



Fourth Session - Thirty-Sixth Legislature

of the

Legislative Assembly of Manitoba

**DEBATES
and
PROCEEDINGS**

**Official Report
(Hansard)**

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Speaker*



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MANITOBA LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
Thirty-Sixth Legislature

Member	Constituency	Political Affiliation
ASHTON, Steve	Thompson	N.D.P.
BARRETT, Becky	Wellington	N.D.P.
CERILLI, Marianne	Radisson	N.D.P.
CHOMIAK, Dave	Kildonan	N.D.P.
CUMMINGS, Glen, Hon.	Ste. Rose	P.C.
DACQUAY, Louise, Hon.	Seine River	P.C.
DERKACH, Leonard, Hon.	Roblin-Russell	P.C.
DEWAR, Gregory	Selkirk	N.D.P.
DOER, Gary	Concordia	N.D.P.
DOWNEY, James, Hon.	Arthur-Virden	P.C.
DRIEDGER, Albert	Steinbach	P.C.
DYCK, Peter	Pembina	P.C.
ENNS, Harry, Hon.	Lakeside	P.C.
EVANS, Clif	Interlake	N.D.P.
EVANS, Leonard S.	Brandon East	N.D.P.
FAURSCHOU, David	Portage la Prairie	P.C.
FILMON, Gary, Hon.	Tuxedo	P.C.
FINDLAY, Glen, Hon.	Springfield	P.C.
FRIESEN, Jean	Wolseley	N.D.P.
GAUDRY, Neil	St. Boniface	Lib.
GILLESHAMMER, Harold, Hon.	Minnedosa	P.C.
HELWER, Edward	Gimli	P.C.
HICKES, George	Point Douglas	N.D.P.
JENNISSEN, Gerard	Flin Flon	N.D.P.
KOWALSKI, Gary	The Maples	Lib.
LAMOUREUX, Kevin	Inkster	Lib.
LATHLIN, Oscar	The Pas	N.D.P.
LAURENDEAU, Marcel	St. Norbert	P.C.
MACKINTOSH, Gord	St. Johns	N.D.P.
MALOWAY, Jim	Elmwood	N.D.P.
MARTINDALE, Doug	Burrows	N.D.P.
McALPINE, Gerry	Sturgeon Creek	P.C.
McCRAE, James, Hon.	Brandon West	P.C.
McGIFFORD, Diane	Osborne	N.D.P.
McINTOSH, Linda, Hon.	Assiniboia	P.C.
MIHYCHUK, MaryAnn	St. James	N.D.P.
MITCHELSON, Bonnie, Hon.	River East	P.C.
NEWMAN, David, Hon.	Riel	P.C.
PENNER, Jack	Emerson	P.C.
PITURA, Frank, Hon.	Morris	P.C.
PRAZNIK, Darren, Hon.	Lac du Bonnet	P.C.
RADCLIFFE, Mike, Hon.	River Heights	P.C.
REID, Daryl	Transcona	N.D.P.
REIMER, Jack, Hon.	Niakwa	P.C.
RENDER, Shirley	St. Vital	P.C.
ROBINSON, Eric	Rupert's Island	N.D.P.
ROCAN, Denis	Gladstone	P.C.
SALE, Tim	Crescentwood	N.D.P.
SANTOS, Conrad	Broadway	N.D.P.
STEFANSON, Eric, Hon.	Kirkfield Park	P.C.
STRUTHERS, Stan	Dauphin	N.D.P.
SVEINSON, Ben	La Verendrye	P.C.
TOEWS, Vic, Hon.	Rossmere	P.C.
TWEED, Mervin	Turtle Mountain	P.C.
VODREY, Rosemary, Hon.	Fort Garry	P.C.
WOWCHUK, Rosann	Swan River	N.D.P.
Vacant	Charleswood	

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Monday, December 8, 1997

The House met at 1:30 p.m.

PRAYERS

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

READING AND RECEIVING PETITIONS

Domestic Violence

Madam Speaker: I have reviewed the petition of the honourable member for St. Johns (Mr. Mackintosh), and it complies with the rules and practices of the House. Is it the will of the House to have the petition read?

An Honourable Member: Yes.

Madam Speaker: Yes. The Clerk will read.

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

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

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

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

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

WHEREFORE YOUR PETITIONERS HUMBLY PRAY that the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba urge the provincial government to consider preparing an

action plan in consultation with the community for the timely implementation of meaningful change as outlined in the Lavoie inquiry, the Aboriginal Justice Inquiry and the Pedlar report.

Madam Speaker: I have reviewed the petition of the honourable member for Osborne (Ms. McGifford), and it complies with the rules and practices of the House. Is it the will of the House to have the petition read?

An Honourable Member: Dispense.

Madam Speaker: Dispense.

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

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

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

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

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* (1335)

Madam Speaker: I have reviewed the petition of the honourable member for Wellington (Ms. Barrett), and it complies with the rules and practices of the House. Is it the will of the House to have the petition read?

An Honourable Member: Dispense.

Madam Speaker: Dispense.

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

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

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

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

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

Madam Speaker: I have reviewed the petition of the honourable member for Radisson (Ms. Cerilli), and it complies with the rules and practices of the House. Is it the will of the House to have the petition read?

An Honourable Member: Dispense.

Madam Speaker: Dispense.

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

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

THAT survivors of abuse, their families, service providers and the community at large recognize serious

shortcomings in the response to domestic violence which continues to threaten the lives of Manitoba women and children; and

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* (1340)

TABLING OF REPORTS

Hon. Rosemary Vodrey (Minister responsible for the Status of Women): Madam Speaker, I am pleased to table the report of Manitoba's Women's Advisory Council, 1996-97.

MINISTERIAL STATEMENTS

Blood Donor Clinic

Hon. Darren Praznik (Minister of Health): Madam Speaker, I have a ministerial statement.

Today, I am very pleased to announce that a very special blood donor clinic is taking place to replenish blood supplies in Manitoba and northwestern Ontario for the holiday season. Not only is the purpose a noble one, but the drive is being sponsored by three organizations: Hemophilia Manitoba, the Red Cross in Winnipeg, and Manitoba Health.

On behalf of the Manitoba government, I would like to express my pleasure with the opportunity to join with Hemophilia Manitoba and the Red Cross to sponsor this drive. This co-operative effort is a first and shows that community partnerships are a rewarding and effective way to achieve a common goal.

Madam Speaker, with your permission, I would like to draw the attention of the House to the presence of Mr. Mark Brown, president of Hemophilia Manitoba

and Mr. Mark Neskar, executive director of the Red Cross in Manitoba, who are in the gallery for this particular announcement.

The clinic is taking place from 4 p.m. to 8 p.m. today at the Bingo Royale hall at 932 Erin Street in Winnipeg, which is adjacent to the offices of the Hemophilia Society of Manitoba. As an additional element of the partnership, Monarch Industries is supplying free parking at their lot just south of this particular location.

I would like to tell honourable members how the clinic was developed. On November 4, I had the opportunity to meet with representatives of Hemophilia Manitoba to discuss a wide range of issues, including blood collection. We recognize that continued media publicity of the tainted blood issue was hurting blood donations and that the then forthcoming Krever report would exacerbate the situation. It was suggested that a drive be put together by Hemophilia Manitoba, the Red Cross, and the Ministry of Health, which could help in maintaining public awareness of the continuing need to donate blood, particularly during the coming holiday season.

I was very pleased that the Red Cross responded positively to this proposal when they were invited to join in the partnership. The need for this clinic is shown by figures the Red Cross gave to us recently, that donations have dropped off by 15 percent in this past year. Within the government, we have already drawn our employees' attention to the clinic and have encouraged them to participate.

The intent of the drive today is to focus on the future. The immediate goal, of course, is to ensure adequate blood supplies during the holiday season. Looking farther ahead, we want to send a strong, positive message to our citizens about the continuing need to give blood, as we and other governments work through the implications and recommendations of the Krever report and move Canada and Manitoba into a new era in our blood system.

Madam Speaker, this clinic is the first time such a partnership has been formed to secure greater citizen initiative to donate blood. I hope we can work together in other initiatives to ensure a continuing safe and dependable blood system for Manitobans and indeed all Canadians.

Mr. Dave Chomiak (Kildonan): Madam Speaker, I thank the minister for providing me with a copy of the statement just before we came into the House, and we on this side of the House welcome this initiative.

One of the wonderful things about this nation is that we have created, on this northern part of the continent, a system of co-operation and caring for each other that is probably unparalleled in the world. As a result of this, we have our universal medicare system that is also unparalleled and recognized as one of the best in the world. Together with that, we have had a blood collection system that has been universal, that has been freely accessible and that has worked over the past several years—albeit with some severe difficulties—and come through crisis. Nonetheless, that system has worked to help our fellow Canadians, fellow Manitobans in their time of need.

We have come through a major crisis and many people are suffering, yet we have been large enough I think to admit that mistakes have been made, and we are working together on solutions for that.

In typical Canadian and Manitoban fashion, we recognize there have been mistakes in some of the administration of the past, but the principle, that is, the principle of a universal blood system and a system that is freely accessible to all continues, and that is why we welcome this initiative today. In fact, to have the Red Cross together with the Hemophilia Society I think sends a strong message to all Manitobans of the strength of our blood system and our hope in the future.

So we on this side of the House welcome this initiative and support it to the highest possible degree. Thank you.

* (1345)

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

Bill 2—The Elections Amendment Act

Hon. Gary Filmon (Premier): Madam Speaker, I move, seconded by the honourable Minister of Culture, Heritage and Citizenship (Mrs. Vodrey), that leave be given to introduce Bill 2, The Elections Amendment Act; Loi modifiant la Loi électorale, and that the same be now received and read a first time.

His Honour the Lieutenant Governor, having been advised of the contents of this bill, recommends it to the House. I am pleased to table the Lieutenant Governor's message along with that bill.

Motion agreed to.

Bill 3—The Elections Finances Amendment and Consequential Amendments Act

Hon. Gary Filmon (Premier): I move, seconded by the honourable Minister of Natural Resources (Mr. Cummings), that leave be given to introduce Bill 3, The Elections Finances Amendment and Consequential Amendments Act; Loi modifiant la Loi sur le financement des campagnes électorales et modifications corrélatives, and that the same be now received and read a first time.

His Honour the Lieutenant Governor, having been advised of the contents of this bill, recommends it to the House. I am pleased to table the bill as well as the message from the Lieutenant Governor.

Motion agreed to.

Bill 15—The Dutch Elm Disease Act

Hon. Glen Cummings (Minister of Natural Resources): Madam Speaker, I move, seconded by the Minister of Culture, Heritage and Citizenship (Mrs. Vodrey), that leave be given to introduce Bill 15, The Dutch Elm Disease Act (Loi sur la thylose parasitaire de l'orme), and that the same be now received and read a first time.

His Honour the Lieutenant Governor, having been advised of the contents of this bill, recommends it to the House. I am tabling his message as well.

Motion agreed to.

Bill 16—The Water Resources Administration Amendment Act

Hon. Glen Cummings (Minister of Natural Resources): Madam Speaker, I move, seconded by the Minister of Rural Development (Mr. Derkach), that leave be given to introduce Bill 16, The Water

Resources Administration Amendment Act (Loi modifiant la Loi sur l'aménagement hydraulique), and the same be now received and read a first time.

His Honour the Lieutenant Governor, having been advised of the contents of this bill, recommends it to the House. I am tabling his message.

Motion agreed to.

Introduction of Guests

Madam Speaker: Prior to Oral Questions, I would like to draw the attention of all honourable members to the public gallery where we have this afternoon sixteen Grade 11 students from Shaftesbury High under the direction of Mr. Steve Peers. This school is located in the constituency of the honourable First Minister (Mr. Filmon). On behalf of all honourable members, I welcome you this afternoon.

ORAL QUESTION PERIOD

**Health Care System
Waiting Lists**

Mr. Gary Doer (Leader of the Opposition): Madam Speaker, my question is to the First Minister (Mr. Filmon). We have raised the issue of waiting lists before, and the government has only in the past announced a pre-election funding of money to deal with the waiting lists for tests and the waiting lists for procedures here in the province of Manitoba, and this was prior to 1995. Since that, we have been getting calls from our constituents, calls from Manitobans dealing with the long waiting lists in the province of Manitoba, and a lot of them are a result of the cutbacks made by the Filmon government, the government opposite, and the resulting lack of operating staff for our needed procedures and diagnostic equipment here in the province.

I would like to ask the Premier: will he have a long-term systemic program to deal with waiting lists here in the province of Manitoba, or are we going to just have some more short-term announcements in a pre-election way to deal with this really tragic situation for many Manitoba families?

Hon. Darren Praznik (Minister of Health): Madam Speaker, first of all, I would think we agree on both sides of the House that where waiting lists for any procedures in our health care system get to be longer than what would be medically acceptable or certainly are longer than what would be viewed as a convenient wait, that it is a tragedy and it has to be addressed. One of the fundamental issues in addressing waiting lists, I would suggest to the Leader of the Opposition, has been often the way in which we organize the system, not even in terms of the funding for it but the organization of it, and having the Winnipeg Hospital Authority in place has given us a vehicle to be able to co-ordinate our variety of programming, particularly diagnostics, and reduce waiting lists in a much more effective manner. We have made some announcements to date; we have others that are coming very shortly as we work out some details, and our goal that we share with him is eliminating these waiting lists on a long-term basis, just not on a short-term one.

* (1350)

Mr. Doer: I am surprised the Minister of Health is so critical of the Premier who has been in charge of the organization of the Department of Health for the last eight or nine years. I am surprised that he could be so critical of the Premier who has had three ministers of Health and has been in charge of this so-called lack of organization that has just been spoken of by the Minister of Health. In fact, they promised a reorganization in '92, '93, '94, a short-term election announcement in '95, and, again, waiting list after waiting list.

I would like to ask the—[interjection] Well, if the Deputy Premier (Mr. Downey), the Ed McMahon of this Chamber, would like to be quiet, perhaps I could pose my question.

I would like to ask the Premier (Mr. Filmon): can he explain to me and Mr. Yakel, a constituent in the Elmwood community, why he was told in May of '97 that he would have to wait until May of 1998 to have cataract surgery that is absolutely essential for him to have? Can the Premier answer why this Mr. Yakel has to wait one year for this procedure?

Mr. Praznik: Madam Speaker, these are very, very serious matters, and it is very easy for the Leader of the

Opposition to get up and say the comments he did. This Premier and this government have been very dedicated in 10 years to making fundamental change in our system, and every step of the way that we have attempted to bring about major reform when various interests within the system have opposed that, often for their own particular viewpoint, because it might affect the way in which they operate within the system, members opposite, and, by the way, not always the critic, but members opposite, in particular the Leader of the Opposition, have always been there to take their side. In fact on many occasions, if we had followed what the Leader of the Opposition had suggested, our system would be in a terrible state with no hope of correction.

If the Leader of the Opposition would like to provide the details of that particular matter to my office, I would be delighted to look into it. As the member may know, often the priorities on surgery, Madam Speaker, are determined by the physicians themselves. We would be very happy to look into that matter for the Leader of the Opposition.

Health Care System Kidney Dialysis Waiting List

Mr. Doug Martindale (Burrows): Madam Speaker, Marion Hofley of Winnipeg is a dialysis patient, or was a dialysis patient, at the St. Boniface Hospital, where she received excellent care.

