted for and what they wanted, which is balanced budgets for all time and future. So this is not an exercise in pure accounting theory. This is a practical way of ensuring that budgets—[interjection]

No, Mr. Speaker, the member for Fort Rouge (Mr. Sale) is the person I referred to when I talked about silly. He said that balanced budget legislation was silly. I have respect for the Auditor. I signed his Order-in-Council hiring him, and I respect him, but I am saying that this is not an exercise in accounting theory, this is a practical application of what it takes to ensure that budgets can remain balanced without causing chaos within the delivery of services throughout the provincial government, and it works.

Point of Order

Mr. Sale: Mr. Speaker, the Premier has made some very important comments in regard to the Auditor and the function of an Auditor—

An Honourable Member: Past Premier.

Mr. Sale: Past Premier, right. What the Auditor said, Mr. Speaker, and what I think is very important that this House understand is that the transfers from the Fiscal Stabilization Fund should never be shown as current revenue. The deficit to which the Fiscal Stabilization Fund is being attached is, in fact, a deficit which is being offset and not current revenue. That was the Auditor's point. [interjection] It is not a silly point. It is a very valid point of public clarity about our finances, which you would never allow happen.

Mr. Marcel Laurendeau (Opposition House Leader): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker, the member is well aware that a point of order is to be raised not to disrupt when a member is speaking but to bring up the disruption of a rule. This member has not brought forward a rule or

anything in Beausheue that has been—
[interjection]

He has no point of order, and he should not have been disrupting. Could you call him to order, Mr. Speaker?

Mr. Speaker: On the point of order raised by the Minister of Family Services (Mr. Sale), it is clearly a dispute over the facts.

* * *

Mr. Filmon: Mr. Speaker, another area that I thought was not very well served in the throne speech was the fact that the throne speech referred to the flood of the century on the Red River that took place two years ago. That was indeed very well fought and dealt with by all Manitobans, particularly those within the Red River Valley. It was an enormous job for which compliments have been given in successive throne speeches.

But here it is two years later and for whatever unknown reason, the members opposite want to take some credit for the response to the flood of the century. They do not even talk about the major flood that took place in southwestern Manitoba just this spring. There was an enormous saturation of the ground. There was a million acres that went unseeded. It was a very substantial natural disaster that in many ways was larger because of its impact on the GDP than was the flood of the century on the Red River, and it is not even mentioned in the throne speech. I found that incredible.

The member for Lakeside (Mr. Enns), the member for Ste. Rose (Mr. Cummings), the member for Minnedosa (Mr. Gilleshammer), many of my colleagues and I met on numerous occasions with people in all the communities throughout southwestern Manitoba. We listened to them. We met in the cabinet room. We met in their own communities and we made a commitment, a very substantial commitment of \$50 per unseeded acre, based on the recommendation of countless farm groups and many, many people in that area. We made that without having the backing of the federal government. It was, indeed, a risk. It was a significant risk, and I say that we took it with our eyes wide open.

We indicated that it should be funded out of the Fiscal Stabilization Fund, but the federal government should pay its share.

The member for Lakeside (Mr. Enns) will remind members opposite that we did not accept that the federal government should only pay 50 percent, for instance. Our proposal to the federal government was on something of that magnitude, they ought to be there for 70 percent. These are the kinds of things, and we will continue to support the government and to work with the government to get the attention of the federal government to say that this is a natural disaster that ought to be cost-shared by Ottawa. It cannot be the responsibility solely of the people of this province, a province of 1.1 million people.

But getting on to agriculture, Mr. Speaker, I want to say that we had a good debate over the last couple of days. It is an area of great importance. It is an area that I believe is a key area all the time for the Manitoba economy, over \$3 billion contributed to our GDP but more importantly also the source of a great deal of other jobs in the whole food production side.

Agriculture today, having been here in this Legislature for 20 years, has changed dramatically, since the first debates and discussions that I sat in on 20 years ago. I remember 20 years ago that the former member for Arthur-Virden who was then the Minister of Agriculture got into great difficulty by suggesting that he would wrestle the Wheat Board to the ground. Today more and more and more people are seeing that the Wheat Board does not need to be abolished, but the Wheat Board needs to change. The Wheat Board cannot remain inflexible and cannot continue to block out opportunities to our Manitoba producers and our Manitoba agripreneurs who want to create better opportunities—
[interjection]

I ask, as the member for Lac du Bonnet (Mr. Praznik) asks: will the government opposite have the courage to work with change and support change? Because they did not have the courage when we were in government and we changed the marketing system for hogs in our province to a dual marketing system. They opposed it and indeed the Minister of

Agriculture (Ms. Wowchuk) continues to argue that it is detrimental to our province. But the one thing that was evident was that we would not be able to become the centre for hog production and processing if we did not change.

* (1550)

I have heard from ministers in Alberta and ministers in Saskatchewan, including premiers, that they envied our move, our dramatic and our very, very strong move to dual marketing before they got it because it resulted in us getting a major investment, firstly, by Schneider's, and then, secondly, by Maple Leaf and indeed in becoming the centre and the focus for value-added processing in the hog industry. It has meant thousands of jobs. It has meant well over \$100 million of investment, in fact between those two alone, over \$150 million worth of investment, and yet the Minister of Agriculture continues to say that she has her reservations. I can tell her this: that her colleagues to the west do not have any reservations about that. Even the New Democrats know that you must ensure that processors have direct access to business with producers in order to ensure that they can get the supply of hogs that they need.

Why change? Why do we have to continue to look at change in agriculture as a necessity, not a choice but a necessity? Well, Canada is probably the most vulnerable country in the world to commodity price reductions. Indeed, I have always said I just marvel at farmers when I recognize how much stress they have to deal with and indeed what great risk they face every day in their daily life. Farmers are remarkably resilient people. Think about all the things they have to be concerned about. One is weather. I mean, you can have a late spring that does not allow them to get seeded on time. You can have an early frost that destroys the crop. You could have a hailstorm. You can have too much rain; you can have too little rain. You can have all these different things going. It is a remarkable risky situation that they have to deal with year in and year out that decides whether or not they are going to get their income as expected.

They have interest rates that are often very variable. I mean, they went through that period. My own brother-in-law lost his farm. Why?

Because the interest rates rocketed up to over 20 percent in the early '80s and it did not matter what he did with the debt load he was carrying. No matter how efficient he became, there was not a thing he could do to keep the farm in operation. Absolutely. Lost the farm. This is an incredible risk that he faced, because he has no control over these interest rates.

Of course, the third area is prices. The prices are all set on a world market. It is not Canada that sets the price of grain or the price of hogs or beef or anything else. It is a world market. So it is well beyond any control that he could attempt to exercise.

It is an unbelievable situation of huge risk, and yet they continue to be there, and yet they continue to produce, and yet they have become, I would argue, the most efficient producers in the whole world. The farmers of Canada can stand on any forum and demonstrate that they have become the most efficient producers in the whole world, but they are also the most vulnerable.

Why are they the most vulnerable to world commodity price reduction? Because 80 percent of the crops that they grow, wheat crop for instance, 80 percent is not for consumption in Canada. It has to be sold on an export market. So again they are dealing in an environment that is well beyond our borders, well beyond our control, and they are subject to all of the things that we have been talking about in this House, the fact that there are these huge subsidies from the European Community, billions and billions of dollars a year, the fact that Bill Clinton is up to, what, \$7 billion to \$8 billion in the United States.

An Honourable Member: Plus. It will be \$11 billion by the time they finish.

Mr. Filmon: The Premier (Mr. Doer) says it may hit \$11 billion. These are the kinds of vulnerabilities that they face. Our government, the little, old government of Canada, does not have the capacity to put \$11 billion on the table. That is true. Yet our people have to be in the game.

So there are so many things that are at risk here, which is why we have to do so much more

to process our production here. It is why we have to become so much more diversified, so that we are not just dependent on one or two or three commodities, that we have a whole diversity of crops. That is why we have become, in the last decade, the largest producer of edible beans, why our legume crops, why so many different crops, sunflowers, so much has been expanded and diversified here. Canola and hogs exceeded the value of wheat production last year in our province. It is the only way we can go.

It means that the government has to lead the way in being open to change, because if that government sits there and says, no, we are going to protect certain things and we are going to make sure that nobody changes this or that or the other thing, our producers are lost. They cannot survive based on the economics that they face, based on the challenges that they face, the competition that they face. There is only one solution, and that is that they have to become less and less dependent on all of these areas that are at risk. That means that more and more has to be processed here. That means that we have to process more of our various different grain crops. That is why the Canadian Wheat Board, in taking a position that says that no, you cannot sell your product directly to a processor to have a pasta plant here, is killing opportunity. No other place in the world would allow that situation to prevail, where a producer and a processor cannot enter into a direct agreement to be able to produce that value-added product.

An Honourable Member: We would have no McCain potato plant in Portage if that were the case.

Mr. Filmon: That is right.

The member opposite talks about all of these areas in which we have value-added processing. Look at them. Potatoes. We are huge producers. We have the largest French fried potato plant in Canada right now, huge producers of that. It is not subject to any marketing board, and it is not subject to any government control at the production side.

The same thing is true of canola. It is not under the Wheat Board; it is not under marketing.

An Honourable Member: That is why we have the crushing plants.

Mr. Filmon: Crushing plants here, refining, and all that going on. Beans, sunflower seeds. We have some processing going on in southern Manitoba in that area. Oats. We have the Can Oats plant there. Why is that happening? It is happening because it is out of the control of the Wheat Board now, and it allows for the market to decide and the entrepreneurs to decide.

We have to have that opportunity. I am not saying take the Wheat Board down. I have always said that directly to their face. We as a cabinet over the last few years have been meeting a couple of times a year with, what do we call them, the commissioners of the Canadian Wheat Board. We have been saying to them we are not your enemy, but if you do not allow for this kind of flexibility, then everybody in the production side of agriculture is going to become your enemy because you are going to prevent them from ensuring that they can make a living, ensuring that they have the financial stability for them and their families, and ensuring that you add the value and you create the opportunities in rural Manitoba and throughout the farm and rural economy. You have to be able to do that. If you block it off, then the farmers are the ones who pay; Manitobans are the ones who pay because of lost jobs and lost opportunities.