I would like to ask the Minister of Health why it is that she is now being forced to go by taxi three times a week to Morden for dialysis. How can this government justify their ineptitude in not planning ahead and not providing adequate dialysis facilities, and spending \$1,000 a week on taxi fare to send patients from Winnipeg to Morden for dialysis? What is this minister going to do to cut down this waiting list and help this senior citizen who is facing great hardships? She leaves after three o'clock every day, gets back after midnight, and she is facing dialysis for the rest of her life.

Hon. Darren Praznik (Minister of Health): Madam Speaker, I will tell the member exactly why that in fact happens and what we are doing to correct that, because

I do not find that an acceptable situation either as Minister of Health.

First of all, for one thing, the number of dialysis patients continues to increase annually by approximately 8 percent, so we have had a growing pressure on our system. Secondly, within our system, Madam Speaker, one of its, I think, shortcomings, from the point of view of the question from the member for Burrows, is that in fact all new patients coming on the system, as I understand it from my inquiries, are required to be dealt with first in the Winnipeg system, which puts additional pressure on them before they can move out. So the difficulty has been, as we have had an increase in dialysis patients, we have had to ask Winnipeg residents to go to rural stations to give us some manoeuvring room within the system.

However, Madam Speaker, I, like members opposite and members on this side of the House, have asked questions about how we in fact organize this system, because we are continually putting more money into it—some \$700,000 for a new program in the Interlake. I have asked the Winnipeg Hospital Authority to take over this particular program for the province, and they are developing the plans to do so currently.

* (1355)

Health Care System Hip/Knee Replacement Waiting List

Ms. Rosann Wowchuk (Swan River): Madam Speaker, because of long waiting lists in this province, many seniors are suffering unnecessary pain. Mrs. Winnie Russenholt of Minitonas suffers from arthritis and as a result had to have a knee replaced. She had to wait two years until she finally got her operation, in October of '96, in Yorkton, Saskatchewan. She now needs her other knee replaced.

Will the minister agree that this is unacceptable to have people waiting two years for knee and hip replacements, and will he ensure that Mrs. Russenholt and others will not have to wait for two years for this kind of surgery? Will he agree not to play politics or election promises with this but have it addressed immediately?

Hon. Darren Praznik (Minister of Health): Madam Speaker, we just took steps in reorganizing our system within Winnipeg where with a declining number of births, from 13,000 down to 10,000, we managed to save by changing a function at Grace Hospital, which members of the New Democratic Party, the member for St. James (Ms. Mihychuk), opposed. They opposed that change.

It allows us to add this year alone an additional 180-plus procedures, exactly for the kind of person, exactly for the kind of constituent that the member for Swan River is talking about. We moved money from obstetrics into orthopedic surgery, hips and knees, at the Grace, and next year will save us \$1.8 million by making that change that allows us to increase the program even further, but let the public remember that members of the New Democratic Party urged me not to make that change, Madam Speaker, or any change.

Health Care System Ultrasound Waiting List

Ms. Marianne Cerilli (Radisson): Madam Speaker, my constituent Mike Lawrence, who has been calling the Minister of Health's office on behalf of his grandmother, has endured with her two hip surgeries due to falls she survived when she had mild strokes, strokes that went undiagnosed for over a year because what she really needed was an ultrasound to determine the extent of what was causing the strokes.

I want to ask the Minister of Health: how can he explain to Mike Lawrence and his grandmother, who has endured two unnecessary hip surgeries, why she could not get an ultrasound in a timely basis and why she would have to go to Grafton, North Dakota, to pay for this service rather than having it in her home community?

Hon. Darren Praznik (Minister of Health): Madam Speaker, two points to be made: first of all, anytime there is a need for an emergent diagnostic procedure that, in fact, takes place, the doctor can arrange it. If it is not emergent—the doctors currently control that system. Now, in fairness to everyone in this system, as long as we have continued to have our diagnostics controlled by a number of institutions throughout Winnipeg without good co-ordination, we are not

getting the best use out of that system in my view, and that is why, with the Winnipeg Hospital Authority—I have asked them to develop the plan, which they are doing, to take over diagnostic services eventually, to streamline that operation and get best use of our resources.

But let us remember one thing when it comes to hip and knee replacement. The move we did to add additional capacity in our system was opposed by her party.

Riverview Health Centre Waiting List

Ms. Diane McGifford (Osborne): Dorothy Webster, formerly of Fred Tipping Place in Riverview and a woman living with Alzheimer's was panelled for care in the fall of 1996 and quite understandably wanted to move to the Riverview Health Centre. Her family was told in 1996, in the fall, that there was a one-year waiting list. In spring, Mrs. Webster moved to Central Park Lodge on the understanding that her position on the waiting list at Riverview would not be compromised. In the fall of 1997, her family was again told there was a year's waiting list. The more things change, the more they stay the same, Madam Speaker.

I want to ask the minister today if he plans to wait until the next election, as his party has done before, until he takes action on the waiting list at Riverview Health Centre, which according to the Riverview Health News opened a state-of-the-art facility on May 27. I would be happy to share the publication with the minister if he does not know about it.

Hon. Darren Praznik (Minister of Health): Madam Speaker, is the member for Osborne asking me as Minister of Health to actually make the determination of which citizens go into which facilities? This government invested significant money in rebuilding the Riverview Centre, removing the old municipals, replacing—that facility was there. I was part of the opening for that facility. It has added a state-of-the-art long-term care facility. We are currently working on other plans to be in the ground in some additional—I believe an additional 200 beds in the spring that was announced as part of our capital program earlier. We are looking at ways of expanding our long-term care

facility. But if the member opposite is asking me to intervene in waiting lists, to pick a specific match for people in a facility, that would be unfair if I did that.

* (1400)

Break and Enters Reduction Strategy

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Inkster): My question is for the Premier. Last week I raised the issue of a person's right to feel safe in their own home, and today I would pose the question to the Premier. Again, today we have an individual that is 91 years old that is in critical condition in one of our hospitals because he was brutally shoved down a flight of stairs, Madam Speaker. In 1995, there were 5,841 home break-ins.

My question is to the Premier. Would he agree that, because of the number of break-ins, we have marginalized the seriousness of this crime, and now is the time in which we start getting more serious with the break-in problem epidemic throughout the province?

Hon. Gary Filmon (Premier): Madam Speaker, I concur wholeheartedly with the member opposite that it is unacceptable for the kinds of crimes that we are seeing, particularly home break-ins. I think the member knows that our government has been contributing an extra \$2 million per year for additional police officers, some 40 additional officers for the City of Winnipeg to help them combat crime and to try and address many of these issues. Regardless of what statistics tell us, even the most recent ones that suggest that crime rates are down and that the police are able to address this to a greater extent, it is still not acceptable that occurrences like this happen, and we certainly—I know the Minister of Justice (Mr. Toews) will be looking very carefully at it and discussing with the various law enforcement agencies further measures to try and combat this type of crime.

Mr. Lamoureux: Madam Speaker, my question is to the Premier. Will he recognize that a total aggregate of nine months is what the average is for someone who breaks into a house, which means they could be out within weeks after breaking into a house—is in fact not an effective deterrent? Will he agree with that, and what actions, if he does agree with it, is he prepared to take?

Mr. Filmon: Madam Speaker, I am informed that the Criminal Code says that people can receive up to a life sentence for a break-in of this nature, a violent break-in, and if the normal sentence averages nine months, then obviously that is something that we do not have a control over as a government. I believe that is a matter that should be pursued, and I believe the Minister of Justice (Mr. Toews), in conjunction with his colleagues, expressed concern that there needs to be further action with respect to Ottawa with respect to dealing more harshly with these kinds of crimes.

Mr. Lamoureux: Madam Speaker, given the Premier's response, will he then instruct his Minister of Justice to aggressively pursue the issue within his department in terms of appeals, if need be, in order to ensure that the incarceration is in fact a valid way—using as a deterrent in order to try to address the whole issue of break-ins and particularly home invasions?

Mr. Filmon: Madam Speaker, I think the member is suggesting that the punishment ought better to fit the crime, and certainly I cannot disagree with him on it. I know that the Minister of Justice (Mr. Toews) certainly concurs with that position.

Health Care System Communication Disorders Waiting List

Mr. Gord Mackintosh (St. Johns): A question to the Premier, not unrelated to risk factors leading to crime. A four-year-old constituent communicates mainly with gestures but was rejected from the Health Sciences Centre communication disorders program because by the time she would go to the top of the two-year waiting list of about 450 children, she would have to go to the bottom of the school division's waiting list, and her parents cannot pay up to \$3,600 a year for the many uninsured private speech programs that the government's waiting list has now created.

My question is to the Premier. Why has his government rejected recommendations from 10 years of reports and has instead insisted on two-tiered opportunities for life for children like this four-year-old who must now enter the school with higher costs and with the stigma of a communication disorder?

Hon. Darren Praznik (Minister of Health): Madam Speaker, the member for St. Johns does bring a very

serious issue to this House. It is one of which myself and my colleagues on the human services committee of cabinet are very much aware and appreciate that we have some work to do in overcoming some of those issues on co-ordination and resource. We hope to be able to do that in the coming months—but it is a very serious issue.

Health Care System Heart Surgery Waiting List

Mr. Oscar Lathlin (The Pas): Madam Speaker, about a month ago, four weeks ago, I phoned the Minister of Health from The Pas to tell him about an individual from the reserve there about his problem of getting into the St. Boniface Hospital. This individual had travelled seven times to Winnipeg to get open-heart surgery, and seven times he was returned to The Pas because there was no bed for him at the hospital. When I phoned the minister's office I was advised by his staff that they would phone the constituent right to his home to solve the problem. My question to the minister this afternoon is: what follow-up has his office taken since that call that I made to him about four or six weeks ago?

Hon. Darren Praznik (Minister of Health): Madam Speaker, first of all, the underlying issue with respect to heart surgery is they are—[interjection] Just if the member would give me the opportunity to finish and give him an answer—I would appreciate if the member would give me the opportunity to answer because this is a very serious question. We all have constituents who come to us from time to time who are waiting for heart surgery and are scheduled and are bumped. A lot of that has to do with where they rate on a priority list. If an emergency happens where someone who is not in an emergent situation, their surgeon may be required to do an emergency heart surgery, and that results in the bumping. Seven times is a large number of bumpings; I do not argue with that fact whatsoever.

Madam Speaker, the setting of that priority list is done by the physicians involved, if I understand it correctly. I do not interfere in that list, nor should I. One other—[interjection] Well, the member asks why there is a waiting list. It is because we have only so many surgeons, and if an emergency happens, those surgeons are required to perform surgery on someone who may just recently have undergone cardiac arrest or

is in an emergent situation. Someone who is an urgent may be bumped; that has always been the case with heart surgery, despite what the member for Burrows (Mr. Martindale) says from his seat.

Health Care System Ultrasound Waiting List

Ms. MaryAnn Mihychuk (St. James): Madam Speaker, today I raise the issues that were raised by Dr. Michael Bass, and I table the letter.

On June 26, 1997, Dr. Michael Bass, who practises obstetrics and gynecology at the Health Sciences Centre, wrote to the Minister of Health. In this letter he states that the waiting list for gynecological ultrasound is eight months and that for obstetrical ultrasound it is three months and that these waiting times are unacceptable. He predicts in the letter in June that Manitoba will lose quality physicians if they do not have the tools to do a proper job.

Madam Speaker, my question to the minister: given that, despite Dr. Bass's letters and warnings, waiting lists have grown and that Manitoba has lost over 40 quality physicians, when will we see a comprehensive strategy to deal with this unacceptable situation which is the worst in Canada?

Hon. Darren Praznik (Minister of Health): Madam Speaker, many times in this House—and the member's question is a very valid one and a very serious question—we have discussed the fundamental issues that are here in place, why we have some of these difficulties. The work that my predecessor did, the member for Brandon West (Mr. McCrae), in working through a plan to deal with those issues, which I now have the responsibility to implement, I think it is very clear that one of the fundamental reasons we have difficulties in many of our lists is because we have had up to nine institutions, each running its own field, making decisions and not always in a co-ordinated manner. When I looked into issues like diagnostics, for example, I found a great divergence in the waiting list, I found the lack of a central ability to co-ordinate. These are things that were identified and also brought to my attention by the member for Brandon West. Now we have that vehicle which is available to us in the Winnipeg Hospital Authority, and as one of the tasks

that I have charged them with, that is, to look at running centrally our diagnostic system, they are in the process of putting together a detailed plan to do that, which I hope we can start giving effect to in the very near future.

* (1410)

Health Care System Waiting Lists

Mr. Steve Ashton (Thompson): Madam Speaker, it was interesting the other week when the Premier gave his state of the province address, he did not spend very much time talking about the effects of nine and a half years of neglect of our health care system that has seen people like Mrs. Cadwell, a constituent of mine, waiting extensively for hip surgery, or Phyllis Laine [phonetic], a former constituent, who has been in the Seven Oaks Hospital since mid-May. Normally you are supposed to be in this particular ward for no more than 30 days, but on December 8, 1997, she is still waiting to get into a personal care home. By the way, she was referred to the personal care home in Thompson, but there is no personal care home.

I would like to ask: if the Premier (Mr. Filmon) is not going to deal with that, will the minister admit, as he did last week on home care, that the real problem is that we have had nine and a half years of neglect and that the government's cutbacks in health care are now impacting on some very extensive waiting lists? They are affecting many individual Manitobans.

Hon. Darren Praznik (Minister of Health): Madam Speaker, it is with great regret that, while the member for Thompson sat on this side of the House in government, his party was unable to build a personal care home in Thompson and neglected the people of his community and have left it to us to work on that result. Members of the New Democratic Party cannot have it both ways. We on this side of the House, despite very tough budget times, like every other government in Canada, have had to deal with some tough issues over the last number of years. We have still maintained significant funding for our health care system, each year increasing budgets.

But what is most interesting about today is last week in this House we had members of the New Democratic

Party arguing strenuously that we should continue to overspend in our food system in our hospitals, that we should continue to subsidize restaurant food in our hospital cafeterias to \$2.5 million and then now we should spend more money in different areas. You cannot have it both ways. Do you waste money subsidizing cafeteria meals like they would propose, or do you divert it over to where you need it? This party stands for diverting it. They want to spend it. I need those dollars to deliver health care.

Health Care System Radiation Therapy Waiting List

Mr. Gerard Jennissen (Flin Flon): Madam Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Health.

Is the minister aware that the internationally accepted standard for waiting time for radiation therapy is under four weeks and that Mr. Gordon Fidler from Cranberry Portage was forced to wait an incredibly stressful 14 weeks—98 days—before the first radiation treatment for his cancer could begin?

Hon. Darren Praznik (Minister of Health): Madam Speaker, I am not aware of the specifics, but I can tell you that we have announced—if the member opposite is not aware, we, along with the Cancer Treatment and Research Foundation, have committed to a \$42-million new state-of-the-art facility that doubles our capacity. I understand they will be in the ground very early in the new year. We also recently approved just short of an additional million dollars for that same facility so that they could recruit six additional oncologists and four additional technical associates, which they are in the process of doing currently. Part of their difficulty in meeting service is recruiting that additional personnel, but I want to assure Manitobans that the dollars necessary to do it have been approved and are in place, and they are in the process of recruiting the expertise that they need to continue to deliver the program to Manitobans on an increasing basis.

Personal Care Homes Waiting Lists

Mr. Tim Sale (Crescentwood): Madam Speaker, while we are talking here, more than 500 elderly Manitobans, including Mrs. Beatrice Wirth, are sitting

in hospital beds inappropriately waiting for placement in nursing homes. Beatrice Wirth has been in Victoria Hospital not since May of '97 but since May of '96, some 18 months, waiting for placement in Riverview or a Level 4 nursing home.

Can the Minister of Health tell this House why any Manitoban should have to wait in the wrong place for 18 months to get an appropriate placement when she is suffering from a serious disease?

Hon. Darren Praznik (Minister of Health): Madam Speaker, first of all, waiting lists for personal care homes are not new. Being short of personal care home beds is not new. In fact, I remember when members opposite were in power, we had waiting lists and demand for personal care homes.

The fact is with an aging population—[interjection] Members opposite, if they are interested in more than subsidizing cafeterias, Madam Speaker, I would hope you would call them to order so they can hear the answer. The fact of the matter is one of the changes in most of our hospitals is that we have actually made reorganizations of wards to accommodate people who are waiting when they could adjust programming for people who are long-term care patients who are waiting for placement.

We have nearly 300 people in our Winnipeg hospital system today who are in that category. We have made changes in wards to be able to accommodate them, so the member opposite should not make it sound as if the person is being neglected. They are being cared for.

Madam Speaker, we are very much committed. We have, I believe, 200 beds that were committed in the last capital commitment in the spring. We are working on additional bed space, will be in the ground in some—and we will hope to continue to meet this need as best we can.

Health Care System Sonogram Waiting List

Mr. Gregory Dewar (Selkirk): Madam Speaker, my question is to the Minister of Health. Mr. Richard Epp from Selkirk has been told by his doctor that he may have to wait up to a year for a sonogram to help

determine the cause of a stroke he suffered in August of this year. My question is to the minister: what is he prepared to do to help Mr. Epp and others, and why will Mr. Epp have to wait for a year for this medical test? I am prepared to table a letter from Mr. Epp.

Hon. Darren Praznik (Minister of Health): Madam Speaker, I think I have addressed this in previous questions about—[interjection] What we are doing in centralizing—[interjection] Well, the member for Thompson (Mr. Ashton), I would expect would know better. One of the difficulties that my predecessor identified was the way in which we manage our health care system, that is, a minister. Ministers have very little direct control over the way in which the system operates. We have seen that over and over again. One of the benefits of regionalization, which many members opposite have criticized and condemned, is it gives us the vehicle to be able to deliver services more efficiently.

Madam Speaker, what I find so ironical about today is members of the New Democratic Party have criticized this government in supporting changes within the system that save some \$3 million a year on food services, prevent the loss of \$2.5 million on subsidizing cafeteria food, dollars that we need to do exactly what they are asking for. So what is their choice? Subsidized—

Madam Speaker: Order, please.

Point of Order

Mr. Steve Ashton (Opposition House Leader): On a point of order, Beauchesne's Citation 417 is very clear that "Answers to questions should be as brief as possible, deal with the matter raised and should not provoke debate." Not only is the minister out of order, but this is the 12th question we have asked about the impact of close to 10 years of neglect of our health care system, in this case a very specific question about a constituent of the member for Selkirk. I would like to ask, Madam Speaker, that you ask the Minister of Health to answer the very serious questions we are raising on behalf of Manitobans today.

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

Mr. Praznik: I was just simply pointing out that we need the savings in places like food services to pay for the care that members opposite are requesting.

* (1420)

Madam Speaker: Order, please. On the point of order raised by the honourable member for Thompson, I would remind the honourable Minister of Health that indeed he should keep his responses specific to the question asked and not provoke debate.

Education System Educational Assessment Waiting List

Ms. Jean Friesen (Wolseley): Madam Speaker, children in some of Manitoba's public schools with suspected learning disabilities are having to wait a year or more for proper assessment, while their parents are being advised that they should take their son or daughter for a private assessment at approximately \$1,200. I would like to ask the Minister of Education if she would table a report on education waiting lists in assessment across the province, and could she tell us what she thinks is an acceptable period of waiting for these children?

Hon. Linda McIntosh (Minister of Education and Training): Madam Speaker, if the member would be kind enough to provide me with the details of her allegations, I would be pleased to look into them for her. Saying "some people say" is not really giving me enough to go on, so if she can provide me with the details I would be pleased to provide the—look into the—

Madam Speaker: Order, please.

Point of Order

Ms. Friesen: If you would direct the Minister of Education yet again to answer the question that I asked her, which was: would she prepare and table a report on the waiting lists in educational assessment across the province?

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

Mrs. McIntosh: With respect, the member in her question said that there were some people who had

some specific concerns, and I thought she had asked me to report to her on them, but without knowing what they are, it is hard to report.

If she is looking for general information on waiting lists in assessments and so on, I would be pleased to provide her with—I do not have a formal report, but we certainly do have a lot of information on early intervention, early identification, assessments, Level I, Level II, Level III. Those types of areas are known to us. Divisions report—

Madam Speaker: Order, please. May I deal with the point of order raised before the minister completes her response? Which I believe she has just done. Given that the minister now has responded to the point of order, I guess my only ruling is that there was no point of order, given she has now made the appropriate response.

Health Care System Bone Density Scan Waiting List

Mr. George Hickes (Point Douglas): Madam Speaker, in September of this year, the government announced that \$76,500 would be spent to make more staff available to operate bone density testing machines in order that patients on a two-year waiting list would receive tests before Christmas. On September 26, the Minister of Health was quoted in the *Winnipeg Sun* as stating: once we have cleaned out the backlog, it will enable us not to create a new one.

Madam Speaker, the money has since been spent, additional staffing for machines has since been reduced, and we have learned that once again there are several hundred patients on a new waiting list for bone density tests. When will the minister stop implementing patchwork solutions, and develop a comprehensive waiting-list strategy?

Hon. Darren Praznik (Minister of Health): Madam Speaker, I understand some of the last patients on the Manitoba Clinic side will be receiving their bone density scan within days or very, very shortly in Manitoba. We have managed to eliminate that part of the list, and we want to ensure that we do not have another list grow. That is certainly unacceptable.

We are doing two things: first of all, the protocol on use is in the process of being finalized, because obviously there are some people for whom this is a good thing to do, others it is not. So that is being developed. Secondly, the resources are being identified to be able to carry on, on a far better basis than we have in the past.

Madam Speaker, let us not forget that when we first looked at this, one of our initial proposals was for nearly \$450,000 that would have eliminated the list by June of next year, and by doing some looking around and being innovative, we did it for \$76,000 and got it done by Christmas. So I do not always accept what comes out of the system as being the route to go.

Health Care System CAT Scan Waiting List

Mr. Conrad Santos (Broadway): Madam Speaker, in our province, there are a number of people in pain, represented by Miss N, who is a 57-year-old woman having a lower-back and leg problem. She is still working, and somehow she managed to have a CAT scan arranged for her, but it will not happen until April 22, 1998.

Can the honourable minister tell me what to tell this woman in case she cannot work any more because of persistent back pain?

Hon. Darren Praznik (Minister of Health): Madam Speaker, I think the member should tell her that it is important that we have the resources. First of all, we are making the change in how we have organized the system so that we get the best use of our equipment, use it at the maximum amount of time, and have a central co-ordination, and if we need to have additional financial resources, it is sometimes a matter of prioritizing.

I am not trying to play politics with this at all, but when members opposite come to this House and they say to us we should continue to spend money on areas of health care that buy no health value when we do not have to, it takes dollars right out of the areas where we need the care. The member for Broadway should know that by making those choices, he is saying to that lady that it is more important, and I do not mean to make

light of it, but more important to have a subsidized meal in a cafeteria than have dollars available for those additional resources. That is not where we stand, Madam Speaker.

Betaseron Coverage Approval

Mr. Clif Evans (Interlake): Madam Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Health.

One of my constituents, Mrs. Verna Hryhorchuk, along with hundreds of people in the province who suffer with multiple sclerosis, could be helped by taking Betaseron or its companion drug, Copaxone. When we first raised this question with this government, the then Minister of Health indicated he would not want any bureaucratic delays. Will the Minister of Health tell us why his government continues to hide behind this bureaucracy and why people who need this drug are continuing to wait for coverage?

Hon. Darren Praznik (Minister of Health): Madam Speaker, I may have missed when the member for the Interlake garnered his M.D., but the committee that reviews these drugs and their effectiveness recommended to me that we not accept it. So, if the member is suggesting that I move very quickly to accept their recommendation and not deal with it, then that is fine. But what I did say at that time and after meeting with them and the member for Kildonan (Mr. Chomiak), who I must compliment has worked on this issue with me, I think who appreciates the difficulty of this issue, we both recognized that there was other additional information. I have some questions about the process by which information came to that committee.

I am pleased to report that I have met with that committee. We have discussed some ways of improving that process, and I have asked them to take another look at this, including ensuring that those people who have been researching on the product here, I think at the MS clinic—I look to the member for Kildonan who was part of that meeting—also have an opportunity to put their findings to that same committee, and I will await their next consideration of this particular product.

* (1430)

Health Care System Waiting Lists

Mr. Dave Chomiak (Kildonan): Madam Speaker, is it not funny after nine and a half years of Tory mismanagement of health the government is still choosing to blame the previous government for its difficulty? The same government talks about \$2.5 million in expenditures in cafeterias, many of which have been privatized, and yet they are spending \$100 million on SmartHealth. They wasted over \$5 million on Connie Curran. The Premier (Mr. Filmon) said they were going to save \$10 million on home care. That is where the money went—in Tory mismanagement of our health care resources, which is why we have the waiting list.

My question is: why did the previous Minister of Health have \$500,000 to reduce waiting lists a month before the last election and reduce waiting lists on hip and knee replacements, CAT scans, ultrasounds and MRIs, and this government has done nothing for two years while the lists that we indicated today have grown and grown and grown, much to the hardship of Manitobans, every one of whom we represent, waiting on long waiting lists? How dare they do that?

Hon. Darren Praznik (Minister of Health): How can members opposite come with that kind of indignation when they oppose almost every change that is needed to make the system run better?

Madam Speaker, when we talked about taking money out of a program at the Grace in obstetrics that we did not need and putting it into hips and knees, the member for St. James (Ms. Mihychuk) opposed it. When we come forward to try to get a better operating of our food system to free up dollars to put it into those areas, members opposite oppose it. They want everything for everybody, but the one thing they cannot do is run government or a health care system. They cannot deliver. Every change that is needed for the future that we stand for they oppose. They want better diagnostics. You need an information system to be able to co-ordinate that. They oppose it.

This government is very much committed to health care. We have expanded in area after area, but one thing is for certain, we will always put money for health rather than subsidize cafeterias any day of the week.

Health Care System Angiogram Waiting List

Madam Speaker: Order, please. The honourable member for Dauphin, with one very short question.

Mr. Stan Struthers (Dauphin): Madam Speaker, my constituent Ken McCartney from Dauphin has been waiting and still is waiting for an angiogram.

Why will this Minister of Health not help him?

Hon. Darren Praznik (Minister of Health): Madam Speaker, the priority on those procedures is dealt with by the physicians. [interjection] You know, I am not a physician—

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Madam Speaker: Order, please. The honourable Minister of Health, to quickly complete his response.

Mr. Praznik: There is not a health care system in Canada where anyone who requests heart surgery today gets it tomorrow, unless it is an emergency. There is not a province where that happens. You know it is almost—it is sad to raise the expectation to people out there who watch this on their televisions that that is ever possible. Heart surgeries are done on a priority list. The doctors involved set those priorities on the needs of the patients.

If the member would really like to help his constituent, he should make sure that that constituent updates his physician on his need.

Madam Speaker: Order, please. Time for Oral Questions has expired.

Speaker's Rulings

Madam Speaker: I have four rulings for the House.

On March 5, 1997, during debate of the Speech from the Throne, a point of order was raised by the honourable First Minister (Mr. Filmon) with respect to

words spoken by the Leader of the official opposition (Mr. Doer) in debate. The words in question were “I think the Premier going to community meetings and saying that teachers are overpaid by 20 percent and underworked is an absolute disgrace.” The Premier, in raising the point of order, denied that he had made such a remark.

The First Minister did not have a point of order. A point of order is a question raised to call attention to any departure from the rules or from the customary modes of proceeding in debate. A dispute arising between two members as to allegations of fact is not a point of order.

During Question Period on March 5, 1997, the opposition House leader (Mr. Ashton) raised a point of order about my caution on the use of the phrase “will the Premier finally tell the truth.” In raising the point of order, the opposition House leader made reference to Beauchesne Citation 490 stating that the phrase “not telling the truth” had been ruled as being parliamentary. In speaking to the point of order, the government House leader (Mr. McCrae) indicated that the context of the word, rather the inclusion of a word on a list, governed the acceptability of language. This point is made in Beauchesne Citation 491.

I would draw to the attention of the House that Speaker Rocan on seven occasions ruled out of order variations of the phrase “not telling the truth.” Further, I would observe that on March 5 I had not asked the phrase “will the Premier finally tell the truth” be withdrawn; I had asked that discretion in the choice of words be exercised. However, as the opposition House leader had, in his point of order, asked whether the phrase, as he used it on March 5, 1997, was parliamentary, I would have to rule that strictly speaking it was unparliamentary.

Mr. Steve Ashton (Opposition House Leader): Madam Speaker, I assume from your ruling—and I do not recall the circumstances—did occur back on March 5—that you had indicated that it was unparliamentary. Is that—

Madam Speaker: That is correct.

Mr. Ashton: That is the case; I am glad. I am receiving some advice on the rules from the Premier

(Mr. Filmon), who certainly is an expert on unparliamentary phrases.

I was wondering—and it is difficult, once again, not remembering the circumstances because it was such a lengthy time ago, at the beginning of the last session, but that being the case, if it was unparliamentary, are you not requesting a withdrawal of the statement?

Madam Speaker: I am not requesting—

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Madam Speaker: Order, please. I am not requesting withdrawal at this time because I had dealt with it initially, but it was then again challenged by the opposition House leader on a point of order. I had specifically then cautioned, said that we had not accepted the use of that word on several previous occasions, but I had asked him to please use, or yourself I guess, to use discretion in the choice of your words.

Do you all have a copy of the ruling from March 7?

Order, please. I am ruling on a point of order I took under advisement on March 7 during Question Period about an answer to a question given by the First Minister. The question from the Leader of the official opposition (Mr. Doer) was about funding to the Manitoba Metis Federation. In his reply, the Premier spoke about job creation in Manitoba.

The member for Transcona (Mr. Reid) raised a point of order about the content of the reply. Having reviewed Hansard, I have concluded that there was a point of order. As Beuchesne Citation 417 states: answers to questions should deal with the matter raised. I would ask the First Minister, when replying to questions, to relate directly to the issue in the question asked of him.

I took under advisement a point of order raised by the honourable Minister of Culture, Heritage and Citizenship (Mrs. Vodrey) on March 30 during debate of the budget motion with respect to words used by the honourable member for Osborne (Ms. McGifford). The words in question were “the big lie.”

In looking at Hansard, the complete sentence read: “This argument of cutting now to protect future generations is simply at best nonsense and at worse doublespeak or, as I believe my colleague from Wolseley christened it the other night, the big lie.”

Past precedents of this House were reviewed. In 1991, Speaker Rocan twice ruled in order the term “one big lie,” noting that the phrase was not targeted at an individual. On October 28, 1996, I cautioned a member on the use of the words “You know what the ultimate big lie in this MTS Answers document,” but did not rule the phrase as being unparliamentary. Also, as the member for Osborne (Ms. McGifford) correctly pointed out, the member for Wolseley (Ms. Friesen) used the term more than once in her speech about the budget this session and no intervention occurred. Given the precedents and given the context in which the words were used by the member for Osborne, I am ruling that there was no point of order.