So I am saying to you, Mr. Speaker, that the government opposite has to embrace change, has to become an advocate for change, and has to shed its old NDP ways and really show that it is Today's NDP when it comes to all of these things.

We have here in this province the George Morris Centre study that was done for the hog industry that demonstrated that this is the cheapest place in all of North America to produce hogs and therefore the ideal place to process them is somewhere close by. The George Morris Centre showed that we have an advantage in terms of the cost of our feed grains because we are the place where it has the greatest cost in transportation to take them somewhere else. So, therefore that applies, that we want to process as much as possible here.

* (1600)

Those same economics do not just apply to hogs. They apply to beef. That is why now we have record levels of beef production in this province. We do not have the processing here. We lost it decades ago, but we must ensure that we are doing everything possible to get more and more processing. That is why the egg production is here. We work very hard.

There are some great new opportunities for egg production for the industrial market and for the export market, both of which are outside of the traditional marketing boards. The marketing boards are for table-consumption eggs. We do not have that constraint on us, and we ought not to let CEMA—and I told that to them when I met them in Niverville this spring. CEMA is an organization that we support as long as they are talking about the domestic table market. The minute that they tell us that we cannot allow expansion to meet the industrial and the export market is the minute that they do not have our support. They tried to do that. We had a battle for two years over that, and that is taking place now. What does it mean? It means jobs and economic opportunity for our province.

An Honourable Member: Grain that we do not have to export.

Mr. Filmon: Grain that we do not have to export, as the member for Lakeside (Mr. Enns) says. Poultry production, all of these areas, we have a competitive advantage, but it needs a commitment on the part of government to look at things differently.

We got into, with a considerable amount of controversy, the production of elk, the farming of elk. I do not know where the member for Swan River (Ms. Wowchuk) stands on that. I do not know where she is on that, but this is an area of continued opportunity. There are many, many places. You know, when we look at wild boar, elk, bison, all these areas are continued diversification. They imply more money coming into farm hands and more economic opportunity in the rural areas, and eventually more opportunity for processing here in our province.

The PMU industry. This is an interesting one because the members opposite have been

opponents of the PMU industry. Absolutely. Well, you know, the member for Radisson (Ms. Cerilli) has taken a position. In fact, she is quoted in the literature of the groups that right throughout North America oppose the PMU industry. That had better be an issue that the member for Swan River (Ms. Wowchuk) takes a hold of. Because the fact of the matter is, I travelled through this province during the last election campaign and met many PMU producers. If you want to deny them the opportunity to be in business, you are going to be destroying a lot of the farm economy in your area as well as most areas in this province. [interjection]

Our farmers are very, very efficient producers and our farmers must have more value-added. They must have more processing. They must have more diversification at their disposal in order to ensure that they can survive in what is the riskiest, I believe, line of work in this entire country. But if we are really going to help our farmers, we have to remove roadblocks. We have to reduce regulations and bureaucracy that prevent this value-adding, this diversification and this self-sufficiency that is the ultimate goal. It is good for farmers. It is good for communities.

Indeed, I spoke at the AMM annual meeting about an article that was provided for me by the member for Emerson (Mr. Jack Penner) that talked about healthy agriculture, unhealthy farm communities. It talked about the fact that in the United States they had nice towns and villages and cities that grew up based on taking agriculture production and processing it and creating jobs and opportunities there.

We need to do that. We have not done it for a century. We need to do it now, and we had started to make a very significant move on that. These last 10 years have seen more investment in diversification and value-adding than ever before in our history, and we cannot let that change.

You know, I found it interesting that the Minister of Agriculture (Ms. Wowchuk) declared victory after one meeting with her federal counterpart. I do not know who saw this news release that she put out. I did not see it

until later, but on October 15 she put out a news release, I guess to try and justify the comments that her Premier (Mr. Doer) had made during the election campaign saying that he could establish a better relationship with Ottawa, that he would have much better relations.

So it says here: Agriculture and Food Minister Rosann Wowchuk is describing her meeting with federal Agriculture and AgriFood Minister Lyle Vanclief in Ottawa yesterday as productive. While no firm commitment was made, the federal minister listened seriously to the concerns raised, and Wowchuk expressed optimism that negotiations will be ongoing. I welcome the opportunity to meet with the federal minister for the first time and to talk to him about the situation in Manitoba, she said. Where there did not previously seem to be much hope from the federal government, in this meeting the federal minister did not close the door on the possibility of federal aid. This was an important first step in the process, and I am optimistic that we can reach agreement in the near future.

So the minister took that, and he said, well, I have satisfied her. So the next week he announced that there was nothing more. He now had the minister in his court. He did not need to do anything more. I suggest that the Minister of Agriculture (Ms. Wowchuk) wait a little bit longer to declare victory next time she meets with him.

In concluding my discussion on agriculture, Mr. Speaker, I want to say, yes, let us say firstly that we need proper safety nets in place. We would all agree with that. I think in the early '90s, with the GRIP and NISA programs, brought-in programs that were stable, brought-in programs that provided stability as well as intelligent opportunities for farmers to participate to the extent that they wanted to, it was a balanced program that provided a good underpinning, but they are not there—well, NISA is there. I should not say that.

But there was totally inadequate compensation for the loss of the Crow, totally inadequate. Of course, the irony of it all is that members opposite, along with many people, complained bitterly when Charlie Mayer was

going to remove the Crow with very substantial compensation put in its place, \$8 billion. If that solution had been applied, farmers would not have been in the circumstances they are today. Yet, you know, Charlie Mayer was defeated, unfortunately, in the next election, because he even dared to think about and talk about that kind of fair and reasonable solution to a longstanding problem issue. So we have to.

In the absence of any protection from subsidies in EC and in the United States, we need to have a reasonable safety net in place and more work has to be done towards that goal. The second thing, of course, is that we do need better and fairer trade rules. There is absolutely no question that we need a level playing field, and that we need to get rid of these export subsidies, and we need to put our farmers, who are the most efficient and the most productive in the world, on a level playing field so that they can indeed enjoy the fruits of their labour.

Finally, of course, we must continue to be committed to more diversification, more value-adding, because government support will always be risky, and it will always be based on politics. We know that as long as there are over a hundred seats in Ontario and 80-odd seats in Quebec and that the agriculture heartland in the West has a small number of seats by comparison—I believe something like a hundred—this will never be a political priority of the people who sit in Ottawa. We need to have value-adding and diversification to provide the kind of self-sufficiency and independence that our farmers need.

* (1610)

That, Mr. Speaker, leads us directly to a further amplification on the subject of trade. Of course, it is an interesting—[interjection] The member opposite wants to talk about Seattle. I will mention that in just a few minutes. The fact of the matter is that there is a very important meeting taking place in Seattle, the World Trade Organization, and it does have some bearing on this government and its positions, and I will comment about that.

The reason that agriculture ties in directly with trade is that our farm communities are the

original free traders of this western Canada, because if you look at the majority of head offices that still exist in Winnipeg, the old ones, the multinational companies, all relate to agriculture. You look at the Richardson company, you look at UGG, you look at Agricore, you look at Paterson's and Cargill, the Canadian Wheat Board, the Grains Commission, these are all institutions, huge generators of wealth and employment that are based on trade, international trade.

Interestingly enough, Mr. Speaker, if you look at the majority of new corporations, the growing companies in our province that have really burst on the scene and made huge gains in the last decade, they are also very heavily dependent on trade. Palliser Furniture, it is a wonderful story. Palliser Furniture was about 900 people when we took office in 1988, over 3,000 people today, and it is almost all based on international exports. The Friesen firm in Altona, D.W. Friesen and company is now tremendously oriented towards printing to the United States. When I toured their plant, they are doing the school books, the yearbooks for right across the border states from Michigan all the way through to Montana and well beyond and a tremendous orientation to doing a lot more work in the United States.

You look at our trucking companies and look how much of their business is oriented to trade into the United States, and we have now eight of the 13 largest trucking firms in Canada headquartered here. Loewen Windows is hugely oriented towards export market in the United States. Kitchen Craft the same thing. But look at our transportation industry. Look at things like Standard Aero Engine. Again, Standard Aero was 400 employees a decade ago. I believe they are 1,400 today. The same thing is true of Flyer Industries. They were 400 in 1992, and there are now 1,450 employees. You look at Motor Coach Industries. Where are their major markets? They are all export markets and primarily the United States. Isobord, a new company, almost 80 percent of its production is committed to companies in the United States. Maple Leaf, a huge \$120-million investment, almost all of their production is going to the Asian market, export market and so on and so forth. Even our call centres like AT&T are

doing much of their work outside of our country. Bristol, Boeing, the New Holland plant and so on. Our garment industries, Gemini Fashions, Nygard industries, all oriented to export market.

That is why trade is so important to this province. That is why the position of this government is so important. They have to embrace free trade. They have to be absolutely committed to free trade to ensure that we can keep this growth going, because without free trade, without that opportunity, this province is in dire straits. Most of these companies that I have just referenced would either fold up their tents or move if they did not have the most open and free trading environment that we could allow for and that we could encourage. That is why the position of this government is very important, because we know that yesterday's NDP in this Legislature opposed the Free Trade Agreement. Yesterday's NDP spoke out against it, and although they are being very silent on all of these free trade issues right now, we can read a little bit between the lines.

I will tell you how you can read a little bit between the lines. Now, on the one hand, they sent their Minister of Industry, Trade and Mines (Ms. Mihychuk) to Seattle. Good move. I think that is a good move, because she needs to be there and she needs to learn all she can about how important trade is to our province. She needs to know that our future economic security depends on having the freest, most open trading environment that we can possibly be involved with as a nation and as a province. So I say that is a good thing that she is there.

But what is happening here? We have demonstrations at Portage and Main, by whom? The young New Democrats against free trade, against the World Trade Organization. Pick up today's paper and see what the article on the front page of the Free Press talks about. Who have they quoted in the WTO Seattle? Shirley Lord is down there as part of this organization that is opposed. Former president of the New Democratic Party of Manitoba, Shirley Lord. Now, who else? Rob Altemeyer, one of the heads of the Young Choices group whose parents are both founders of the Choices group in this province, anti free trade, strong New

Democrats, foundation supporters of the New Democratic Party of Manitoba, anti free traders.

That is a problem because you can say, well, we are not really opposed to free trade; it is the WTO that we are opposed to. But reality is that if it is not the WTO, you need an organization in place that is going to be the referee, that is going to gather together all of the nations and look at disputes and resolve differences and set the rules. You need rules, because if you do not have rules then what happens is that the biggest set the rules. They are arbitrary, they trade with you when they want, they cancel your trading when they want, and it is an impossible situation. You must have an organization, whether it is the WTO or something else that sets the rules, that enforces the rules and that arbitrates disputes. You must have that.

So here we have New Democrats from Manitoba opposed to the WTO and part of this whole movement there. I think that that is very, very short-sighted. I think that that is a great concern and I think that Manitobans ought to be concerned about it.

And why am I such a person who is committed to trade? Well, Mr. Speaker, Statistics Canada will tell you that for every \$1 billion that you increase your exports, you add 11,000 jobs. Our exports in this province have increased from \$3 billion in 1990 to now \$8 billion. That is 55,000 jobs that have been created in this province in that period of time, less than nine years, by trade. All of those companies that I talked about have been growing leaps and bounds and creating huge numbers of jobs by the thousands because of trade. That is why trade is important.

Trade is also important as a means of ensuring that we develop the developing countries, because people for decades, centuries have tried to remove these inequities and these disparities between countries and among countries of the world, you know, the developed world and the underdeveloped world, and they have done it with aid, and it does not work. They poured millions and millions and hundreds of millions and billions into these countries, and we know that there is a thin veneer of wealthy people in those countries, and we also know that

there are billions of people who live in abject poverty despite all of the billions of dollars of aid. But if you want to look at the countries that have lifted themselves up, like a Singapore or a Chile, that are just literally lifting themselves up by the bootstraps and creating a stronger and stronger economy and a middle class and a very healthy economy, ultimately, I might say, also embracing democracy as part of that process.

* (1620)

It is countries that are trading, it is countries that are opening up their markets, and it is countries that are creating these kinds of opportunities through trade to build their economies and to get them off being just simply recipients of handouts from the major corporations of the world.

So I might say there was no mention in the throne speech of trade either, none at all, and here is something so important in the long term to our province, and it is not even there. I think we can all take a look and use that as a segue into looking at how our province is different today than it was the last time they were in government, because I think this was a throne speech that was written by the same people who advised them when last they were in government.

This is yesterday's NDP throne speech, and this province is a very, very different place. This province is a province that is a can-do province. It is not a have-not province like they used to talk about when they were in government. They set up the member for Fort Rouge (Mr. Sale) in the Fair Share office with a budget of \$360,000, who had one job, to go to Ottawa and whine and complain for more money. That was their way of economic development. Well, we have changed that. We have changed it by making opportunities for people through trade, through investment, through changing the regulations of government, including getting rid of monopoly marketing for hogs and all of those kinds of things.

You can see it in the newspaper headlines in recent weeks. Our economy is flying high, said one in the Free Press on November 12. Word about Manitoba is spreading in Canada, said

another one in the Winnipeg Free Press. Jobs are the big draw in Manitoba, said another one. Economy luring new residents, keeping old ones, said another one. Those are the kinds of headlines that we are seeing as a result of the decade of change that we have made.

Mr. Speaker, all of the things that were important in the changes of this decade, in the changes of this—[interjection] When the members opposite get uncomfortable, they will do anything to stop me from speaking. This is taking it a pace further than we have had before.

An Honourable Member: As soon as the NDP take over, the lights go off.

Mr. Filmon: Mr. Speaker, I will try and carry on. I think I can carry on.

I think that members opposite have been enjoying themselves. They are liking their new surroundings. Even those veteran backbenchers who did not make it into cabinet still seem to be enjoying life more over there. But the fact of the matter is that there will be a time, there will be a time when they will have to start taking responsibility for their actions. I can tell them that they will be compared not to what is happening across Canada, but they will, to some degree, but they will be compared as well to all the things that they criticized when they were in opposition, all the things that we were able to do, Mr. Speaker.

I say to you that members on this side are very proud of the record of achievement that we have left. We reduced personal income taxes from 54 percent to, as of January 1, 47 percent of the federal rate. All of last year and the first nine months of this year, we had the lowest unemployment rate in Canada. We are experiencing this year the highest gross domestic product in the history of this province, the largest exports, by far the largest exports, in the history of this province. We have the most people employed in our history in this province, and they are earning more money than ever before in the history of our province: \$14 billion of wages and salaries.

There are some things that we share with the members opposite, and I refer to a few of them.

Their stand on child pornography is one. We certainly will work with them with respect to getting the federal government to accept its responsibilities in agriculture support programs.

In North Dakota, in the protection of our water supply, I have told the Premier personally and I say to you publicly that we will support their efforts to protect our water from pollution from our neighbours on any side. For me it is not an anti-American thing. It is a pro-Manitoban thing, and it would not matter whether the threat was from Saskatchewan, Ontario, the Northwest Territories or from North Dakota or Minnesota. We will protect our water supply and will do everything possible to protect that water supply.

This is a very different economy that we have left. It is an economy of opportunity that we are leaving for our colleagues opposite. As a result of a decade of change, financial services is the No. 1 contributor to our gross domestic product. Twenty percent of our GDP is financial services. Manufacturing—and there was a wonderful article in the magazine that was put out by the Manitoba Chamber of Commerce about the tremendous growth that we have made in manufacturing—a lot of that had to do with the policies of our administration and the encouragement for investment that we made. As a result of that, and the best part, I believe, of what we did, was to ensure that development took place everywhere in this province, not just in our capital city. We are committed to making this capital city the best it can be, but I say this, Mr. Speaker, that in order to have a healthy province, all parts of the province have to enjoy and participate in the development opportunities. We were committed to that and our record speaks for itself.

I have gone through before the kinds of pride that we feel in having world-class companies now here in our province, many of which began a generation ago as small family-owned companies. That includes the largest book printing company in Canada in Altona; the largest wood frame window manufacturing company in Canada in Steinbach; the largest potato processing operation in Canada in Portage la Prairie; the largest pork processing operation in Canada in Brandon; the largest centre of bus

manufacturing in all of North America, those two plants at Motor Coach and New Flyer; the largest life insurance company; the largest mutual fund company; the largest furniture manufacturing in Canada with Palliser Furniture; the largest ladies wear and ladies outerwear manufacturers, and the largest call centre in AT&T's call centre here.

All of these are primarily oriented to markets well beyond our borders. They need the opportunities for open access. They need the opportunities for better support from government towards ensuring that they keep their markets open, they keep their opportunities open, and that they have a government that is devoted to encouraging and creating and keeping a pro-business environment.

* (1630)

So, Mr. Speaker, we have been disappointed that so many of these key issues were left out of the throne speech, so many of the things that are vitally important to the future health and well-being of our people in this province beginning with their economic health and being able to parlay that economic health into ensuring that their public services remain solid and strong for them in the future, and so it is with regret that

I move, seconded by the honourable member for River East (Mrs. Mitchelson),

"THAT the Motion be amended by adding to it after the word 'Manitoba' the following words:

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Motion presented.

Mr. Speaker: The amendment is in order.

Hon. Steve Ashton (Minister of Highways and Government Services): Mr. Speaker, I have had the opportunity to speak on a few throne speeches in the past but never in this particular type of scenario. I certainly look forward to it as a challenge given the current situation in the Chamber.

I want, first of all, to put on the record my thanks to the people of the Thompson constituency for having the faith to elect me for my sixth term in this Legislature. I want to thank them, Mr. Speaker. You know, I was overwhelmed this election. This is the highest degree of support that I have ever received. I won every poll. You know, I do not judge elections strictly on that basis. In my first election, I won it by 72 votes. Quite frankly, that was probably the sweetest victory. As I look in the House, I would remind a few of the new members who won by similar margins—actually, where is the member for Assiniboia (Mr. Rondeau)? That was pretty close, I think, three votes. I would just remind people that I remember my first term I was nicknamed "Landslide" and told I would be a one-term MLA. I am still here, and I thank the people of Thompson for that.

I also want to particularly congratulate you, Mr. Speaker. I want to give away a bit of a secret here. This is sort of coming as a northern MLA. We have sort of a thing as northern MLAs. There are four of us, four and a half, five, if you include now the new boundaries, the member for Swan River (Ms. Wowchuk). Do you know I have always noticed that there are people actually on both sides who have spent time in the North on various different occasions? But with your roots clearly in the North, in fact, born in what is now Nunavut and having been raised in Churchill—I know, having known you personally in your years in Thompson—I just want to say how proud everybody in northern Manitoba is.

I had a chance to visit some of your former fellow employees with Limestone training, actually now with the Keewatin Community College, and I notice there seems to be sort of a new dawn in Manitoba as I speak here. I do not know, more light is being shone. I credit you because you had very tough competition in this first election of a Speaker by the members of this Legislature. I want to say how proud I am of your election. You will be a fine Speaker.

I really also want to put on the record, too, since it is probably my last opportunity to pay tribute to our Clerk of the Legislature, I actually was elected before our Clerk. Now, that kind of dates how long I have been in this Chamber. You know, it is not an easy job. The Clerk of this Legislature has to give advice on procedure, has to operate this Legislature. The Clerk often is in a position of not being able to respond or explain. It is a very difficult situation, but our Clerk, I would say, is one of the finest servants of any Legislature, not just in Manitoba but throughout the Commonwealth. I just cannot frankly imagine this Legislature without Binx Remnant in it. I know we are going to have a few more days of this, but I want to put on the record, on a personal basis, how much I appreciate the work that our Clerk has done. He is the epitome of public service, Mr. Speaker, and we should all thank the Clerk for his many years of valuable service.

I also want to welcome all the new members to this Legislature. I must say I sense a sort of the energy on both sides, certainly on our side with the new members that we have, with the

enthusiasm. I want to say on the record that I am extremely proud, too, of the fact that our government represents all areas of this province. For the first time in 11 years, all areas, urban, rural and northern, are represented in our caucus, and I say that speaks to our commitment as a party to speak for all Manitobans.