On March 24, 1997, I took under advisement a point of order raised by the Leader of the official opposition (Mr. Doer) respecting words spoken by the honourable Minister of Health (Mr. Praznik) during Question Period. In raising the point of order, the Leader of the official opposition asserted that the Minister of Health had imputed unworthy motives to the respiratory therapists of Manitoba. I have reviewed Hansard to ascertain the context in which the words were spoken. The words in question were:

“What I would suggest we have here is a lot of people with their own particular piece of interest in this area pursuing it and if that were the case we would never make any decisions in government.”

* (1440)

Beuchesne Citations 481(e) and 484(3) deal with imputation of motives, but both contemplate comments made by one member about another member; these citations do not address comments made by a member about persons outside the House. Therefore, the Leader of the official opposition did not have a point of order. However, I caution the minister that care should be taken by members of this House when speaking of persons or groups outside this House.

Speaker's Statement

Madam Speaker: I have a statement.

On November 21, 1996, the honourable member for Osborne (Ms. McGifford) raised a point of order concerning words she attributed to the Premier (Mr. Filmon) regarding the member for Crescentwood (Mr. Sale). The Premier has now on the record unequivocally withdrawn the words. The matter is therefore concluded.

Point of Order

Mr. Gary Doer (Leader of the Opposition): Excuse me, Madam Speaker. I will allow our House leader to deal with this, but given the fact that you were asked to make a ruling, are we not going to get a ruling, or is it not the precedent for the Speaker to make a ruling? The matter is a year and a half or two years old.

Hon. James McCrae (Government House Leader): Madam Speaker, I think any review of the history of these types of matters in the House where a phrase or a word objected to and argued about is withdrawn, that traditionally has been the end of the matter. I believe that has been handled that way in this case, and I believe that is the appropriate way that it should be handled.

Mr. Steve Ashton (Opposition House Leader): On the point of order, Madam Speaker, and I think the government House leader used the right term in discussing this when he talked about history, because unfortunately this matter languished for more than a year. The apology, the so-called apology that was received from the First Minister (Mr. Filmon) was made when we complained that a ruling had not been made on a matter of privilege that had been raised, not only one year, one calendar year, but two sessions previously. I would note, by the way, on the record that the First Minister did not apologize until we raised it again in the House more than a year and two sessions afterwards.

I think if you were to be making any ruling on this particular matter, including on whether the First Minister had given a sincere and honest withdrawal and

apology on this matter, that it should have been done in the form of a ruling, and I would like to note on the record that ruling should have been brought in this House a lot earlier than today, December 8, more than a full year after we raised a matter of privilege in this House.

A matter of privilege should always be dealt with, not only by members at the first opportunity, but I believe in terms of rulings, you should have brought in a ruling a lot earlier, and the Premier should have apologized in the first place more than a year ago.

Madam Speaker: The honourable Leader of the official opposition does not have a point of order.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

Hockey Exchange Program

Mr. Jack Penner (Emerson): Madam Speaker, last evening my wife, Dora, and I, in the company of the honourable Government Services minister (Mr. Pitura) and his wife, Evelyn, had the pleasure of attending a banquet in Morris. The event was in honour of an exchange program between the Morris and St. Jean Baptiste hockey teams and the La Baie, Quebec, 14-and-under hockey team under the direction and supervision of Denis Desmarais [phonetic].

As part of the exchange program, a young team of Francophone hockey players from La Baie, Quebec, and their chaperones have had an opportunity to visit Manitoba. After arriving in Manitoba last Thursday, they were billeted with host families in Morris and St. Jean. In addition to playing hockey, La Baie players have taken part in a wide variety of activities. They visited Morris schools, St. Jean Baptiste schools and the Lowe Farm school. They attended a Manitoba Moose hockey game and also saw the Canadian women's Olympic hockey team take on the American team at the Winnipeg Arena. They had an opportunity to view the flood video Red River Raging and today will visit the flood gates at Winnipeg.

This young team is also, as most of you know, from a town that experienced a disastrous flood in the same year that we did, and they found the devastation that we incurred very similar to theirs, although theirs might

have been even a bit more traumatic when whole homes were swept away.

Today these players are also visiting a number of rural businesses, providing them with the exposure to a strong agricultural Manitoba community. Their visit will also include stops at Roy Legumex Inc., special crops contractors in St. Jean, as well as tours of the Paterson elevator company at Morris and Westfield Industries in Rosenort. We welcome these young hockey players. We know that our teams out of Morris and St. Jean Baptiste, when they travel to La Baie, will be afforded the same welcome as we afforded these youngsters.

Health Care System

Mr. Steve Ashton (Thompson): Madam Speaker, earlier today we saw an example of just how much our health care system has deteriorated in this province. We saw case after case after case of people who are facing unacceptable waiting lists for surgery and other procedures. What I found interesting was the fact that the Minister of Health (Mr. Praznik) blamed everyone except the government. He kept trying to blame the previous government, but I point out for the record that not only the previous government but the previous, previous government as well. Maybe after nine and a half years it is time for them to be put on the opposition benches and put in a government, an NDP government, that can rebuild our health care system.

I would like to stress the degree to which we face shortages. I made reference to a situation in my own community that people had problems with referrals, in particular a need for a personal care home in our community. By the way, for the Minister of Health, I was proud to be part of the NDP government that brought in the first seniors' centre, was instrumental in bringing that into Thompson, and quite frankly, I would say, after nine and a half years of this government, we should be looking at a personal care home in our region in northern Manitoba. But the bottom line is after close to 10 years of Conservative government, you will not hear the Premier talking in his state-of-the-province address about our health care system because you ask one simple question to Manitobans today, after nine and a half years of Tory cutbacks, you know what answer you will get if you ask them: are you better off

in terms of your health care today, Madam Speaker? The answer is no. If you ask them: all right, do you have a better education system today, the answer is no. If you go even further and ask them about our economic circumstances, ask them if their children have better opportunities today than they had nine and a half years ago, the answer again is no.

We have seen close to 10 years of failure on behalf of this government. I say this government is out of touch. It is time to move on, and we look forward to the next election when we will bring in true health care reform in this province.

Operation Red Nose

Mr. Marcel Laurendeau (St. Norbert): Madam Speaker, I would like to invite my honourable colleagues and friends to volunteer for Operation Red Nose this year. It is in its third year of operation. For those of you who are unaware of Operation Red Nose, it is a volunteer effort that provides free rides for people who have had too much to drink and cannot drive home during the holiday season. They will not only drive you home, but they will drive your car home. Last year, this service was available in the cities of Brandon and Winnipeg, and we would like to welcome this year The Pas in their efforts in 1997.

There is no formal fee for the schedule for this service. However, a donation is encouraged to the Manta swim club in Winnipeg or the Kiwanis Club in Brandon. Last year approximately \$13,000 was raised in Winnipeg and \$5,000 was raised in Brandon. The Pas will be raising funds for the Rotary Club this year.

In 1996, there was a total of 1,709 people driven home in Winnipeg and Brandon. With the growing awareness of this program, I am sure that the numbers of passengers will increase. I would like to applaud the efforts of the 200 Brandon volunteers and 300 Winnipeg volunteers who gave their help to stop drinking and driving.

* (1450)

We are not expecting people to refrain from drinking over the holiday season. We are saying: if you drink, do not drive. Since the introduction of Operation Red

Nose in 1995, there has not been one fatality due to impaired driving on the nights this service was offered. Together, MPIC and the local community organization are educating the people of our province that drinking and driving do not mix. If we can educate Manitobans that drinking and driving is a fatal combination, then there is hope that one day there will not be an impaired driver on our streets.

So, Madam Speaker, if we must drink, call Operation Red Nose, and they will get us home safely. Thank you.

Occupational Health Centre

Mr. Tim Sale (Crescentwood): Madam Speaker, last week we made public in this House the fact that many families have waited as much as 12 years to receive benefits from the Workers Compensation system, and 10 more families still await benefits from the deaths of their spouses because of pancreatic cancer. Had it not been for the efforts, the very strong efforts of the Occupational Health Centre, a very important project of the Manitoba Federation of Labour and of this previous government which we put in place, then this case would never even have begun to go to appeal.

Had it not been for the very fine efforts of Dr. Anna-Lee Yassi to find funding not from the Workers Compensation Board but from other sources to undertake a very careful epidemiological study, had it not been for her professionalism and her skill, the science needed to finally prove the linkage would never have been undertaken. Had it not been for the very good efforts of the worker advisors in this case, and particularly August Bairos, who was the advisor who carried the case to the medical review panel after a great deal of effort, this would never have resulted in benefits for these families.

Let it not be thought that this is the Workers Compensation Board working well. This was the Occupational Health Centre; this was Dr. Anna-Lee Yassi; this was the worker advisors doing their utmost to appeal to a board which had received the wrong advice and had used the wrong act and the wrong criteria to turn down these widows incorrectly. It was only after a great deal of effort on the part of worker advisors, Dr. Yassi, the Occupational Health Centre

and the widows and families themselves who continued for years to be the advocates for their own cause, that they finally got justice, Madam Speaker.

R.W. Bobby Bend School

Mr. Edward Helwer (Gimli): Madam Speaker, this past Friday, along with the Premier, the Honourable Gary Filmon, and also the Honourable Linda McIntosh, the Minister of Education, I had the opportunity to attend the official opening of the R.W. Bobby Bend School in Stonewall. The addition to the R.W. Bobby Bend School is quite impressive and will benefit the nearly 500 students, teachers and staff there. The expansion includes four new classrooms. This has allowed the school to add an extra grade, Grade 4, which is in keeping with the philosophy of the early years education. The addition of the Bobby Bend School also involves a new library, so students will no longer have to use a converted classroom as their library. Also, the creation of a multipurpose room frees up more room for special programs such as the choir. There is also expanded room and a quieter space for special needs children.

Over the past few years we have seen an increase in the numbers of students in the Gimli constituency, especially in the Interlake school division. There has been an impressive amount of expansion in the Stonewall area, and as more and more families move into this region and enjoy all that this vibrant community has to offer, Stonewall and area residents have a great deal of respect for the value of education, and I know they will benefit from these expanded facilities. So I would like just to take this opportunity to once again congratulate the students, teachers and staff of the R.W. Bobby Bend School and to wish them much success in their newly expanded school. Thank you.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

THRONE SPEECH DEBATE (Seventh Day of Debate)

Madam Speaker: To resume adjourned debate on the proposed motion of the honourable member for Pembina (Mr. Dyck) and the proposed motion of the

honourable Leader of the Opposition (Mr. Doer) in amendment thereto, standing in the name of the honourable member for Inkster who has 35 minutes remaining.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Inkster): Madam Speaker, as I had indicated on Friday prior to leaving the Chamber, I said that I was going to give a great deal of thought in terms of exactly what it was that I would be saying today and, in fact, that great deal of thought ended up being more so a few hours.

Madam Speaker, I have always in the past voted against the throne speech and against the government budget, and I believe it is only me and the member for St. Boniface (Mr. Gaudry) that have done that since we were first elected back in 1988. I believe in the past that I have justified that by indicating that there is an obligation on members of opposition to provide constructive opposition to government. Even though in any given throne speech there are a number of positives and equally there are a number of negatives, I have always been of the opinion that as long as I believe the party in which I belong to is able to provide a better alternative that in fact it is my responsibility, at least in part, to vote against the throne speech, to vote against the budget, and then provide some sort of an idea as to why it is I voted that way and to share my thoughts and my voting pattern, if you like, with my constituents, the individuals whom I represent, first and foremost, inside this Chamber.

So when I was trying as well as I could to get some sort of an assessment of a current situation which was proving to be most awkward, something in which I had not experienced in my previous nine and a half years inside our party, what I have found is that over the weekend a number of questions that I had on Friday were in fact answered, and I do believe that the opportunity still is there for the provincial Liberal Party to provide a viable alternative to the government of the day. As a member of the Liberal Party caucus, what I would like to be able to do is to address some of the concerns and also give some credit where I believe the government has done well. What I did is, because of the somewhat limited time I am going to be able to speak today, came up with five or six points which I am hoping to cover.

The first one I wanted to touch upon was the one of the Constitution, primarily because I do know that there are going to be discussions over the next while, there are going to be public hearings and so forth. It is an issue in which I believe that I have been fairly involved in trying to get a better understanding so that I can better represent my constituents, and also to try to provide that constructive criticism to the government.

The issue on which I want to focus in the whole area of constitutional reform is to emphasize to the government, to the Premier (Mr. Filmon) in particular, that we should not lose focus that in any sort of constitutional round of debates there has to be a give-and-take on both sides. The concern that I have always had in the past has been that it has been very one-sided, where we have seen provincial governments make their demands and the federal government, at least in the past, appears to be giving in to those demands in order to achieve some sort of a constitutional package. That has not worked, Madam Speaker.

What I am hoping to see, in particular from this Premier, because this Premier is in fact the dean of the premiers across the country—and there is some expectation, Madam Speaker—is that he will take a leading role in some of those constitutional discussions. I would emphasize the importance of programs such as the health care in particular so that, when the Premier goes and has these discussions, we recognize that there are programs in which the federal government must continue to have a very significant role.

Having said that, Madam Speaker, because I know that there is going to be public hearings across the province, I do want to remain somewhat open-minded on it at least until Manitobans have had their opportunity to have a say in the form of a report, in which my colleague from St. Boniface represents both me and the member for The Maples (Mr. Kowalski), and has done exceptionally well in doing just that.

Madam Speaker, when I look at some of the positive things that the government has done, one of the biggest highlights no doubt would in fact be the hog industry in the sense of its expansion. Recently, we have heard the expansion of a plant which will bring in somewhere in the neighbourhood of 1,200 jobs. I think it is a fantastic opportunity for the community of Brandon,

and I would applaud all those individuals that were involved in making that project happen, because, as a direct result, what we will see is more prosperity for the Brandon community. I think that is something that is long, long overdue, but I would be remiss if I did not express some of the concerns.

* (1500)

One of the reasons why we have been able to accommodate that sort of expansion is some of the policies that were decided from the government 16 months, 18 months ago. That is when they started to move towards that vertical integration, for example. If you talked to the hog producers back then, the hog producers were exceptionally upset with the government because they were not consulted in a manner in which they felt was appropriate. I did get the opportunity to meet with dozens of hog producers; they were very upset and felt that in fact they were not consulted at all. The primary concern, of course, is that we do not lose the opportunity for the small hog producer, that that still be allowed to continue in some form into the future. We will watch very closely in terms of what the government is doing to ensure that that does in fact remain.

Of course, when I talk about the economy and I think of the hog industry, the other industry that has grown exceptionally huge in the province of Manitoba is that of, and this is more of a critique, the gambling industry. I can recall that, when I was first elected, we saw the Crystal Casino brought in, Madam Speaker. When we brought in the Crystal Casino, the argument then was that the proceeds would go towards health care. Then we brought in the rural VLTs and the argument for that was that those monies would be used for rural economic development. Then it was made wide-open where we saw our two huge bingo palaces on McPhillips and Regent. Then we saw VLTs scattered throughout the city, and today we have VLTs in every corner of the province.

What I would like the government to recognize is the fact that there really has not been any debate inside the Chamber, legitimate debate for a responsible gambling policy—[interjection] The member for St. Norbert (Mr. Laurendeau) tries to make reference to my own position on gambling, and I believe that back in '93, I did take a

very responsible approach to gambling, one that was more based on tourism as opposed to cash generation. I hope today that we will recognize the need to start talking about some of the negative social costs that the gaming policy has had on the province.