Mr. Conrad Santos, Deputy Speaker, in the Chair

I also want to say—and this is where I will get a little bit political, probably a little bit more political in a few minutes, but, you know, I think the comments by the former First Minister probably speak volumes as to why we are on this side of the House. I found it somewhat offensive, quite frankly, that the former First Minister would question the background of many of the members of this Legislature. He talked about taxpayers and tax consumers. I look on the other side, and I see many of the MLAs, returning members, new members, who spent their career in the public sector, presumably in that category of the tax consumers that the former Premier talked about.

I want to say that I particularly noticed that the only thing he could note was in terms of business experience. You know, I think it is important to have people with a business experience in this Legislature. We do have people on our side with business experience. But you know what? I think it is important that a government and a Legislature reflect all walks of life, both genders, all ethnocultural backgrounds. One of the things I am particularly proud of is that if you look at our caucus and our government, we reflect the diversity of this province. That is something we are proud of. We are not of one mold; we are representing all the people of this province.

I say that because I really believe after 11 years one of the difficulties with the government on the other side when they were in power is towards the end they forgot that. It is a real responsibility. It is an awesome responsibility to have to try and represent all Manitobans. We will obviously be involved in political differences in terms of debate on issues. But, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I would hope that we would think twice before we question the fact

that the people of Manitoba spoke during the election, and they voted for 57 MLAs. They made the judgment about their background, their experience, their political affiliation, and I trust in the judgment of the people of this province.

* (1640)

I want to sort of also respond to a few other things, because you know what I find interesting is—and I know I was one of the people mentioned earlier today in Question Period—the former Premier lecturing people on arrogance, the former Premier, after 11 years, lecturing people on arrogance. I was sort of one of the ones that was referenced, because I said—here is what it was. This was a terrible thing for me to have said. I said we have nothing to learn from the previous government when it comes to issues of the environment. I do not know how that could be perceived as arrogance. I could run through in detail their environmental record.

But I say to members opposite, and I say this having had the fortune of having been in government, then in opposition and then in government again. One of the first things is a certain degree of humility that should go with any election result. Believe you me, the first lesson in humility—we learned this is 1988 going from government to third party—is that when the people have spoken, you respect that decision. I suspect, in listening to the speech today and listening to some members opposite, not all, but many members opposite still cannot get over the fact that they are no longer in government. You know, they seem to have this idea that there is almost a divine right to govern here. This seems to have been a Conservative attitude for many years. I remember it was expressed by Sterling Lyon I think in many of his actions from 1977 to 1981.

But, you know, the people spoke. They spoke clearly. They gave us a mandate. We were very clear with the people of Manitoba what our mandate was. I say to members opposite that when you look at your new situation, one bit of advice, and that is a little bit of humility. I do not take the throne speech amendment, by the way, as necessarily being an indication of that. That is a traditional thing for all opposition parties to do. We certainly moved

nonconfidence motions on the throne speech. I do not think anybody in the province of Manitoba would expect this to pass after two months in government, but that is not what I am referencing.

I really do think that the Conservatives have to take a long, hard look at why the people of Manitoba elected one of the—I put this on the record, too, by the way. I forgot to mention this. This is, in fact, the largest majority government in this province since 1981. We received a majority that was greater than any of the majority received in the 11 years, the 4,167 days, as my colleague reminded me, that the Conservatives were in office.

I also now want to sort of move into some reflections on coming into office as a government. I want to put this on the record too. I expected some surprises, but this is ridiculous. Now, I could spend some time talking about some of the surprises I ran into as newly appointed Highways minister. I just want to put on the record the fact that I did not expect the previous government to have sent drivers' licence information to Elections Canada to have that information go lost—it has been lost, Mr. Deputy Speaker—and ended up in a situation where they did not tell the public. Yes, I did not quite expect that.

I also did not expect, and I referenced the humility before, the previous Minister of Highways, his defence was, No. 1, I was not the minister. Well, you know what, I was not the minister when this happened in June, but on behalf of my colleagues, I have ordered a complete and thorough security review and a legal review, and we have told Manitobans that that information went missing. That was the responsible thing to do. I mean, even the Premier said: I did not know. He said: If I had known I would have gone public.

I say, Mr. Deputy Speaker, this speaks to, I think, the rot that had sunk in with that government if they did not understand that 675,000 drivers' licence records went missing. They did not think it was important to speak out on that and let the public know, the public, by the way, most of whom did not even know that

happened. I think there was something wrong with that.

But, you know, nothing can compare to the surprise we received on the fiscal side. Now, let us put this in sort of perspective for a while, because the previous First Minister in his speech likes to play around somewhat loosely with the financial truth here, and I want to put on the record. This is, by the way, the first time that the former Premier, the current Leader of the Opposition (Mr. Filmon), recognized that in 1981 the NDP government at the time inherited what? A deficit. Now, what he leaves out, and this, by the way, can be vouched for by the Auditor, was what they did in 1988.

Now, we are coming in, and I will deal with this in a minute, basically inheriting not a surplus but a deficit. Now, in 1988, what did the Conservatives inherit when they came into office? What did they inherit? They inherited a surplus. What they then did is they took the surplus out of the funds, they set up the Fiscal Stabilization Fund, okay, so they could make it look like the NDP had left a deficit. In fact, if you were to check on what happened at that point in time, when the budget was released it appeared that there might be a deficit, but because of the boom in the economy, another thing the Conservatives inherited, a booming economy—nickel revenue, for example, was \$100 million-plus over the amount that was budgeted for. So they inherited surplus, and then they turn it into a deficit.

So notice the common factor here. You ended up with a Conservative government that left a deficit and an NDP government that left a surplus. Well, let us look at what has happened in Manitoba. Now we have an NDP government inheriting a fiscal situation from the Conservatives. Now, what have we inherited? Well, in their budget they said there would be a modest surplus. Now, were they over somewhat on their spending? I want to deal with this because there are some more details on this that I think put this in context, but I want to start right with, were they \$100 million over in terms of their spending?

Some Honourable Members: No.

Mr. Ashton: \$200 million?

Some Honourable Members: No.

Mr. Ashton: \$300 million perhaps?

Some Honourable Members: Getting there.

Mr. Ashton: Well, we are getting close, because they were \$325.2 million over in terms of additional, anticipated expenditures, \$325 million. Now, by the way, just keep that figure in mind for a moment, because when did a lot of that happen? I notice that the Tories have objected that this list of expenditures is somehow in the Deloitte Touche report as a wish list, you know, a Christmas wish list. Well, I tell you, it was Christmas in August for the previous government.

On the day before the election was called, they authorized \$91 million of additional expenditures, \$91-million worth of expenditures. So I want to put that in context, okay? In their budget that was brought in, I believe, in April, they had projected a small surplus. They then ran up the expenditures by \$325 million—that is in eight months—more than was budgeted. Three hundred and twenty-five million dollars.

Well, what did they say in the election? Now, I am just trying to picture this. Just put yourself back to Day One of the election. These supposed financial managers here, and I am going to get into that because we should look at their real record, they turned around and what do they do? They go into the first week and they started this house under construction. You know, it is kind of going back and forth. Then, the second week, the sort of political bombshell, they came out with a billion-dollar tax cut and expenditure program.

An Honourable Member: A billion?

Mr. Ashton: A billion.

An Honourable Member: Where is that billion dollars?

Mr. Ashton: What I find amazing is I actually had a lot of people talking about this at the door in the first week. Everybody wants lower taxes,

more expenditures. They want a balanced budget. Everybody wants everything that is possible. But we had taken a different approach. We had said the fiscally responsible thing to do is not to promise something you cannot deliver; it is to promise things you can deliver.

We were very specific. We costed our promises out in terms of health and education. We dealt in terms of Manitoba Hydro. We dealt with the bottom line reality of what it was going to be like to be in a government based on the financial information we had available to us. I remember, there were some at the time that questioned it. I remember John Loxley, and, of course, they would say, well, you know, he is a left-wing economist. You know what? I am an economist by background, and I suppose being a member of the New Democratic Party you pretty well know my position on the political spectrum, and I am proud of that. But you know what? I also know something about numbers. So does John Loxley. But Gary Filmon, the Premier at the time, said: it does not surprise me that people on the left have difficulty understanding the numbers. So the first defence was shoot the messenger. Well, Deloitte and Touche, I do not think, would be considered on the left.

* (1650)

But, you know, I do not know if I should read this on the record. I thank the member for Brandon West (Mr. Smith) for providing me with this because when I read this in the Free Press today, I just thought this was just the ultimate: "Wall Street rating service gives thumbs up to NDP." Now, what are they referring to? I want to deal with this here. Powerful Wall Street bond-rating agency, which is Moody's, has maintained Manitoba's Aa3 debt rating, okay? Now, I do not think we are known as having a lot of connections on Wall Street. We certainly respect the role of the financial community, but I want to read what they said because this is even more interesting.

"Moody's criticized the Tories for going on a post-budget spending spree that the rating service believes will force the province into running a deficit." And I quote—and I want this noted, and if this could be inserted into Hansard it would be appreciated—because this is not me

speaking; this is not John Loxley speaking; this is not our Minister of Finance; this is Moody's Investors Service. "Expenditure commitments of the previous government have derailed the budget balance in the near term." A direct quote from the report.

It went on to say that "Moody's believes the NDP will get the black ink flowing again." And I quote: "Going forward, the new government has articulated policies for restoring favourable budgetary performance."

Now, who would have thunk it? I mean, who would have thought that we would be standing here, after the election—I do not know if I would have thought I would be standing here—citing Moody's, pointing to the obvious fact that the previous government went on a pre-election spending spree that put the finances of this province in jeopardy?

Now, I just want to go a little bit further because if anybody on that side believes that the Conservatives had control on what was going on in terms of the budgets and expenditures of this province and if they do not believe that the \$325-million worth of additional expenditures is a factor, I am going to ask this question, and I particularly want to direct this to some of the new members who perhaps did not realize this when they signed up for this party, to run for them. I mean, they were told about their fiscal responsibility. Revenue since 1995-96 has grown about 6.8 percent. What has expenditure grown at? Same rate? A little bit higher? Spending since 1995-96 has grown at 12 percent.

This previous government set the seeds in place for what we saw in the Moody's report basically from '95-96 on. I think we have to put it in context, because what we have always argued is that the previous government operates on election-driven cycles. Okay. You go back to Sterling Lyon, that is what happened then. Cuts, first year. Cut, the second year. Cut, the third year. Spend like crazy in the fourth year. Now, let us go back to 1995, and by the way, to members opposite, when I hear all these pious words about balanced budget legislation from the former First Minister, I just want to put that in context too, because they have been getting

away, I think, with this argument for far too long. It is time to get the reality of what happened under that government.

In 1998, as I mentioned, they turned a surplus into a deficit. What did they do in '88-89? They ran a deficit; '89-90, they ran a deficit; '90-91, they ran a deficit; '91-92, they ran a deficit; '92-93, boy, did they run a deficit. The largest deficit in Manitoba history. The only way they were able to reduce the number was to draw on the Fiscal Stabilization Fund. Remember, they took the NDP-year surplus, and they dumped it off into that. I do not think members running for the Conservative Party this time even knew that.

Now, what was their strategy to get out of this? Basically what they did, the first part of it, was VLT revenue. Now, this is real sound management, right? What you do is you put VLTs in rural Manitoba. You say it is for economic development. You say, wow, it is producing a lot of money. So you greatly expand it. So I want people to keep that in mind, first thing they did. Now, in 1995 they brought in the balanced budget before the election, balanced budget legislation. They said: we are going to have balanced budgets. You know what they did? There are two things that happened after the election as part of living up to this campaign promise in terms of that side, one of which involved breaking a campaign promise.

The first thing they did is they froze the personal care home construction. They froze it. You remember hallway medicine? I say you remember hallway medicine because we are working day in and day out to make sure that is part of the history of Manitoba, that we can eliminate hallway medicine. What they did, you know, when you have personal care home construction delayed, what happens? It means those people who should be in personal care beds end up in our hospital system. So our hospital system gets backed up. That is why we ended up with hallway medicine. It is as simple as that.

Now, that was the first strategy. Now, is this fiscal management here? You know, the second one was to sell off MTS. You know what is appalling about the sale of MTS—

An Honourable Member: Everything.

Mr. Ashton: The member for Brandon West (Mr. Smith), who is probably here today because of in large part issues such as the sale of MTS, not only did we not get the chance as the people of Manitoba to vote on it, but you know what, they then took the money and they essentially dumped it into the Fiscal Stabilization Fund, and they spent it in three years—three years. So I want you to keep these threads together, because I am going to try and put together once we get these threads together what the real plan of the Conservative government was.

I have two views of this. One is that they were incompetent and they did not know what was going on. I know the former member for Brandon West, who I respect, said he did not know there was going to be a deficit. He is quoted in the Brandon Sun. I have the clipping here. He just was out there to spend money on education. He did not know that. I want you to put these together, because essentially the economic plan of the Conservative Party was as follows: '90-95, it would be like—and on in terms of MTS.

I would suggest if you want to follow the parallel, what you would do as an individual citizen is you would sell your house and you would spend all the proceeds on lottery tickets, hope you get lucky, because what they did is they sold off one of our prime assets, MTS, and they spent what took more than 90 years to build in three years. I mean, any homeowner who went and sold their house tomorrow and spent all the proceeds in three years, they will have a good three years. It is not sound financial management. It is insanity. So we have seen those threats with the Conservative government.

I started, if you remember, with the election campaign trying to sort of get from them where they were headed. Now, they promised anything and everything. It was a promise a day. Let me think, I almost lost track of the different tax breaks. Now, the government that had been in for 11 years all of a sudden had discovered they were going to do something on stay-at-home parents, the education support levy, income tax. You name it, they were going to do something about it. Now, I have news for the members

opposite. People just did not believe them. Everybody I talked to said if this was so important, where were they for the 11 years? Where were they during their budget? But they promised like crazy. Then the obvious question came up. Where were they going to get this billion dollars? Well, the numbers did not add up. There had to be another factor.

Well, you know, I think we are now starting to see they would have done two things. Let us start with the first, because what I find ironic is now we are dealing with this situation. The first reaction of the members opposite is to say, well, you know, you do not have to run a deficit this year. I mean, I almost find it ironic here. It would be like inviting people over to a party, having them wreck the place and then having them come back the next day and demand you clean it up. I mean, they created this mess. In eight months, basically they increased expenditures by \$325 million, but, no, no, the former Minister of Finance and the previous Minister of Finance and the former Premier said, well, but we could get out of this. We can freeze capital works.

* (1700)

Well, let us deal with that, for example. Okay, let us start on that. Now, in the following years you presumably could do that. At the beginning of a fiscal year, you have fiscal plans. That is what they did in '95. Personal care homes. Now, was that really the plan here then? To get elected and as soon as they were elected, turn around and say, oh, we did not know there was a deficit. Oh, darn, we have to freeze capital expenditures. Because you cannot do it the rainy four months of the year.

I want to give you an example, as the Minister of Highways. Guess what? The Highways construction budget is spent. There is not even any lapse this year because we have had good weather. Now, I suppose, I will tell you what we could do. We could stop winter maintenance on the highways. That may not be a problem with the current weather, but I will tell you the first blizzard that comes, you have to spend it. What else are we going to do? Are we going to shut down our schools in the next four months, six months? Hospitals? [interjection]

Sell them. Sell them to the highest bidder, as the Minister for Education (Mr. Caldwell) said. But you know, the reality is anybody on that side who expects the people of Manitoba to believe that you can run up \$325-million worth of extra expenditures the first eight months and then magically balance the budget in the remaining four months is a fool. That is not sound fiscal practice. It is not possible, and the members opposite should know that.

I want to go one step further because you know the only way they could access money would be the Fiscal Stabilization Fund. I want to deal with that because you know what I find amazing with the Fiscal Stabilization Fund—by the way, when we were in opposition, we supported the establishment of the fund. The Liberals did not.

An Honourable Member: Is there anything left?

Mr. Ashton: Well, let us deal with that because I think we will see in this particular case what the other dimension of the fiscal incompetence of this previous government was. The Fiscal Stabilization Fund has a set target level. You know what they did in the last budget? This was a surprise to a lot of people. They drained the fund for this fiscal year. They drained the fund and they went below the target level. Now how much is left in the Fiscal Stabilization Fund?

An Honourable Member: Did they go a little bit below?

Mr. Ashton: Did they go a little bit? They went significantly below. So what they did, you know, that savings fund that we all talk about, they had already drained it to get the supposed balanced budget they were going to bring in. If they were to use that fund now to even deal with the low end of the estimates of the deficit, they would have to spend all of it. I want to put that in context. That would have meant spending the entire thing in one year, and this is when we are at the top of the business cycle. I mean, what lunacy. The argument for the Fiscal Stabilization Fund is it should be there for a rainy day.

An Honourable Member: For emergencies.

Mr. Ashton: It was there for emergencies. The member for Brandon West (Mr. Smith) was quite correct. It was there during a recession to buffer lost revenue because of the recession. What these incompetent fiscal managers did is they used it when it was a rainy day for them politically, and they drained it in the first part of this year. They flushed the money through on MTS the last three years. They spent all that money, and now they come back with oh, you could run a balanced budget. What do we do next year, and the year after, and the year after that? What do we do if we follow that.

But I have not gotten to the big agenda, I think. I think it is absolutely clear the first thing that would have happened is, and I mention this, cutting capital, it would not happen this year. Next year they would have cut both personal care homes. You know that Oakbank personal care home? You know, by the way, I get a real kick out of this because—

An Honourable Member: I do not know about the Oakbank.

Mr. Ashton: Oakbank? This is the one that was announced and cut, and announced and cut, and announced and cut I do not know how many times. They were doing the same thing in Thompson. We have been fighting to get a personal care home for years. They announced a feasibility study and the minister said, and I can pretty well quote because this is what the mayor told me, but he could see this being built in the year 2000. He could see it being built, and the mayor sort of assumed, hey, it was like a cheque that you could cash and put in the bank, but you know what? I turned to him and said, do you remember Oakbank? He said, yes, I remember about that. I said, you know with Tories promising personal care home construction, until it is built and it is open you just do not believe them.

Let us go one step further because \$1 billion, where else would you find \$1 billion? Now, let us take some of the elements of their financial management strategy here and I mention you sell off assets. They sold off MTS. They spent it in three years, so what are they doing now? What would they have done if they were in government? Where would they find \$1

billion? MTS was a fairly significant value, but what would be more valuable? What asset that the government holds would be more valuable? Manitoba Hydro.

You know what I love, by the way? I knew we were going to win the election when Gary Filmon—and I want to thank you for this—the Leader of the Opposition, he came and he canvassed in Thompson. It was kind of like an Elvis sighting. I was going around Spoonbill, which is on Westwood near where I live in Thompson, and people were saying there was a sighting of the Premier. There was this whole team of people around. This guy actually saw me and he said, Steve, how come you are canvassing by yourself? I must admit I said, I do not need a bodyguard. But he was going around, and I did not find out about this exchange because I went in shortly afterwards, but I sat down with a senior citizen, a couple actually on Riverside, and we were sitting down. I have known this family for a long time. I can tell you that I visit all of my constituents whether they vote for me or not, but I never expected to get support from this particular family because I know they are strong Conservatives. I sit down, and I know I am going to get the sort of maybe Steve you are doing this, that and the other, but we cannot vote for you.

So I am sitting at the table. It is a good thing I was sitting because when I heard what followed next the gentleman says to me I used to be an active Conservative. I used to drive the Conservative candidate around. He said: you know I ran into the Premier on Partridge that Saturday afternoon, and I went up to him and I said, you know what? You are the guy that sold off MTS. He said: how do I know you are not going to sell off Hydro? So apparently the Premier turned around, you remember he repeated this on the news? He would say I have no plans so long as I am Premier to sell off Manitoba Hydro. By the way, I kept thinking of what he used to say about MTS. You know what the senior said? Aha, you are going to get elected, you are going to quit. The next Conservative is going to sell it off.

No one believed him, because where else would you get \$1 billion? I tell you, where else would you get multiple billion dollars? Because

if you look, if you can mentally track what has happened with this government in their fiscal incompetence. They have got themselves in a situation right now where they nearly killed our health care system, and then they were trying to pump, pump, pump money back in at the last minute to save it. I mean, you could only get it by selling a major asset.