I have had a note passed to me from the former Speaker about three casinos. You know, when I look at those particular casinos, one of them that I was talking about was in Gull Harbour. Gull Harbour is a provincial resort that is losing tax dollars and if, in fact, you were to have some sort of a casino operation in a limited way located out there, Madam Speaker, I believe that makes a heck of a lot more sense than having it, let us say, across the street from high schools or in every corner that we have through the province. At Gull Harbour it is more, as I say, of a tourism way to expand on the attraction of gambling as a tourist type of thing.

Mr. Marcel Laurendeau, Deputy Speaker, in the Chair

The other issues that I was wanting to talk about, one being health care, you know, the government has shown that it can respond to opposition criticisms and public opinion. I was glad to see that the government has retracted on two very significant policies that would have had a devastating impact for the province of Manitoba; one in particular for the north end residents of Winnipeg, that being the Seven Oaks Hospital, and common sense prevailed. The former Minister of Health recognized that, and we still have the Seven Oaks Hospital today, because, I believe, the government at times has shown that they are listening.

The other issue, of course, is that of home care services, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Again, we pleaded in opposition. The public pleaded with the government to stay with a nonprofit publicly administered home care services. This is one of the areas in which I would like to see more coming down from Ottawa in terms of direction and financial assistance to ensure that we do have, again, some national standards on something in which not only Manitobans but all Canadians feel very, very passionate about.

There are still areas within health care that I believe that the government needs to look at to change policy. I look at issues such as public labs versus private

labs—I believe it is the province of Quebec where they have public labs—and you will find that the per capita cost is considerably less. I would ultimately argue that it is more in line with providing a one-tier system of health care which I think is in the best interest of all Manitobans, but the direction that the government is taking on that particular issue appears to be the one that favours additional privatization of these labs, and I find that to be a very serious mistake.

We have been very critical, in particular the New Democrats have been very critical towards the Connie Curran contract, and when I flash back to the Connie Curran contract, what comes to mind is the government's inability to work with some of those health care organizations and professionals in trying to invoke the changes.

I like to think that one of the biggest differences that we have within the Liberal caucus is the fact that we do not fear the change. We see change as a positive thing; it is just a question of how you manage that change, and the best way you manage that change, at least in most part, is that you have to work with people. I believe that the government has demonstrated by its actions that it has not been successful at working with people in the health care fields. So I hope that what we will see in time is more working with the people in trying to invoke or manage change so that it is accepted better and that in fact the change does and is in the public's best interest.

I then went to education, and when I think of education, this is an issue which I hold very close to my own heart, because I see education as windows of opportunities for future generations, and that public education should be there to challenge the abilities and skills of all children, no matter what level they might be at, whether they are learning disabled or the elite in terms of academics or the gifted, if I can use the word “gifted,” student, that you have to be able to challenge all those abilities. If in fact you do not have a progressive way of dealing with public education, we are going to continue to see young people falling through the cracks, and I would ultimately argue that the more that fall through that crack the more the costs to us are going to be in the future in terms of contribution towards the provincial product, to the social programs that are going to be potentially

necessary because we did not address it in a more aggressive fashion.

* (1510)

I wanted to appeal to this Minister of Education on the issue of history. I know one of the former ministers, Mr. Manness, did not seem to have a priority with the history, which I would have like to have seen. I still believe today that we do not get the type of history, enough Canadian history taught in our schools. If we go and we talk to some of those students that are there today and ask them some questions, you know, even our adult population, you know, there is one question that I have been kind of posing around the caucus and other individuals with respect to the Premier in the Province of Manitoba. How many people realize that the first Prime Minister of our country's son was in fact a Premier here in the province of Manitoba? Whatever political stripe, what you will find is that very few, and I asked quite a few people, very few people actually even knew of it, even members of the Legislative Assembly, not wanting to mention names, but I would suggest to you that of the ones I have talked to about this, only one actually knew it.

I think that we have a responsibility to ensure that we have an understanding of what being a Canadian is all about, so I emphasize that we ensure that we do not lose sight of that and I would appeal to the current Minister of Education to give that issue very serious consideration.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I want to talk about justice. Justice is something in which I believe, and I have had opportunity now twice since we have been back in session to bring up the issue, for example, of home invasions or break and enters. I really believe that break and enter has been somewhat marginalized in terms of the seriousness of a crime. I find that is in fact unfortunate, where we have over 6,000 break and enters in any given year from what I understand. That would be in the entire province of Manitoba, not just the city of Winnipeg.

This morning we heard about an individual senior, 91 years old, going down a flight of stairs. Last week I brought up a senior that I visited in Portage la Prairie that sleeps during the day, because she was harassed

and her home broken into late one evening. She bolts her doors shut. She is terrified to sleep at night. These are not infrequent events. They are happening far too often, and we need to do what we can to try to make people feel safe in their own home.

I would argue, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that each and every one of us and every Manitoban has the right to feel safe in their home, and I do not believe we are doing enough to ensure that that right is in fact fulfilled.

I am very pleased with the current minister's approach with youth justice committees. I, over the years, have worked primarily because of my colleague for The Maples (Mr. Kowalski), and I know other members, the member for St. Johns (Mr. Mackintosh), I believe the member for River Heights (Mr. Radcliffe), all of us have gotten into those youth justice committees and trying to be able to contribute.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, through you, I would highly recommend that the current Minister of Justice (Mr. Toews) continue on the track of trying to ensure that youth justice committees continue to expand in the province of Manitoba, and that we should do what we can to facilitate these committees to be able to contribute even more.

I know a couple of years back, our committee, and maybe it was somewhat handled improperly, I will not necessarily reflect too much on that, but the idea of youth justice committees, for example, dealing with young offenders under the age of 12. I recognize that there would be a need for parental consent in order for that to occur, but what we have to do is we have to start dealing with kids under the age of 12. When they are nine years old, eight years old, they know the difference between what is right and what is wrong.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, we do need to start to intervene and assist at that earlier age. It is not appropriate that there is no consequence in most of those cases, because they happen to be of an age that is under what the Young Offenders Act requires. To that end I too, like the government and I believe the members of the New Democratic Party, would like to see amendments to the Young Offenders Act. I would even be quite supportive of seeing a resolution inside this Chamber that would show that there is a united all-party support

for the need to make some of those modifications to the Young Offenders Act. That is the reason why, at least in part, I introduced the resolution inside the Chamber, and hopefully it will get debated sometime this year, where we talk about having an all-party task force of sorts to deal with issues like that where we do not necessarily have complete control, where we can lobby effectively together as a united Chamber to try to invoke changes at the national level.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I also wanted to be able to comment on the whole issue of our Crowns, the MTS and the way in which MTS was sold. I am talking about the pre-'95 campaign and MTS ultimately even being sold. I am going to have to agree to disagree with the government in terms of what it has done, but I must emphasize that we still have one of our Crown jewels, that being our Hydro, and I would suggest to the government that there is a need for change in that area.

The change that I would like to see, and I believe that in particular Winnipeggers would like to see, is that it makes no sense to have a Winnipeg Hydro and Manitoba Hydro, Mr. Deputy Speaker. There is no sense to it. The province needs to sit down with the city people, work out some sort of a compensation, and, in fact, I would argue that there are many, many reasons why that makes sense, everything from Winnipeg Hydro's needs in the future in terms of capital dollars in order to keep their facilities operating to the way in which it is handled with the consumers, to the duplication that exists. That is some sort of changes that I believe are necessary.

But I would caution the government that both the New Democrats and the Liberals, I believe, are very concerned with what intentions you might have in the long term with Manitoba Hydro, and I will be looking and monitoring very closely, as many others will, in terms of exactly what the government does.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, with those few words, I will, in fact, be voting consistent with the way in which I have voted in the past, and I thank you for the opportunity to speak.

Hon. Linda McIntosh (Minister of Education and Training): Mr. Deputy Speaker, I am honoured indeed to be able to rise and speak again to a throne speech put

forward by this particular government. I continue to be amazed and overwhelmed by the degree with which this particular government has been able to continue turning this province around and bringing back the strength, bringing back the—[interjection]

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order, please. Could I ask the honourable members who want to carry on a conversation to do so in the loge.

Mrs. McIntosh: I appreciate that members do become fairly agitated when they feel that their record might be compared to the record of the government on this side of the House, and I can understand that.

Just the other day, one day last week, the member for Wolseley (Ms. Friesen) was asking about the state of the buildings at the University of Manitoba, for example, and the kinds of issues they raise underscore the decades of neglect this province received prior to us coming into office.

I would think that it should be self-evident, and I am also constantly amazed at how members opposite do not see the self-evidence of what they are asking when a woman stands up and asks why this government has not yet repaired some 30 years of decay and neglect. She fails to understand that had those repairs been done when they were needed originally in the '60s, '70s, '80s, we would not be faced now with the overwhelming problem that has been dumped upon us by governments like the one that sat before the Filmon administration.

* (1520)

I say that, Mr. Deputy Speaker, by way of an example to underscore for the people opposite that when we were in times of plenty and double-digit revenues were rolling in, somehow they were not able to address the problems that were germinating in our society, and somehow they let those problems come into full bloom.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, the people then chose governments that would come in to try to clean up the mess that had been created, and governments right across this nation have been elected with the hopes that they could clean up the mess left by that kind of mentality that existed in those two decades, the '60s, '70s and '80s, when a mentality flourished of borrow,

borrow, borrow, spend, spend, spend. When all the debt came home to roost, when all the problems came home to roost, those governments that had been responsible for creating a situation that then got out of control and will take the better yet of two decades more to correct began howling somehow that the people called in to correct the problems they created were responsible for the problems they created. That is a fallacy that people do need to be reminded of.

In six short years of New Democratic reign in this province the New Democrats managed to create a society in Manitoba that in addition to the problems they did not address—they did not put a personal care home, for example, in Dauphin. They did not address the crumbling infrastructure at the University of Manitoba. They did not do a lot of other things as well. They did not put the money into women's shelters that should have been there that we put in. They did not do any of those things. Well, they started an airline which we are still paying \$52 million for and nothing is left of it. They did a number of things like that.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, we are now addressing technologies in health that did not even exist when they were in government, and they are saying that we need to expand them faster, which we could if we did not have the debt that they had racked up, which is a 30-year problem. They keep forgetting that the problems they created in six years will take us 30 years to correct. We are already partway through to correcting them, but we still have the better part of two decades left to undo the harm that they caused, they and others like them across this nation.

So I think they need to be wary of, they need to be reminded, particularly the new ones like the member for Swan River (Ms. Wowchuk) and the member for Dauphin (Mr. Struthers), who are talking to each other and not paying attention, they need to be reminded that they were not here when their predecessors did what they did to this province. But they are here now and they could at least help us undo some of the damage that was done and put in corrective action. It takes much longer to put the toothpaste back in the tube than it does to squeeze it all out. They squeezed out all the toothpaste and they are screaming at us because we are not getting it back in fast enough. They could get it out much faster than we could put it in, and we are now

putting back in a new, improved toothpaste than the garbage that they squeezed out. So I think they do need to remember from whence many of our problems came and the role that they played in it.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, could you please call them to order. I cannot speak over this yelling today. My throat is too sore. I would ask that they please be quiet.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order, please. Could I ask the indulgence of the members, please, to keep it down to a low roar. This is not a kindergarten class, and I do not want to speak to you as such. I also ask honourable members to allow a little bit of this to happen, because we are in some cases initiating this to happen.

The honourable minister, to continue.

Mrs. McIntosh: Thank you very much, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I appreciate that very much and I hope members will obey the Chair since they seem to feel that obeying the Chair is extremely important. At least they say they believe obeying the Chair is extremely important, so I trust they will now obey your dictum to not distract when someone has the floor.

Having indicated what I hope the members opposite will really try in their hearts to understand, that you can break something and it takes very little time to break it, it takes a much longer time to repair it once it is broken. [interjection]

Mr. Deputy Speaker, could you please call the members to order.

I realize that this is something that maybe they do not wish to acknowledge, but I think in order to solve the problems together, it is necessary for them to acknowledge what has happened and what needs to happen to correct it. [interjection]

Perhaps the member for Wellington (Ms. Barrett) would like to make her speech now, since she is so consistently chattering from her chair.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Could I ask honourable members to put their comments through the Chair, and if we do not provoke debate, debate might not be as—

An Honourable Member: As likely to take place. That is right.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: As likely to flow across the floor.

The honourable minister, to continue.

Mrs. McIntosh: Thank you very much, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I do think it is important that together we can recognize our problems without seeing them as provoking debate or assessing blame. I place no blame. I place no judgment. It is the way it was. As I said in my opening, provincial governments of every political stripe right across this country fell into the same trap that the New Democrats did here in the decade preceding this one. It was the mode and mentality of the times—the overborrowing, overspending, and getting provinces into problems. The federal government was doing the same thing.

The current governments—plural—across this nation have been elected to try to fix those problems created by a national mentality that was reflected in the mentality of the government. This is not a judgmental thing. This is something we need to face together so that we can correct together, and it would be very helpful if it could be seen that way, rather than this overly defensive attitude that has the member for Wellington still rudely speaking from her desk instead of obeying. The members opposite who believe in obeying the Speaker, they say, do not reflect that in their actions. Witness their behaviour right now, disobeying the Speaker's ruling, and so the next time they stand to say they want the Speaker to be obeyed, I think they should remember what they are doing right now.

We have in the time that we have been in office done a number of things to bring this problem back into a corrective mode, and it takes a very long time. But despite the fact we have had a national recession—[interjection] Mr. Deputy Speaker, could you please call the House to order so that I can speak and hear myself.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order, please. The honourable minister has the floor at this time. The honourable minister, to continue.

Mrs. McIntosh: Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I call to attention, for example, an article that was in the Free Press just this weekend. One of the things we had said when we took office was that we believed it was necessary to create a strong economy, a strong economy that would then generate enough revenue to be able to sustain the essential systems—[interjection]

Point of Order

Mrs. McIntosh: A point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: The honourable minister, on a point of order.

Mrs. McIntosh: Mr. Deputy Speaker, I am trying very hard to speak and be heard, and the member for Wellington, in particular, has not stopped chattering, even though you have admonished her on several occasions. I would ask on a point of order that she would follow the rules of this House, which are not to distract speakers when they have the floor and are trying to speak on something as important as the throne speech. Heckling from a seat, even if she is not in her own seat—which she is not—heckling from anywhere in the House while someone is trying to speak is against the rules of the House. The fact that they are consistently broken still does not negate the fact that this is a point of order that is valid.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: The honourable member for Wellington, on the same point of order.

Ms. Becky Barrett (Wellington): Mr. Deputy Speaker, I do not know if Beauchesne identifies or labels heckling, but what I was attempting to do with the Minister of Education (Mrs. McIntosh) is to ensure that accurate comments are placed on the record, and so far I have heard very little of any accuracy coming from the Minister of Education. I am trying to educate the Minister of Education.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: I will just ask the members to just give me one minute.

The honourable government House leader, on the same point of order.

* (1530)

Hon. James McCrae (Government House Leader): It strikes me that what we probably have here is a genuine honest difference of opinion between the two honourable members, and if all honourable members tried to observe the kind of decorum that we talk about all the time, Mr. Deputy Speaker, we may be able to get on with some progress this afternoon.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: I thank the honourable minister for that.