Now, maybe you think we are getting a little bit paranoid, okay. But, you know, think about this for a moment because what amazes me with this party is talk about the balanced budget legislation for a moment. We moved an amendment to that legislation that would have stopped using the proceeds of the sale of a Crown corporation from being dumped in and considered as somehow creating a balanced budget. You know what? They voted it down. I guess it should have foretold what was going to happen a short time afterwards.

You notice when it came to Manitoba Hydro, all we got was empty words, okay. They never once agreed to our proposal to have a referendum on the sale of any major Crown corporation. They never included this in the balanced budget legislation. It was clearly a part of their strategy. The sad part is they got three years out of MTS. They might have got five or six years out of Manitoba Hydro. But that is no way to run a province. You do not sell your house off. You do not go in and use the proceeds for living expenses.

An Honourable Member: You live within your means.

* (1710)

Mr. Ashton: You live within your means, the member for Brandon West (Mr. Smith) said.

I want to get to the root of just how incompetent this government was, because I think we finally have to put on the record after 11 years the mess they left in this province. I want to focus in on health care for a moment, because if you read Deloitte and Touche, I think it is important to recognize the source of a lot of what is happening in terms of why there is this overexpenditure and some of the root causes of this.

I am going to quote from it: Province of Manitoba financial review, November 17, 1999. I mentioned the overexpenditures. I just want to run through where a lot of these costs are coming from because, once again, it shows how there was no plan and that there were root structural problems with the way in which they dealt with our health care system. Manitoba Health, the Estimates were distributed in April of this year. The variances over the Estimates by November 17 were \$189.7 million. I want to deal with this. Deficits of the regional health authorities created by the Tories in their own image, \$73.5 million; other expenditures \$63.2 million, wage settlements; MMA \$16.2 million, the arbitration; Pharmacare \$10.8 million, \$9.4 million. Now, pardon me, one item that is the responsibility of the NDP campaign promise, \$10 million and \$6.6 million. Out of \$190.7-million overrun, \$179.7 million directly the result of that government.

I want to focus on one area that shows the degree to which they were out of touch with the financial realities and with the need for proper service. The regional health authorities. They set up regional health authorities that were not elected, were not accountable. There is some good work being done by some RHAs. But, you know, that is why we have this huge deficit. What you did is you cut our health care system, you cut it to the bone, and you desperately tried in the remaining few weeks and months of your mandate to change that.

I want to say, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that is not good enough. If we are going to have a sustainable, universally accessible health care system, we have to get back to the original vision of health care in this country, a vision pioneered by the CCF and the NDP and Tommy Douglas, in particular, someone who I am very, very proud of. I want to say it has to be based on long-term planning. It has to be based on patient care, not administration. I want to say that this government, the previous government, nearly ran our health care system into the ground.

We accept the responsibility and we accept the difficult time ahead in terms of our own fiscal circumstances because in the same spirit of Tommy Douglas who, in 1944, inherited a

virtually bankrupt province and built one of the best medicare systems not only in Canada, but the forerunner of one of the best medical systems in the country. We believe we can do it. We believe we can do it with the strength of all this province. Our vision going into the next century is a province that extends from the U.S. border to the 60th Parallel and beyond with our connections with our friends in Nunavut. Our vision is for a revitalized health care system. Our vision is for public education, a reinforced, reinvested commitment to public education. Our vision is economic development that will benefit all our citizens, including First Nations people and many of the people left out by this government.

Our vision is summed up, Mr. Deputy Speaker, by the fact we are an inclusive caucus, and we are a caucus that has a clear vision that was probably best expressed by J.S. Woodsworth, the founder of our movement: what we desire for ourselves, we wish for all. That is our guiding vision, and we are going to be working for all Manitobans as a government over the next four years and beyond.

Mrs. Joy Smith (Fort Garry): It is my first time that I can address the House, and it is just a pleasure to be here today. I want to congratulate first of all Mr. Speaker, who has the honourable position, the highest office in the House. I know this is my first experience in the Legislature but I understand that by the election from all his peers he was elected and he is in the office now. I am very pleased to congratulate him. I would also like to congratulate the Deputy Speaker, Mr. Santos. I can tell Mr. Santos that you can fill in and accomplish the job very competently, and it is an honour to work with you as well. Thank you.

I want to welcome especially to the Legislature the pages. I noticed two of them were from Fort Garry. I am just so pleased. I have noticed that they are just so competent. They are up on their feet every time somebody calls. They have just done amazing things running back and forth distributing brochures and papers and getting things. It is a big job just to keep track of all this, is it not. So I want to welcome you, and I am hoping that this will be a wonderful experience for you. Some of us are

new here too, and so we are just catching on to the ropes. It is a pleasure to start out here with you.

I want to also welcome my new colleagues first of all, the new people who have been elected here to the House. I know what it is like to go through an election, and I know what it is like to learn about all the new things that are going around. Especially you, Mr. Rondeau, I know I have seen you quite a few times, because we had a very close election. I just welcome all of you here. I know what it took to get here, and I know the MLAs who are in this House are all people who are community minded, are all people who care very, very much about what is happening in Manitoba. I would absolutely give you that. I know we are on different sides of the House because our policies and our beliefs often come in some conflict, but I also know that in your heart of hearts you are here because you want to make a difference. I know I am here for the same reasons.

I look forward to spending our time together. I know that there will be some days when we are hot on the trot, and we are going to be on opposite sides of issues. I know that is going to happen more than I can count right now, but I am very, very pleased, ladies and gentlemen, that we are here and we live in a democratic society where governments can come together, where parties can come together and they can dialogue, they can talk about democracy, they can voice their opinions. We can voice our opinions, and that is why I hold what I am doing here in this House so dear to my heart.

I have been in countries, I remember being in a country where I had to fly in and go through very, very stringent kinds of things to even get into the country. I know that was in the country of Israel, where we tried to get in and see the country. I was so grateful coming back. As much as I love Israel, it is a beautiful country, but coming back to Canada we have our freedom, we can voice our opinions, we can move forward. This is something that we all should hold dear as MLAs here in this country. So having said that, this is something that I have always taken a lot of pride in, to be able to stand up and to be able to make decisions.

So I want to begin to tell you why I am here, and I want to take special time to thank the former MLA, Mrs. Rosemary Vodrey. Mrs. Vodrey spent the better part of 10 years serving the constituents in Fort Garry. It was an honour to work with her and to help her along the way and to work side by side in my community, and now it is great that I have the opportunity to carry on.

I want to tell you a little bit about the Fort Garry constituency. The Fort Garry constituency, to my way of thinking, really reflects the kind of people that are community minded, the kind of people that keep up with the daily issues, the kind of people that are very community minded, care very much about what is happening in our schools, in our businesses, all across the country. They are very knowledgeable people. They are very mindful about the world events that are happening, and they care about what happens, particularly in their own community.

I have seen that community grow and expand. One thing you should know about Fort Garry is it has third and fourth generation Fort Garryites living in that community. My husband's family moved to Fort Garry when he was two years old, and they have been there for 46 years. We raised our six kids in Fort Garry, so we hear when we go to the school reunions, when we go out to Safeway to shop, we hear a lot of our neighbours coming up to us and saying: hey, did you know so and so has moved back to Fort Garry, because it is the best place to live. It is like a '50s neighbourhood with people who know what is going on but they also know the price of tomatoes, so they are very down to earth, very realistic.

* (1720)

I am very, very proud to be a Fort Garryite because it has a sense of roots. It has a sense of history. The people in Fort Garry communicate with one another. They also reach out into the broader community. They think in a global way. They think about North America. They think about the Asian countries. They reach far into the corners of the world, and that is because many businesses are there that have to reach into the corners of the world. We have many

scholars there because we have our university very, very close to my constituency boundaries. A lot of the professors who work at the university live in my constituency, and they are very learned in their ways of digging out facts, and the philosophers. We have a very scholarly kind of mix of people. We also have a huge variety of people that come from all walks of life, people who work with their hands, people who run restaurants, people who are waitresses, people who just come from all walks of life.

I do not think there is a constituency where you will find a bigger mix of people. The good thing about it is that the community centres, the churches and the flavour of Fort Garry just intermingles with the kind of cultural society we have in Canada. So we have people from all walks of life, people from all cultures living in a community that is very caring, very hopeful of the future, very mindful of their next door neighbour. So together we are able to reach out, ask questions and really promote the kinds of things that Canadians throughout the ages have stood for, and that is the democratic society that we live in, the right to voice our opinions, the right to promote our ideas, the right to dialogue, the right to debate. Those are the kinds of things that I hold dear as an MLA. I am very, very proud to be able to represent a constituency that also holds that democratic society dear.

I want to talk a little bit about the changing of the boundaries, because this year we had a huge change in our constituency. My next door neighbour is John Loewen, and Fort Garry was cut almost in half, you might say. Waverley cuts like a ribbon through the two constituencies, and I have to tell you that my colleague John Loewen and I work closely in our constituencies. I am very proud that he is my next-door neighbour.

I also must say that Louise Dacquay is to the south of me in Seine River, and I am very pleased to work with her. I often ask for her counsel and advice, and I know that our constituencies are very neighbourly. We also have Marcel Laurendeau—[interjection] The honourable member for St. Norbert, Marcel Laurendeau, my apologies. I should have referred to him as constituency member. But we are all members in the south part of Winnipeg

and so we neighbour back and forth, our constituents neighbour back and forth, and I think it is very important that we have this sense of community.

Here, going into the millennium, often communities do not have the rich heritage of having a sense of community, and all of us have that. We are able to pick up the phone. We are able to discuss things. We meet each other on the streets. We meet each other in the stores, in Safeway or wherever we are at, and it is a sense of we belong to southern Fort Garry, we belong to Manitoba, we belong to Canada. So we definitely are united in that way, and I have to say that this has been very beneficial to us as people living in that area, very beneficial to the MLAs. We as MLAs have a camaraderie there that I think is second to none.

I want to tell you a little bit about my family background because when we talk about the agricultural situation here in the House, I can definitely relate to it because I grew up in rural Manitoba in a little place called Wakopa. It is in between Killarney and Boissevain. Most people have not heard of it. It is at the base of the big Turtle Mountain. It was a wonderful place to grow up.

I came from a poor family, and we really learned how to appreciate everything that we had. As I grew up, I appreciated the countryside, I appreciated the farm life, and I also got a sense of why Canada is the great nation it is. The pioneer spirit was out there at this little place in Wakopa, because I am at an age right now where I can remember when the roads were blocked and we were not able to get out. We had to call our neighbours and they would hitch up some horses and they would help us all out to get to the town of Killarney, and we lived through that. I went to a one-room schoolhouse, and we had K to 8 in that one-room schoolhouse. Those are things that I treasure very much because we used to have baseball games with the neighbouring schools, and we used to do all sorts of different things.

We had a sense of community, and I think that we also had a very high standard in terms of our schooling because the academic side of it was regarded as something that we needed to

pursue. We needed to reach the very best, the highest achievement that we could, and so out in that small community began the first kinds of thoughts I had as a child about the democratic and patriotic kind of sense that I grew to develop as an adult.

I also had a dad who fought in the Second World War, and he was very, very dogmatic and very stern when it came to Canada. He said Canada was the best place to live in. We had a flag on our mailbox, and he carried a flag in his car, Mr. Deputy Speaker, all the time that I was growing up. He continued to do that until his death last year of cancer.

So we grew to be very patriotic Canadians. We learned about the prime ministers, we learned about democracy, and then my dad would tell me war stories about the countries he was in where democracy was being fought for. That kind of background gives you a real sense of appreciation for what we have here.

You know, there are times when we say we do not like this, we do not like that, but we live, I believe, ladies and gentlemen, in the best country in the world. I think we live in the best province in the world. Manitoba is situated right in the centre of Canada. There is a spot just off Lagimodiere that is actually the official centre of Canada. I think, ladies and gentlemen, that we were in this place and this time right now because this is our destiny to be here. The farm roots that we have here in our House and the people who have grown up in Manitoba have a keen, keen sense of what it is like to be free, a keen, keen sense of what it is like to be able to develop as a country and as a province. I think that started from my family roots personally.

I know when we were sitting around the dinner table at night, often we would talk about our country. We would often talk about the kinds of things that were going on both in the U.S. and in Canada. I think that is because my grandfather's brother was a senator in the U.S., and I think because of that, we had a lot of dialogue about politics and a lot of dialogue about the country growth and the need to develop our country. So as a very small child that was my paradigm. That was the way I thought. I had two brothers and three other

sisters. We lost one brother to an accident and the other brother passed away of heart disease, but we always continued to be very bonded as a family. I think that bonding as a family helped me later on to better understand and appreciate what it is like to be a Canadian family. So having said that, when I moved into Winnipeg and began my schooling and all these kinds of things that I was about to do in the future, I had a grounding that would set the stage, as it were, for my destiny to be in here, as everybody's is today that are elected MLAs in this House.

So coming to this point in time is an honour and a privilege when I think back about the upbringing I had as a Manitoban in rural Manitoba. Having come to Winnipeg, I began to understand new kinds of things, because I went to university and then I went and studied a lot about leadership and what effective leadership was. I got a lot of that through my teaching experience. I taught public school for 22 years. In that, I began to understand about leadership, because public school not only centred on teaching in the classroom; it centred on teaching in the community. It centred on getting involved in all sorts of aspects. I began to take a leadership role in many different kinds of ways. I think that is why I am here today, because I began to understand the importance of being a true leader.

* (1730)

You know, I have looked around this House, I have looked around at my colleagues as I was teaching, I have looked around at the kinds of things that have happened here in Manitoba, and I have come to some very decisive ideas about leadership. We as MLAs here today are positional leaders because of our position. We are elected MLAs. I want to thank personally the constituents of Fort Garry for electing me. I consider it an honour and a privilege to be here to represent them.

Now I think that my leadership has to continue on. As I look in the House today, I am better understanding my view of the kinds of leadership that I want to see here in Manitoba, because as a teacher and as a professional person I had opportunity to experience different types of leadership. As a small business owner, ladies

and gentlemen, I also saw a different kind of leadership. So we have certain characteristics. I want to tell you about those characteristics that I believe are so important to being a leader.

Mr. Speaker in the Chair

The first level of leadership I mentioned a few minutes ago. That is your position. You can be an MLA, you are a positional leader. That does not make you a leader. It is a positional leadership. If you are a banker, if you are a teacher, whatever you are, whatever your title is or your position is—a mom at home, that is a leader, or a dad at home, that is a leader because of your title. It is called positional leadership.

But, you know, research in the U.S. and Canada has indicated that leadership goes through at least five stages. At the second level of leadership, I am going to call it the progressing development of leadership. You have to go to the second level of leadership. That second level is what I call the win-win stage. It is building relationships. You can have relationships with other MLAs. You can have relationships with your constituents. As a teacher, you have relationships with your students. But it is building win-win relationships. So you see, Mr. Speaker, those kinds of relationships begin to develop us as leaders here in the House. We are building relationships across the House with different members of our peers. We are building relationships in our caucuses. We are building relationships in our communities. When we start to do that, I believe that we are going to the second level of leadership.

One of the reasons I went in to become MLA was the exemplary leadership I saw in our leader, Gary Filmon. I thought that he epitomized the kinds of leadership characteristics that I would see. Mr. Filmon is very, very good at building those kinds of networks.

At the third level of leadership, going to the third level of leadership is where we produce results, productivity. Many people call themselves leaders. They say I am the leader of this or I am the leader of that, but they are not actually leaders until they produce results. That

is the third level of leadership. You know, you should look behind you. Anyone who thinks they are a leader, if they say they are a leader, look behind you. If you do not have anyone behind or beside you, you are only taking a walk. So it is my belief that here in the House it is very important that I as an MLA and we as MLAs understand the concept of leadership. When we start to produce results that really reflect in a very, very positive way on Manitobans and for our constituents, then we are really exemplifying the leadership.

The fourth level of leadership is something that is all hard for leaders to do, and this whole House is filled with leaders. That is having the wisdom to share leadership with others and to take advice as was talked about a little earlier, Mr. Speaker, when we were talking about the throne speech. It is sharing the leadership with others, taking advice, helping each other out. That is the fourth level of leadership. So if we go through those four levels, then we can be assured that what we start to do will produce results, and not only that, will expand, because, after producing results, we will have the wisdom to reach out and to connect and to cause that leadership to exemplify itself by sharing with one another and spreading out like a network.

The fifth level of leadership, it is my belief, is your track record. So we will know that of all of us in the next five to 10 to 15 years. Our constituents and our fellow MLAs will be judging us on our track record, and that is really something that you gather. It is an historical thing. When we look back on the kinds of things that we have had develop here in Manitoba and in Canada since our forefathers first came to this great country, we can see the type of leadership that was intrinsic talent inside of people. We have seen it in many, many walks of life. We have seen it, not only in our political leaders, but in our business leaders. We have seen it in our humanitarians. We have seen it in our school-teachers. We have been it in every walk of life in Manitoba.

I think that understanding of leadership is crucial to what we are going to be doing here in this House.

I have to tell you a little bit about my teaching experience because that was the thing that greatly influenced me all my life. I have to tell you what it is like to stand in front of a classroom of children and grow to love them as much as you love your own children because you deal with them on a daily basis. And I have to tell you what it is like when you develop children and help them when they are having difficulties. When you see the truly very able, very gifted children that you know that you have to program for and you have to work for, it teaches you to wear a lot of different hats.

You know, as a teacher you see all sorts of different households, you see all sorts of different kinds of social, economic situations, and you begin to realize that every single person in front of those children makes a difference. That has influenced me a lot, because I know that every single MLA in this House will make a difference to the people's lives that they represent. The thing of it is to make a very positive difference that will cause them to grow, cause them to expand. As a teacher, that is something that I prided myself in.

I am mindful of a story about a student that I taught. I have to share this with the House because I have his permission to share it. I will not give you the name but we shall call him Jason. Jason was an unruly child in Grade 1. I had to teach him in Grade 1, and he was all over the place, but I loved Jason. He never did anything right. He never had his shoelaces done up and he never really was very popular with all the teachers or half the students, because he was always getting into some mischief. Then I taught him again in Grade 3. I remember sitting in the staff meeting and doing the class lists and everybody wondering about Jason, who was going to take Jason. So I taught Grade 3 a couple of years later and I said, please, can I have Jason? So I got Jason again and I grew to work with him and work with his family. Jason did not change much. He was into everything. But there was something about Jason. This boy had a spark, and I know many people got so frustrated, and he had failing marks. He did not reach the 50 percent mark, but there was something about this child that was wonderful.

So I continued on, and he went on to the upper grades, and then in Grade 6 my husband got Jason. Jason had the same modus operandi. He was full of vim, vigour and vitality. He never did very well academically, but there was something about Jason. He could really think. He could really analyze. He could really manipulate. This kid taught us a lot.

* (1740)

Well, in Grade 6 one day we discovered that, my husband noticed that Jason kept coming to school every day with the very same clothes on. Now, we had grown to know his family very well. He came from a wonderful family. We just loved them. But Jason, for whatever reason, decided that he was going to run away from home, and we found him on the top of the school that we were teaching in at that time. He had set up shop, he had run away from home, and he was a very smart boy.

This was December. That was not very smart. But he situated himself beside a heating vent and he had a little tent and he had his sister bringing him food on a daily basis. So Jason was prepared to stay there till the end of Grade 6.

Well, I will never forget the night in December before Christmas when I climbed the ladder to the top of this school and visited Jason and said, Jason, I am sorry, it is time to come down from the school. I could not believe what I was seeing. So we brought him down and eventually he got back with his family. He also lived with another family for a while, but we had a sense of community in that school. So we could never get rid of Jason because this boy just had something about him. I saw some leadership. I saw some things in him that really it was a God-given gift. Even though he did not reach academically the heights that we thought he should, Jason was very creative and Jason had an answer for absolutely everything. But he also was a survivor.

To make a long story short, I kept on with Jason. We kept in contact with Jason. He finally reached Senior 4 and graduated with honours. Then he went into his university. He eventually got a master's degree and he

eventually got into the Navy. I remember early in his 20s Jason was the captain of a submarine. He was in B.C. driving submarines, or navigating submarines through the Straits of Juan de Fuca. So from there, now I must tell you, ladies and gentlemen, that the same boy is now studying to be a surgeon in a very prestigious medical school. I am telling you this story because my theme today as I talk to you is leadership. You know, leaders come from the most unlikely places.