Order, please. The honourable minister did not have a point of order, but I would ask for the co-operation of the House. We are into debate, and we each have a small portion of time allocated to put our views forward. Sometimes we disagree with those views, and it can add a little bit of disagreement within the Chamber. I will allow a little bit of that in the Chamber, but I think we have to keep it to a low.

The honourable minister, to continue.

* * *

Mrs. McIntosh: Mr. Deputy Speaker, we had said coming into office that what we needed was a strong economy that would generate enough jobs and generate enough revenue and generate enough wealth to be able to support and sustain those essential services and programs that are the hallmark of a caring and compassionate society. That is what we said in 1988 and in 1989, and we have said that each successive year.

How do you build a strong economy capable of achieving those ends? Well, Mr. Deputy Speaker, you do it in several ways. One, you first of all ensure that jobs are created. You do not do that by government creating jobs, you do not do that by, say, starting an airline when you do not know anything about running an airline. You instead do things such as lower the aviation fuel tax and put in incentives so that businesses can flourish and jobs can be created. That is the type of thing that we did.

For 10 years, we have not raised any of the major taxes. It is a North American record of unparalleled

performance, and it is recognized, not only in Canada, but internationally as well that Manitoba has achieved this. Manitoba has also reduced personal income tax by 2 percent, all of these types of things done in one of the biggest national recessions the country has faced in the early '90s. So while we had small revenue coming in from external sources, massive cutbacks in transfer payments, all of those items that governments before us had never had to cope with, we still managed to improve the economy to such a degree that we have attracted businesses that we have by tax incentives, by a whole series of positive climating, enabled businesses to expand or to locate here.

The net result is, of course, the creation of jobs, and that creation of jobs has meant that more people have become self-sufficient and independent. I am not talking about part-time jobs. I know members opposite try to pretend these are part-time McJobs. They are wrong. We have more full-time jobs, permanent jobs leading to good futures, providing stable incomes for families. We have seen more people come off welfare to become fully productive citizens, to have independent lives of self-sufficiency.

We have done things with hog marketing that have been extremely beneficial to this province. That is just one example, Mr. Deputy Speaker, of dozens and dozens and dozens of examples. They were fought—[interjection] Well, those kinds of changes were fought bitterly by members opposite, but those were very good decisions, and they resulted in the jobs that we were looking to see created in the private sector, not by government. At the same time, we have downsized our own workforce in a humane way such that we were able to downsize thousands of positions with very few actual layoffs.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, the article I referred to in the paper the other day has the heading: There is no place like home for finding jobs. If I may be permitted to quote: We see that Manitobans who have left the province because of big job prospects are coming back, and they are finding just what they are looking for, and job hunters still in Manitoba do not need to look much further than home because the province has the highest rate of full-time employment in Canada right now. This is a great time to be a Manitoban. Statistics Canada figures show the creation of 14,200 full-time jobs so far

in 1997, an increase of more than 3 percent over the same period in 1996 and twice the national average. Some people are coming home to find jobs waiting for them, said Mr. Jim Downey, our Minister of Industry, Trade and Tourism. The employment rate which is a low 6.4 percent is a good sign for Manitoba's future economic employment.

I think it is fabulous news that confirms that when unemployment was low early this year, it was not just a temporary trend, said Harry Mardon. It is not just in Winnipeg; it is in rural Manitoba as well, he said.

So you see the types of things that are being reported in the paper, Mr. Deputy Speaker, and that is not, of course, the only thing that is being reported in the paper. I am quoting the paper because notoriously this particular paper is not seen to be a friend of the Tory government necessarily, so these are I think rather significant articles. We tend to hear it more being presented as a glass half empty than half full, so I think these articles are significant.

Manitoba tops the nation. Again, this is Saturday's paper. I am still being heckled extremely rudely by the member for Wellington (Ms. Barrett), and it is hard for me to hear, but I am going to prevail without asking for a point of order which I believe is legitimate, that I could ask.

It is the best of times for Bud Howard and thousands of people like him. A booming economy helped push the Manitoba jobless rate down to 6.4 percent last month translating into steady work at a good job for Howard after 12 months of unemployment. Things are really picking up, he said. The guys are always talking about all the jobs out there and who is hiring. It is a great change from the way things used to be, and so on, and so on.

We know that these jobs, Mr. Deputy Speaker, are—there are 14,200 more jobs just over this year alone. If you look at figures going back to—I hesitate to say the previous government because the member for Thompson (Mr. Ashton) points out we were the previous government—the previous administration, the New Democratic administration, you will see these figures being quite different and quite improved over that situation.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, we have taken an historic first step by making our first payment towards the total elimination of Manitoba's debt, a very significant step that is absolutely supported by the majority of Manitobans. This we all know; members opposite know this. That is why members opposite have recently begun to say that they do support the elimination of the debt. That is a new thing for them to be saying, and it is a good thing for them to be saying. They are saying it in response to the public's acceptance of the way we are following through in our commitment to the people of Manitoba.

We have our third balanced budget which will free up dollars ultimately for support of those essential services, compared to what would have happened, Mr. Deputy Speaker, had we carried on—[interjection] The member for Wellington (Ms. Barrett), I invite her to stand right now and put those comments on the record. I have no objection to her standing and putting it on the record as she said them from her seat, not changed.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: The honourable member for Wellington, on a point of order?

Ms. Barrett: No, in response to the Minister of Education's invitation.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order, please. The honourable member will have her opportunity when the minister is finished. This is not a question-and-answer period. The honourable minister, to continue her presentation.

* (1540)

Mrs. McIntosh: Then I presume I will not be getting any more questions from the chair, from the seat, if she is not to do that publicly.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, what we do know is that third balanced budget and the way in which the money has been handled by the very capable people in government, that we will soon begin to see more money for our social programs. We do have money set aside for things like floods and fires and national disasters. [interjection]

I cannot believe she is still carrying on. I mean, I would be so embarrassed if I were her, I just—honestly.

However, that is her choice. We do know that the members opposite, the member for Wellington (Ms. Barrett) wants us to spend every cent we have in the rainy day fund. She has said that clearly, and I would like to see her say that publicly in her speech when she makes it and send a notice saying she wants to spend every penny in the rainy day fund. On what? I would like to know on what—

Point of Order

Ms. Barrett: A point of order.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order, please. The honourable member for Wellington, on a point of order.

Ms. Barrett: On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I have never said in this Chamber I or we wanted to spend every single penny of the rainy day fund. There is, however, a fund of \$577 million and wait lists of three years for special assessment for children in the minister's own department.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order, please. The honourable member did not have a point of order; it is clearly a dispute over the facts.

* * *

Mr. Deputy Speaker: The honourable minister, to continue.

Mrs. McIntosh: Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I am delighted that the member has now acknowledged the need for a rainy day fund, that she would not spend the rainy day fund in its totality if they were in power. Many of their members, including her, have given that impression, so this reversal is heartening. The NDP do support the existence of a rainy day fund.

Without the measures we put in place, we would not—

Point of Order

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order, please. The honourable member for Wellington, on a point of order.

Ms. Barrett: The Minister of Education (Mrs. McIntosh) has been stating time and time again that we

are putting inaccuracies on the record. I would like you to admonish the Minister of Education not to put words into the mouths of people other than herself. She has difficulty enough with that. No one has said that we are supporting the rainy day fund. What I said was there was a rainy day fund, and there is also a wait list of three years for special assessments for children in her own department. Please ask her to be accurate when she makes her comments from her chair.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order, please. The honourable member did not have a point of order; clearly a dispute over the facts.

* * *

Mr. Deputy Speaker: The honourable minister, to continue.

Mrs. McIntosh: Thank you very much. I believe the record will show the member said she would not spend all the money in the rainy day fund; ergo must one conclude that she would leave some money in the rainy day fund. Why would she do that if she does not support a rainy day fund? Pardon me, but we take deductive reasoning in school. If she wants to come and sit in on some of the lessons, she would be most welcome. It is part of our new assessment in schools.

An Honourable Member: Are you next, Becky?

Mrs. McIntosh: I hope she is, yes. I have to indicate that what we have is a rainy day fund which the NDP would not spend in its totality. The member for Wellington (Ms. Barrett) has made it clear that they would not spend all that money in the rainy day fund; they would leave some in that rainy day fund. She made that clear.

If we had not done what we have done, what we would have instead would be an escalation of the \$2 million a day in interest that we have to pay on the debt that they incurred in six years and left to us as a legacy, and every time we have to spend that amount of money on a daily basis for interest on the debt, we have that much less left that we can spend on emergency items, essential services, et cetera, so I maintain that we are in a far better position today with the first major payment on the debt, with money in place for essential services,

with emergency money set aside in a rainy day fund that the NDP would not spend in its totality.

We are building for the future. I look forward to the day, and it will be in my lifetime, when my daughter as a citizen of Manitoba does not have to wake up in the morning and know that the government is taking \$2 million of taxpayers' money away from her and others like her every day of the year to throw on interest on the debt and never be a benefit to her. I look forward to the day, some 20 years hence, before she is my age, when she can live in a debt-free province, keep some of the money she earns in her own pocket, get better services because there is more money left over to use for services because the debt as we know it, given to us by our friends opposite, will no longer exist for our children.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I look forward to that. I look forward to grandchildren that I might have being able to grow up without this debt hanging over them, so that we can afford food programs in schools for children instead of taking money on the debt. All the money we have to spend on the debt—[interjection]

Now, the member opposite has just said some very terrible things. I encourage her when she makes her speech to repeat them verbatim the way she has just said them now and have the courage and the guts to put them on the record as she spitefully spits them across the House. I do not know that she would have the courage to do that, but I challenge her to put those words exactly as she just said them on the record in her speech. I suspect they will come out slightly changed, slightly modified, slightly toned down so as not to offend any constituents of hers who might read them. [interjection]

You know, there is something that happens in this Chamber that—

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order, please. It is going above and beyond what I was allowing. I said I would allow a little bit, but we are going beyond that, so could we bring it back to a low level? The honourable minister, to continue.

Mrs. McIntosh: Just to give you an example, Mr. Deputy Speaker, of the kind of support we have been

able to provide to some of the social services, namely education, for which I am currently minister, we have in Manitoba over the past nine and a half years of careful attention to the province's finances still increased funding to public education by \$115 million—\$115 million more this year than the year we came into office for our public schools. [interjection]

Now, Mr. Struthers has taken up where the other member left off. I find it extremely offensive.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order, please. Could I remind honourable members that we refer to the other members by their ridings, not by their names. The honourable minister, to continue.

Mrs. McIntosh: Part of the problem I think we have, Mr. Deputy Speaker, is that when I say things like we have \$115 million more spent on education, public school education this year from the province than when we took office, part of the problem is the members opposite get very agitated with that statistic. They would prefer to talk about the three years when there was a 2 percent cut, but I have to say that even including that 2 percent cut for those three years we still are putting \$115 million more into public schools this year than in 1988, and that money has kept pace with inflation over the last recorded 10-year period, except for 0.5 percent. It has kept pace with inflation except for 0.5 percent.

What has also happened over that last 10-year recorded period, of course, is that school divisions' spending outstripped inflation by 15 percent. Now, some of that was for legitimate reasoning. Some was not; some was. I am not placing judgment on it. I am just saying that that funding kept pace with inflation. The spending outstripped inflation for a variety of reasons that we are working with school divisions to try and address.

That is just for public schools. The member for Dauphin (Mr. Struthers) may question the figures, but I invite him to do the math, \$746.5 million this year, compared to \$631.7 million when we took office. That is \$115 million by anybody's calculations, and by anybody's calculations it is a substantial increase. That is just public schools, just public schools.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, we also talk about the total amount spent on all education, and when we took office that was 18 percent of a \$4-billion budget. It is now 19 percent of a \$5-billion budget which, again, is a very substantial increase. It is second only to Health in terms of an overall expenditure.

* (1550)

We did a number of other things as well, Mr. Deputy Speaker. We have one of the lowest class sizes in Canada, the lowest pupil-educator ratios in Canada, approximately 19 students per classroom teacher and approximately 15 students for every person holding a teaching certificate in the school. That latter figure includes people like principals, resource teachers who do not normally teach in the classroom. Over and above this, of course, above those people just identified, we have teacher assistants and medical personnel in many schools.

But, Mr. Deputy Speaker, we did all of this with a decrease in transfer payments from Ottawa for Health and Education and Family Services. They cut us from \$744 million in '94-95 down to \$499 million this year. It is a huge cut that the province has had to absorb, and we absorbed that cut, and all we passed through during that era was a 2 percent to the public schools. That cut, if all applied to post-secondary education alone, is the equivalent of the operating budget of the University of Manitoba. We did not close the University of Manitoba down. We did not push the whole burden onto public schools or the whole burden onto some other area of endeavour in Health or Family Services. We managed through that depression and through those horrendous transfer cuts in ways that I challenge the members opposite to ever be able to meet.

Their solution would have been—they would have said we have no choice, we have to raise taxes. I know beyond a shadow of a doubt that they would have said we cannot meet these crises in revenue reductions to us; we have no choice; we will have to raise taxes. That is what they would have done, and we would have been again into the over-borrowing, over-spending instead of cost containment, cost management, and that is very bad for a province that ultimately wishes to be healthy. It is like a family putting all its credit cards to the maximum and then finding out it does not have enough

coming in its pay cheque to cover their grocery costs. It is foolish to do that, and it would be foolish for a province to do that as well.

I have to indicate, as well, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that funding for special needs students is currently \$92.9 million which is \$8.6 million more than it was in 1993, so there, again, despite the financial problems wrested upon us by Ottawa, et cetera, and the recession, we have still substantially increased the amount of money.

We have done a number of things like that, Mr. Deputy Speaker. We have in terms of youth employment tremendous opportunities. We have assisted some 15,000 students and youth annually, annually, with employment opportunities.

We have worked to ensure post-secondary education remains affordable and accessible, and we currently enjoy the third-lowest tuition fees in the country. That is third-lowest tuition for undergraduate arts and science degrees which have the largest enrollments nationally. That is a really good record. Just ask people who are trying to support others taking post-secondary education in other jurisdictions how well we fare by comparison. We also have tremendous accessibility into our post-secondary institutions here.

We have also facilitated greater credit transfers and program recognition at the post-secondary level between and amongst institutions. We have given students a stronger voice in decision making, having committed to a 25 percent makeup of all boards of governors being made up of students. Students have been crying for that voice and were never given it before. This government has given it to them.

We have put in the learning tax credit for students. We have provided some \$5.5 million for fire and safety upgrades at the University of Manitoba and the University of Winnipeg, something that was long overdue, repairs that needed tending 10, 20 years ago, never addressed by members opposite when they were in office, never addressed when the problems began and when the repairs were first needed, being addressed now by this—[interjection] We put in \$12 million for the new Faculty of Agriculture for the aggie building out at the University of Manitoba. That building was of vital necessity. It had to be completely replaced because it

had not been repaired under the New Democrats as it should have been. It finally resulted in a complete replacement of the building which we made available for that particular institution.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I believe that we have done so much in terms of education despite the problems we have faced financially. At the same time that we were able to sustain the system and are now beginning to add back into the system, we managed to bring in standards. We managed to do a number of other things in the schools in terms of assessment, proper assessment, asked for by the parents in the first two Parents' Forums we held where we had the first Parents' Forum and parents said: No. 1. What do you want? They said we want standards, measurable standards, properly assessed, proper evaluation for our students. We have provided that. We recently had a feedback forum where we brought parents in and said to them that we are now being able to tell them how we have responded to their initial requests of updated, relevant curricula. History. The member for Inkster (Mr. Lamoureux) mentioned history. Absolutely. Those dreadful statistics he was quoting are all the products of the current history curriculum put in place by the NDP. We are bringing in new history curriculum that will be more relevant, more succinct, more concentrated. We will have more history taught in the schools than we currently do now, and it will be enriched Canadian history.