Back in Grade 1, I would never have thought that we would have this child or this young man, who wants to be a heart surgeon, and I am sure he will be—he is becoming that right now—but I learned how to appreciate the talents and the leadership in each and every person and to understand more what leadership was all about. I wish we could can it and sit on the can, but it does not seem that likely that we will be able to do it, because what I am telling you is that some people have talent and leadership talent intrinsically, like the people who are here in this House today. For you to be elected as MLAs, that talent is here. But the other reason I need to tell you about that is sometimes, when that leadership does not come to the forefront, we can develop it. As a teacher, I learned that. I think, in fact, I know it can be developed in all of us.

Having said that, when I was teaching I paid special attention to the new reforms that were coming in. I paid special attention to the accountability in the schools, and as a teacher I was delighted to see this happen. I paid strict attention to what was going on because in my mind I knew that our Canadian students had to become the best in the world. They had to achieve as best they could.

So I became very involved with the Conservative Party because that was part of how I was developing as a person. I wanted to see the accountability. I wanted to see new curriculums. I wanted to see the high academic standard. I started to discover a lot of other things that were happening that excited me. I became more and more involved in the political field. I became more and more involved in communities. As a teacher also, I became very involved in the parental involvement movement

that was happening, not only all across Canada but here in Manitoba. I found that the parents were our greatest natural resource when it came to the schools. So when I came to work with Manitoba Education and Training in charge of the parental and community involvement initiative, I was very, very pleased to see that parental involvement, working in partnership with the schools and the teachers. I know when the Advisory Council for School Leadership legislation came in I was delighted because then parents had a choice. They could either organize in a structured way, or they could organize just as any council they wanted to become. The emphasis on parental involvement gave a lot of credibility to the role that parents play in the educational system.

Having said that, with the teachers I was also very interested in the kinds of things that were happening on the economic level in our province. I was very proud when balanced budget legislation came into our province, because I knew with this planning that we would be able to grow as a community in an economic manner, which would make lives better in our schools, in our communities, in our homes. It all went together.

I also had a small business at the time and, in '96, was nominated woman entrepreneur of the year. It was because I decided that I needed to learn more about how to market, how to develop, because I had written a book at that time, and I was very, very interested in discovering more and learning more about the business community. It very much excited me to see the kind of fiscal planning that was done in this province at that time, because we were able to carry on as a business and build businesses. I interacted with other business people. They were very excited about the opportunity. Ladies and gentlemen, all of us here in this House, and myself as an MLA, we need to have the vision, and we need to have the plan.

Having said that, the last part of what I want to talk about is the role I play as an MLA. Here in Manitoba, all our roles are extremely important as MLAs here. I am a strong believer, and I think my teaching background and I think my rural background has caused me, forced me, to think about planning and to think about

having a vision for your life, for your community, for those you are responsible for. Mr. Speaker, as an MLA in this House I think the vision and the planning is absolutely crucial.

You know, we just celebrated November 11. We commemorated Remembrance Day. We talked about and thought about the veterans that gave their lives. You know, if you talk to any World War II veteran right now, do you know what they say? Do not forget. Do not forget what we sacrificed to make you free here in Manitoba and here in Canada. You know, we must not forget. That is what they want.

Do you know, ladies and gentlemen, another thing that we must do is take that example of our World War II veterans and our World War I veterans, and we as Manitobans cannot forget that we have to have a plan. We have to have a vision. My disappointment in the throne speech was that the plan was not there. I know in the House we are going to be talking an awful lot about what is your plan, not to be obnoxious, but to have a vision for what we need in this province. Ladies and gentlemen, all of us as MLAs have to take a look and see the plan for our constituents, for Manitobans.

I think the first thing that we have to look at when I think about what my constituents are talking about is the fiscal responsibility. I think the plan, the vision, has to be sketched out and has to be outlined so we as MLAs know the direction that we are going and have this responsibility in us to do that.

I do not think as the World War veterans say, if we allow ourselves to forget the past, we will be remiss. We have to remember the kinds of things that are good. You heard earlier the idea that clear and concise language in our documents was a really good thing to do, and I would applaud that, ladies and gentlemen. It is a really good thing to do, but I think the other thing that we have to remember is the track record that followed our NDP government when they were in power previously.

* (1750)

I think that we can learn by mistakes that have happened. I think we can remember the

things that have come across in terms of the deficit that was built up under the last NDP government, the kinds of lack of fiscal restraint that was there, the lack of planning. I say that because now we are at a point where we have an opportunity to build. The Tory government has always had a vision and a plan here for Manitoba, and I think that is really important. Our vision and our plan has to reflect one thing: the fact that we as MLAs here in this House are responsible to make sure that Manitobans live a better life. Number one is through education and fiscal planning. Those two objectives have to be met in this House this year and have to be done very quickly.

So, ladies and gentlemen, Mr. Speaker, I have to thank you for this opportunity. I know it is the end of the day. I was hoping I would have an earlier slot. I have tried very hard to compliment and to give a vision for what I think leadership is all about here. I look forward to working with all of you in this coming year. I hope that we will build many relationships that will be productive for the people of Manitoba.

Hon. Becky Barrett (Minister of Labour): Mr. Speaker, it is my pleasure to rise today and speak on the first Speech from the Throne of a new government of which I am a very proud member. I have an unusual situation here in that I am a veteran of nine years in the Legislature, but I am representing the constituency of Inkster for the first time. So I have a bit of a dual role here.

I would like first of all to congratulate the Speaker on his election. It was a very proud moment for us all in the Legislature, and I think we all 56 of us showed that in a fairly rare moment of unanimity, and wish the Speaker all the best as he starts on this uncharted course for him and a new government, many new beginnings. I know he will do a remarkable job, and he has shown in his first few days that he is able to control with a calm hand a somewhat raucous, sometimes raucous caucus—sorry, not caucus, but MLAs.

I would like to welcome the pages here today that are here for this session in this period with us. It is an interesting position. You spend a lot of time sitting and then a lot of time

running around crazily. You perform a very vital function for this group of people in this House. We could not operate without you, so appreciate the time that you have taken from your academic year and hope that you learn a great deal out of this experience, most of it positive, I hope.

As well, again, as many others have, I would like to say a job well done and that we will miss our Clerk, Mr. Remnant, when he retires at the end of this session, this fall session. He has provided an enormous amount of service and advice to all of us. On a personal note, I have enjoyed many conversations with him, talking about his decades of experience in Legislatures throughout the country. He will be greatly missed.

I talk about these groups of people as well as the table officers, who provide us, and the Speaker in particular, with much good information and advice. All of these people, with the possible exception of the Speaker, are virtually unknown outside of this House, but this House is kind of a community or a family, and like a family, it is fractious at times and does not always agree, but the services that are provided by the staff here, including Hansard staff, the Sergeant-at-Arms, all of the people who work with us deserve our applause and our congratulations.

I think I am going to surprise members opposite, because I am not going to take my full 40 minutes, and I will save my pointed comments for other opportunities.

Again, as the Minister of Highways (Mr. Ashton) spoke earlier today, we are very proud of the composition of our caucus. It does reflect arguably better than any other caucus on any side of the House in the history of Manitoba. Out of 32 members that were elected as New Democrats, we have nine women, five of whom are in cabinet. We have three First Nations members, two of whom are in cabinet, one of whom is the Speaker. We have two representatives of the Filipino community, one of whom is the Deputy Speaker and one of whom is a brand-new member for The Maples (Mr. Aglugub). We have a representative from the Metis community as well. So we reflect and we have representation from all corners of the province.

Mr. Speaker, in the few moments that I have left, I would like to very briefly tell the House about the constituency that I am now proud to represent. Inkster incorporates the northwest corner of the city. It includes five farms, and it also has the distinction of having the largest community of Filipino Manitobans in the province and a large multicultural population. I believe arguably and I will bow to my colleagues from The Maples and Wellington and Point Douglas, but it has one of the largest mixes of people from across the world of any constituency in the province.

An Honourable Member: A melting pot.

Ms. Barrett: It is not, as my honourable colleague from Carman says, a melting pot; it is a mosaic. A melting pot is what happens in the United States. We are very proud here of our mosaic. As an ex-American, I know of what I speak, and I am speaking.

Mr. Speaker, the constituents of Inkster spoke volumes on September 21. Whether they voted for the NDP or the Liberals, they spoke with a massive voice. A huge majority of the voters in Inkster said we do not believe what the former government was pledging in their fourth attempt to form government. Most importantly, they believed and will continue to believe in the pledges that the current government of the province of Manitoba made throughout the election campaign. At every door that I knocked on in Inkster, people said it is time for a change. They said we need a government in power who will address the critical issue of health care, who will address the critical issue of our public education system, who will address the critical issue of the safety of our community, who will address the critical issue of maintaining the public ownership of our Crown corporations, including the jewel, Manitoba Hydro, and will live within their means while they do these things.

Mr. Speaker, the member for Fort Garry (Mrs. Smith), who gave a very good inaugural speech, said that the Speech from the Throne was not a plan. Well, it certainly is a very specific plan, an outline of what we will commit to do, what we will do. As we have seen in the House already, we are well underway particularly in the areas of health care and education and the justice system in fulfilling our entire election pledges. We are going to do it while living within the balanced budget legislation.

Even though we were given not a \$58-million surplus that the Conservatives had when they came into power in 1988—but probably a 417- or 450-, or who knows how high it will go, deficit—with commitments that the former government made in their pre-election spending binge in their failed attempt to buy the voters of Manitoba not only in the constituency of Inkster but throughout the province of Manitoba, the voters of Manitoba said we do not buy it from the Conservative government of the time, and we do believe that the New Democratic Party will provide good, strong, consultative leadership that will address the issues that are of concern to the people of Manitoba.

I pledge to the voters of the constituency of Inkster that that is what we will do. So, Mr. Speaker, in closing, I would like again to commend the government of the province of Manitoba for its Speech from the Throne.

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. Is the minister finished?

Ms. Barrett: Yes.

Mr. Speaker: When this matter comes before the House again, debate will be open. The hour being 6 p.m., this House is adjourned and stands adjourned until 1:30 p.m. tomorrow (Thursday).

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

December 1, 1999

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