Those stats the member for Inkster quoted are statistics that are the results gleaned by the current curriculum which has been in place since the NDP were in power. We have promised to change that and get better results and better knowledge of Canadian history by the citizens of this province. We do not want those stats that are the results of those years to remain. We do and we will—we do wish to see them enhanced and we will see them enhanced.

You have to know that in my area the Grace Hospital will now be the centre for replacing hips, et cetera. The long waiting list will be shortened right in my neighbourhood. We are opening four operating wards in the hospital at Grace whereas in 1987, the year before we came into power, the NDP closed four operating wards in Winnipeg hospitals. The NDP closed four operating wards in hospitals in 1987. We

are opening four in the Grace Hospital in my constituency in 1997. I think that says it all right there, Mr. Deputy Speaker, and in doing so we are addressing the long list of hip replacements most of, which were not being—a lot of these surgeries were not being done very much at all a decade or two decades ago because they were not commonplace pieces of surgery.

But as we become more and more sophisticated in the medical technologies, more and more sophisticated in the educational technologies, we are determined that we will have an economy strong enough to be able to afford these things for the people, and we will not allow ourselves to sink into that long deep hole of debt from which we are slowly climbing out. We have spent too much energy climbing out of that hole of debt to let ourselves slide back down into it.

I am very proud of the initiatives announced in the throne speech, very proud of the work this government has done. I am very pleased that people have come back to this province to work, to live, to raise a family, to seek employment and a good quality of life for their families. That is what we wanted in 1988. That is what we are providing. That is what we will continue to provide. That is the type of thing I believe people want to see continue, and all the naysaying from members opposite, all the cruel and vicious jibes from the their seats, all of the things that they have tried to do to deflect attention away from the real issues, away from the substantive issues, away from the things that count, to bring up red herrings over whether something was done according to protocol or not, anything to avoid talking about the real issues in Manitoba they will do. I think if only once we could go through a session where we actually work as partners who cared about the people of Manitoba instead of pretending, as so often happens, that the real issues which we are addressing are not real issues.

I just invite them to think ahead to any children or grandchildren they might have and the kind of world they would like them living in 25 years from now, and they have to know in their hearts that a province riddled with debt will never be able to provide their children what we could provide them in a province without debt.

* (1600)

So it is wonderful for them to promise to spend money, spend money, spend money, but they have to get the money from someplace. The money—there is only one place that money comes from and it is from people who live in this province who do not want to pay any more money than they are currently paying. Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Mr. Gerard Jennissen (Flin Flon): I am pleased to have the opportunity to put some words on record regarding the throne speech of this the fourth session of the Thirty-sixth Legislature of the Province of Manitoba.

I welcome back all the other members of this House, and I extend a particular welcome to the newest member of the House, the member for Portage la Prairie (Mr. Faurichou). I had the opportunity of briefly meeting him on election day at Portage la Prairie, although that election did not particularly turn out the way I wanted it to, but I do bid him welcome.

It was with considerable interest I listened to his maiden speech. He is obviously a valuable addition to this House, and I wish him well. I also extend a warm welcome to the six pages. I am sure that the daily proceedings in this Chamber will be a real learning experience for them.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I will describe this throne speech as others have before me as a warm-and-fuzzy document lacking in detail. It is a stay-the-course document that avoids all the negatives of unbridled fiscal conservatism, and in fact as if by a magic wand turns all the darker questionable, painful aspects of this government's policies into virtues.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, in my other life I was a teacher of English, and I take particular interest in how words and sentences are put together in order to create a world of reality and this is word reality. Sometimes this word reality has very little to do with real reality. In analyzing the composition of this document, I was struck by the fact that even for throne speeches this one was unusually heavy on positive spin.

This speech is full of words with positive connotations, adjectives such as proud, strong, new,

enhanced, abundant, potential, co-operative, and this document is loaded with nouns such as partnerships, success, vision and opportunity.

Now, I do not blame the government for doing this. If the government wishes to make much of its intermittent, sporadic, modest and limited success, then let it do so, but it is certainly not a balanced picture that is being presented. The government in this throne speech is making mountains out of molehills. Fortunately, the majority of Manitobans do not take the throne speech that seriously. Instead of words, words, words, as Hamlet said, they look for actions, actions, actions, but as usual from this government they get inactions instead.

The government and the throne speech like to create popular mythology, sometimes aided and abetted by the media, that the vast majority of Manitobans support the cost-cutting, belt-tightening, mean-spirited direction this government is taking. The fact is that if you take into account the number of Manitobans eligible to vote who did not vote in the last election, then approximately 70 percent of Manitobans in 1995 either did not vote at all or voted for some other party than the Tory party. So much for the reality of public endorsement for the right-wing policies of this government.

My Leader, in his response to the throne speech, labelled this government a government for the privileged few, a government that does not speak for children, for the poor, for aboriginal people, for immigrants, for northerners, for working-class people. This government does not really listen to ordinary Manitobans.

We saw a clear example of this during the MTS furor and the eventual selling of MTS. Did the majority of Manitobans want this publicly owned utility sold? Absolutely not, and while the Premier (Mr. Filmon) was assuring us that the government had no intention of selling MTS, the secret deals were on. The fate of the people's utility was sealed. Yes, government for the privileged, because a privileged few, especially brokers, made obscene amounts of profit, and ordinary Manitobans will pay the increased monthly rates on telephone service.

The throne speech does a good job of camouflaging the true nature of this government, a government that emphasizes the wishes of the privileged few and puts these wishes far ahead of the needs, the actual needs of ordinary Manitobans. Rapidly, a two-tiered system is developing for health and education: one system for the rich, and the other one for the rest of us. If you are rich and if you are ill, you can go to Grafton, North Dakota, for diagnostic services. You do not have to wait. You can avoid the long waiting list; you can jump the queue. Similarly, if you have money, you can send your children to private school and let the public system struggle on its own. Surely in the home care strike last year, it was clear to everyone that this government was prepared to privatize home care and attack the living standards of hundreds and hundreds of home care workers just so that a handful of Manitobans could become rich.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, the throne speech devotes considerable space to the flood of the century, and, yes, we applaud the generosity and the hard work of Manitobans and others in fighting the flood of the century. Yes, the government may have nickelled and dimed some of the flood victims, but at least they acknowledge that flood occurred. Floods in northern Manitoba are not even mentioned, even though Hydro officials admit that by keeping the Nelson channel artificially low to accommodate southern flood waters creeping north, the effect on South Indian Lake was sudden increased water levels.

There was virtually no warning to the fishers of South Indian Lake, and I am not making this up. I went to visit there, and I did see the nets that were damaged, the shorelines that were eroded, the water quality that was extremely bad; it was full of silt. We realized that the fishing industry was badly damaged. Whitefish were spawning along the shoreline, where the eggs are going to freeze this winter because the water will inevitably drop. I think the fisheries may have been damaged beyond immediate repair; it may take years to repair that fishery.

So when we asked the Minister of Northern Affairs (Mr. Newman) on Wednesday, December 3, whether he believed that the Red River flood had any impact on South Indian Lake, he said he did not think so. Then the following day we asked the Minister of Natural

Resources (Mr. Cummings), and he just simply quoted the Minister of Northern Affairs, basically saying that this government has to take no blame for anything that happened in the northern communities that were ravaged by flood this fall, even though the same flood waters obviously went north and did damage to those communities.

Madam Speaker in the Chair

Madam Speaker, there is virtually nothing for northern Manitobans in this throne speech. There is a vague reference to all Manitobans in all regions sharing economic benefits. That sounds good. There is a vague reference to a commitment to make northern communities more self-reliant. That sounds good too. There is a one-sentence acknowledgement that the Churchill rail line and the Port of Churchill are an important link on the north-south, midcontinent trade corridor, and although mining is Manitoba's second-largest primary resource industry, an industry that is worth a billion dollars annually, it received only one scant and somewhat misleading paragraph in the throne speech.

I believe it is worth quoting this paragraph to show how fuzzy, noncommittal, and often misleading the wording of the throne speech can really be, and I quote: "Close to 100 years of exploration and mining success have spurred the growth of major mining centres such as Thompson, Flin Flon, Snow Lake and Lynn Lake. From these hubs a strong infrastructure spreads across the North in support of increasing exploration and mining activity. As well, new frontiers await development in the northeastern part of the province, with its extensive tracts of underexplored mineral deposits."

That quote is on page 14 of the throne speech.

Now, let us take a closer look at this paragraph just quoted, Madam Speaker. First of all, I do not know where the hundred years of mining success came in. Leaf Rapids, which is not even mentioned, just finished celebrating its 25th year of existence a year ago; Snow Lake celebrated its 50th anniversary this year; Thompson and Lynn Lake were developed in the 1950s. The throne speech refers to these towns and cities as hubs of infrastructure spreading out across the

North and ignores the fact that much of the actual infrastructure is either deteriorating or nonexistent. Take Lynn Lake, for example. The only road into town, PR 391, needs major improvement. Between Lynn Lake and Leaf, we have over 100 kilometres of potholes, bumps and broken pavement. The federal government, which once owned and controlled the Lynn Lake airport, dumped the facility into the town's lap, a town which has lost a lot of population over the years and which is ill-equipped to handle a large airport built in better times and built for better times.

The only bank in Lynn Lake is pulling out its services in January, leaving not even an automated teller or money machine. This lack of service affects not only the people of Lynn Lake but will also affect the surrounding communities of Brochet, Pukatawagan, Lac Brochet, Tadoule Lake and so on and also the future reserve of Black Sturgeon. I know what this can do to a community because 15 or so years ago the Royal Bank pulled out of Cranberry Portage. It started a train of events which led to many businesses closing in the community because when people shop in the neighbouring town, as the people from Cranberry Portage did by going to do their banking service in Flin Flon, then they also buy other services. The net result is the community is damaged.

* (1610)

Now all of this does not sound like strong infrastructure and services spreading across the North. Absolutely not. It sounds more like cutbacks and retrenchment and downsizing and shrinking and isolating.

Then there is Leaf Rapids. The throne speech does not mention the town but, as a mining town, it, too, faces major challenges. The Ruttan Mine, according to HBM&S, is slated to cease operation in the year 2003 or 2004. Ruttan is the town's biggest employer, and when Ruttan ceases to operate, it will be a major blow to the town. There is hope that new exploitable mineral deposits will be found near Leaf Rapids, but, as of now, that is not yet a fact. The town has downsized considerably over the years. Many apartments and houses have been boarded shut. Leaf Rapids, however, is a fighting town used to adversity.

The provincial government is trying to remove itself from Leaf Rapids by attempting to sell parts of and possibly all of their property. Services have been cut. Keeping physicians has become a challenge in this community of Leaf Rapids as in other northern communities, thanks to this government. While southern Manitobans are compensated to some degree for their flood-damaged properties, many people in Leaf Rapids who lost their homes, buildings, possessions in a forest fire of 1995 were never compensated. They do not live on a flood plain, but they do live in forest-fire prone areas.

The throne speech also mentions Snow Lake as one of those northern mining towns with strong infrastructure, and, indeed, Snow Lake has bounced back from very difficult times a few years ago. Over the past few weeks, the community has fought to keep its two doctors. The gold mine, TVX New Britannia, employs 260 people, and Photo Lake, about 60. The Photo Lake Mine was officially opened about two years ago and will cease production approximately the middle of 1998. Photo Lake contains very high-grade copper, but the deposit is not large.

The hope that is in all of us in the North is that some major mineral deposits will be found and found soon, and certainly there are encouraging signs. The titanium deposit near Cross Lake and the copper deposit near Knife Lake in Saskatchewan are examples. But the fact remains, there are fewer miners working in northern Manitoba today than there were a few years ago. Mineral exploration is down this year over last year, and although the super-sophisticated spectrum airplane used by HBM&S to pinpoint mineral deposits has given us hundreds of potential new sites, whether any of these sites will become commercially viable mine sites or are of significant size remains to be seen. Certainly, every northerner, every Manitoban for that matter, hopes that one of these days someone will hit the mother lode and thus extend the lifeline and the prosperity of existing northern mining towns or even create new mining cities like Flin Flon or Thompson.

The throne speech mentions Flin Flon as a mining hub whose strong infrastructure spreads North. Indeed, Flin Flon is the oldest continual operational mining community in northern Manitoba, although nowhere near the 100 years as suggested by the throne speech.

Indeed, Flin Flon is a unique and internationally famous mining city known not just for its mining history but also for its generous and hospitable people and its passion for hockey. Who has not heard of the Flin Flon Bombers, Bobby Clarke, Reggie Leach and the Whitney Forum? In fact, Whitney Forum is listed as one of the 10 most famous arenas in Canada. But Flin Flon, like other northern mining communities, has fallen on difficult times. The city's population has stabilized at between 7,000 and 8,000, but it is a far lower population than 20 years ago or even 15 years ago.

Much of Flin Flon's infrastructure needs to be renewed or upgraded, and this is especially true for the water and the sewer system. To provide the city with an upgraded water and sewer system and to include the suburb of Channing, we are looking a price tag of perhaps around \$15 million. This does not mean we cannot put the plans into place now and work on this project phase by phase. Although Flin Flon may have lost size, it certainly has not lost its determination to do well in the future; in fact, Mayor Craig, and I am quoting him from a speech the other day from The Flin Flon Reminder, said we might be a smaller community but we are a closer community. The sky has not fallen yet. That was Mayor Craig.

Which means that Flin Flon will remain optimistic about its future because its citizens are willing to work together to create a viable future. Working together is the northern way. I know the government continually talks about partnership, but in the North it is a way of life. We practise it.

Just last year in northern communities business and labour groups joined together in the back-on-track coalition to save the Sherridon line from being torn up for scrap. Another example is Healthy Flin Flon. Once a month, usually on a Monday at noon hour, a variety of spokespersons for various sectors meet in the friendship centre in Flin Flon to discuss and initiate plans on how to make the city a better place to live. These are only several examples. Flin Flon will survive despite the cutbacks, despite the draconian slashing to the general hospital, despite the removal of service jobs by both levels of government, which is certainly not congruent with this government's once prized objective of decentralization.

Flin Flon has seen only government centralization away from Flin Flon. This is not acceptable; this government promises but seldom delivers. They promised Flin Flon a personal care home before the election but cut the hospital by \$1.5 million after the election. They talk about their concerns about domestic violence, and then they close the Flin Flon/Creighton Crisis Centre, a centre that served a huge catchment area of northern and eastern Manitoba and northwestern Saskatchewan.

We know we cannot trust this government. As with MTS, they promise one thing before an election and do another after an election. But northerners are patient. Forty-degree-below weather and heavy snowstorms soon force us to be patient, but we have long memories, and cities like Flin Flon will go on surviving, hopefully expanding. We know that in order for Flin Flon to get safely beyond the year 2004, a great deal of work and planning must take place. We know that well over \$600 million will be needed for new mining projects and expansion of ongoing projects if Flin Flon is to get safely by the year 2012. The plans to make this a reality are underway, and key stakeholders have formed a governance council to plot the course that will ensure Flin Flon's future beyond the year 2012. I thank all members of this governance council for their sincere efforts, their proactive energy, ensuring that, by their planning and by their strategizing, Flin Flon and the surrounding region will continue to be a prosperous mining city and mining region.

Now it is possible, Madam Speaker, that members opposite feel that I am biased in my presentation of northern realities. They might argue that Tories in northern Manitoba might paint a more positive picture than I do of what this government does or fails to do for northern Manitoba, and that sounds logical.

Let me quote just a few excerpts from The Flin Flon Reminder, Wednesday, December 3. The staff writer for The Flin Flon Reminder, Grant Elliot, under the heading, Flin Flon Chamber group meets minister, reports that a four-member delegation from the Flin Flon and District Chamber of Commerce was reviewing their presentation for Finance Minister Eric Stefanson—Mr. Stefanson was having a prebudget public consultation meeting in The Pas—but allow me to quote, Madam Speaker. Under the heading, Flin Flon

Chamber group meets minister, a four-member delegation from the Flin Flon and District Chamber of Commerce was to tell Manitoba Finance Minister Eric Stefanson last night that the provincial government must start doing more for northern Manitoba.

The four Chamber of Commerce members, Cheryl Hordal, Gord Mitchell, Gerry Hildebrand and Nazir Ahmad, attended the minister's prebudget public consultation meeting at The Pas. The group spokesman, Ahmad, told yesterday's noon-hour chamber meeting that the delegation will present the Finance minister with a list of concerns about the lack of government spending in the North. We will tell the minister that it is our turn now for some development funding, Ahmad said.

Further, there should be no need to travel to southern Manitoba to receive specialized medical care, and there is no reason to travel to southern Manitoba to get a university degree, he said. This is Mr. Ahmad. Further, he says: We would like the province to institute a higher level of education that uses modern technology like television and satellites. Further, he says: Smaller northern communities should be receiving basic seed money to explore economic development options. Funding could be approved on the merit of the particular development studies, Ahmad said.

* (1620)

He asked for lower Manitoba Hydro rates. He says: We would like the government to introduce some form of rate incentive or rate adjustment for the North. He also says: The economy of northern Manitoba should be fully integrated with the economy of the south, and he says: We need provincial money to spend on capital projects that promote sustainable development. Above all, he says: The province should spend more on highways and health care in the North. That is Mr. Ahmad.

Now, they did go to the meeting the following day in The Pas, and again from The Flin Flon Reminder, December 4, and I will make it very short, Nazir Ahmad says, and I am quoting: The meeting was not as productive for the Flin Flon delegation as had been expected. The format of the prebudget meeting did not

allow for individual or group submissions, he says. He also says: The ministers were about an hour and a half late, and the people at the meeting were given questionnaires to fill out, Ahmad says.

So this gentleman says that the meeting was not as productive as they had expected, and I am willing to table those excerpts, Madam Speaker.

Now, let me be clear as to who was speaking in those quotes. All four of these people are respected people in Flin Flon, there is no doubt about that. I have no idea of how they vote, but I do know that the spokesperson for the Chamber of Commerce, Nazir Ahmad, is not only a respected former mayor of Flin Flon but a former Tory candidate, and Gord Mitchell, equally respected, was a former mayor of Flin Flon and also a former Tory candidate.

So two of those people are Tory candidates. As well, Gordon Mitchell is a chairperson of the Norman Regional Health Authority, a body whose members are directly appointed by the Minister of Health, and Gerry Hildebrand is the CEO for the Norman Regional Health Authority. Cheryl Hordal is the president of the chamber.

Surely these voices cannot be construed in any way, shape or form as coming from some extreme ideological left field. If this government will not listen to the four northern MLAs when they chronicle this government's inability or unwillingness to provide adequate support and services for the North, at least they should have the good grace to listen to the Flin Flon and District Chamber of Commerce. If the government will not listen to our words, let them at least listen to the words of their own former candidates.

By the way, it should be obvious to all by now that northerners will stick together and work together on issues despite political differences. That is why I am proud of the Flin Flon and District Chamber of Commerce for telling the Finance minister in no uncertain terms that the North is tired of second-class treatment, and we are tired of free budget consultations that do not really consult, that are PR exercises to create the illusion that the Filmon Tories listen and care.

Madam Speaker, the throne speech makes reference to completion of the development of regional health authorities. These nonelected bodies allegedly will bring a "broader range of services closer to home." Those are the exact words from the throne speech. I hope, however, that by bringing a broader range of services closer to home, the word "home" refers to the region and not to Winnipeg because one of the inevitable results of slashing the budgets of northern hospitals is to expect more and more work from fewer and fewer health care workers which leads inevitably to increased medivacs to Winnipeg.

Combined with the difficulty of keeping and attracting physicians in northern Manitoba, the cutbacks have further exacerbated an already difficult situation. Most Manitobans agree that moving somewhat from expensive institution-based health care to community-based health care is a good direction to go, but not every nickel and dime saved by cutting services is reinvested in health care for Manitobans.

I know the minister means well and would have us believe that by importing frozen toast from Toronto it would directly result in more hip replacements and more knee replacements and more heart surgeries and so on. I wish this were true. If the Minister of Health (Mr. Praznik) is intent on squeezing every nickel for allegedly noble purposes, that is, improving the health care system, then let him tell us exactly the cost of the RHAs. Then the public can determine whether or not the RHAs are giving Manitoba good service for every dollar spent. Then the public can decide whether the RHAs are indeed what the minister says they are or whether they are expensive, Tory-appointed boards and bureaucracies that shield the minister from public wrath for his cost-cutting ventures into Manitoba health care.

This government is keen on accountability. Well, then let this government and the Minister of Health be accountable to Manitobans and divulge the precise cost of running each RHA, the stipends, the travel allowances, the per diems, the cost for attending meetings and so on—all the costs, not just a few costs. Let the people decide on real information whether the hundreds and thousands of dollars spent on the RHAs is money well invested or is money that belongs at the front lines of health care or, as the minister says, money that should go for hip replacements, knee replacements,

and so on, for I have seen what cost cutting in health care has done in other Tory provinces.

Two months ago my mother had a stroke. She was living in Edmonton. When my sister took her to the Grey Nuns Hospital in Millwoods, my mother was examined and sent home because there were no beds available. When the ambulance returned my mother to the hospital in the evening, this time totally paralyzed on the left side and virtually unconscious, there were still no beds. The doctors apologized and made it clear that Mr. Ralph Klein had a lot to do with that situation. My mother spent three days off a hallway in the emergency walk-in ward. Every day hundreds of injured people walked by her bed. The hallways were filled with beds. The nurses and doctors were going frantic, and all this chaos and bedlam could have been prevented, every one of those patients could have had a real bed, a real room, because two or three floors in that building upstairs were empty. They had been closed. But Ralph had closed the top floors down. In one of the wealthiest province of Canada, health care is not a priority. Now, I expect that from the Alberta dinosaurs, from the Kleins and the Pocklingtons, because in their Darwinian world only the rich and the powerful count. But I do not expect it here.

I am happy to see the throne speech for a change make reference to aboriginal people, especially aboriginal youth. The throne speech indicates that the government recognizes that aboriginal youth represent the fastest growing segment of the overall population and that Manitoba needs innovative strategies and initiatives to address their training and employment needs, which leads me to ask why innovative strategies and initiatives such as access programs, New Careers, and BUNTEP were eliminated or downsized in the first place? Is the government now going to put more money into programs they slashed earlier, programs started by the NDP, programs they are claiming now as new initiatives?

If the government is truly intent on helping all aboriginal people, they could start by doing some very concrete things. They could implement some of the key recommendations of the Aboriginal Justice Inquiry. They could support the Sayisi Dene of Tadoule Lake and the Northlands Dene of Lac Brochet over the Dene land claim north of 60. They could build the 20-plus

kilometres of road that will link Pukatawagan to the outside world and thus lower overall food and health costs. They could reinstitute subsidies for transporting fish from northern Manitoba. They could compensate residents of South Indian Lake and other northern communities for the damages caused by this fall's flood. They could upgrade the crumbling infrastructure of many northern communities, the water and sewer systems where they even exist, the roads, the airports. They could put pressure on the federal government to improve housing on the reserves. The list is almost endless. The list is almost endless, but even a few initiatives will be much better than merely fine words.

For example, if the government is serious about fighting child poverty, let it begin by recognizing together with the federal government that the poorest of the poor are aboriginal people. Instead of jurisdictional disputes and squabbling about who is responsible, let us get the job done. Let us remove poverty for aboriginal people. Aboriginal people are not only Canadian or Manitoban, they are the first Canadians, the very first Manitobans.

Madam Speaker, as I stated at the beginning, the throne speech is a warm and fuzzy document. There are many areas of concern the throne speech does not mention; for example, workplace health and safety issues and issues relating to Workers Compensation.

I am happy to note that the throne speech does stress Manitoba's commitment to the National Highways Program. It is only reasonable that Ottawa should reinvest, say, two cents a litre from its fuel taxes in upgrading our national highway infrastructure. That would be a positive step, although of course it is easy for a provincial government to ask the federal government to increase spending on highways when this government is cutting back on its highway spending.

* (1630)

The federal government will argue that it has its own demons of debt with which it is prepared to wrestle and that it pays a lot more out of each tax dollar to service its debt than we pay out of our tax dollar to service our debt. That will be the federal argument; I merely pose it.

In conclusion, allow me to say that the throne speech was a rather muted document. It was not full of sound and fury signifying nothing. It was more than nothing, but in its positive rhetoric and warm vagueness, it did not really grapple seriously with the issues of concern to most average Manitobans. Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Hon. Jack Reimer (Minister of Urban Affairs): Madam Speaker, really it is a pleasure for me to rise to speak today on the throne speech that was just brought down for the Fourth Session of the Thirty-sixth Legislature.

First, I would like to begin by welcoming the new pages to these Chambers: Robyn Beninger, Sophia Radwanski, Sara Katz, Melody Drolet, Andrea Stevens and Dave Grabowski, as well as having the opportunity to welcome our newest member for Portage la Prairie, David Faurshou, who has come forth to sit in the hallowed halls here of this Chamber. I would hope that the pages do not become too discouraged sometimes at what happens in here, but it is a process that we, as legislators and elected to serve, do with pride and with the dignity and the honour that our constituents have bestowed upon us in our rights to represent them in this Chamber. So I welcome them to the Chamber and I hope that at the end of their stay, they can look upon this as a very pleasurable and a very memorable time in their education process.

I think that in speaking to the throne speech, I should go back to looking at what has happened, and a lot has changed, you know, in the last 36 legislative assemblies. In 1995, this government was re-elected because Manitobans felt that we were in the best position to enact change. Change is something that on the other side of the House seems to be a very prickly issue because anytime that there is a change mentioned, whether it is in health care or in policy that we are bringing forth, it is that old is better and not to rock the boat but look back and think of the good old days of the '70s and '80s when the NDP were in power and when we went into that tax-and-spend mode of operation.

People do not want the status quo, Madam Speaker. People in Manitoba want a government that will act. I am proud to be part of that government that continues

to act on changes that are working to facilitate growth and opportunity for all Manitobans.

Madam Speaker, this throne speech has assured Manitobans that our government will continue to act and make the necessary decisions that are important to this province. Manitobans have great reason to feel confident about their future. Manitobans can be proud of the fact that they have a strong foundation to compete in the 21st Century.

Madam Speaker, most Manitobans remember the 1980s when that same foundation here in Manitoba was crumbling, and it was because of the opposition that I related to just earlier and their habits and their philosophies. We were crumbling to a debt of the unacceptable weight of over a half-billion dollars in deficit, a deficit that was growing and was going to jeopardize our children's futures.

We have reached a new era with a new generation of Manitobans who understand how their futures were jeopardized by the previous government. It is now time to move forward and learn from the past, and it is time to lead Manitoba towards a future of strong economic growth and strong prosperity. Madam Speaker, our foundation is strong. Our foundation is ready to carry us into the next century.

As mentioned, I do not like to dwell in the past, but I feel it is important that we learn from the mistakes that we have inherited. I want to focus today on the importance of providing a climate for job creation, strong government and accountable decision making for the taxpayers here in the city of Winnipeg. As Minister of Urban Affairs, it has given me great pleasure in working with the City of Winnipeg, the council, EPC, and the mayor and their various venues and their ability to make changes there.

Over the past few years, the people of Winnipeg were witness to a civic government that had a certain amount of nondirection. It was through the mayor's initiative and EPC and the council itself that they decided that it was time to make a change, and I compliment them on their recent adaptation of the Cuff report and some of the initiatives that they have now undertaken.

It is a report that sets out a new direction and a new philosophy of taxpayer accountability down on Main Street, and I think that it is worth noting that when the Cuff report was passed, it was passed with a unanimous vote of 12 to four. This was 12 councillors from various parts of Winnipeg that in looking at the ramifications of the Cuff report and the direction that it was going to take the City of Winnipeg, that they felt it was time to make a change.

One of the biggest changes they made, which was on their own volition, was the major change of their structure of the commissioner-type of government and governance that was in place on 510 Main Street. I think that credit should be given to the councillors for recognizing that this had to be done. They were the ones who instituted this change. They were the ones who realized they had to make the change. They then sent over to my department or to government a list of recommendations of other things that they were wanting to have changed in The City of Winnipeg Act. These are under review right now, but, like I say, the biggest change was something that the City of Winnipeg decided to do on its own.

They have taken other initiatives on Main Street that I think are worthy of note and worthy of comment, and that is their direction in looking at what we call SOAs or special operating agencies, and they are looking at the flexibility of decision making through these special operating agencies. They are looking at setting up one or two or—I am not sure exactly how many departments they are looking at, but they definitely will be looking at setting up these special operating agencies within the next short while.

Here in our government we have set up I believe it is almost 16 of these—I think the number is 16—special operating agencies here in our government provincially, and it is saving a significant amount of money. In fact, it is saving millions of dollars each year. It is a system that the city has studied and is now willing to adapt, and we will see some changes down at City Hall and on Main Street in their administration of their various departments through the implementation of these SOAs.

We are also in the process of setting up what we call a Partners in Public Service project in which we have

the various senior levels of government working together not only within the province but also with the City of Winnipeg and looking at ways that we can eliminate overlap, duplication and redundancy in some of the programs that we both offer.

Manitoba and Winnipeg are two huge economic engines of spending and also of collecting of monies, and there are ways to look at efficiencies so that both forms do not have to do the same thing over again. We are in the process of setting that. There is an evaluation going through various departments in the province and also with the City of Winnipeg in trying to come up with ways of coming to an understanding of how we can save money for the taxpayers not only in Winnipeg but taxpayers of Manitoba in looking at efficiencies where we can come together.

One of the ways we are looking at and they are working towards finalization of it is the amalgamation of social services. We are looking at also the inspection and health inspectors. These are just two of the areas that we are looking at in trying to eliminate duplication.

* (1640)

So while the property taxes continue to rise, people in Winnipeg believe that they needed to get some sort of better restitution or better representation from their dollars being spent. This is one of the reasons why the city has embarked on this type of program. It is not unusual and it is not uncommon that this is out of sync with other parts of governments right across Canada, not only municipally, but provincially, where the efficiencies and the accountability of the tax dollars come into question and people are demanding that you get the biggest bang and the best bang out of your buck that they are spending, because it is not only accountability but it is the responsibility of elected officials to make decisions and to be cost-efficient in their decision making when it comes to the expenditures of the taxpayers' dollars.

I think it is important that we recognize that some of these things that are happening with the city of Winnipeg were tough decisions. I think that the councillors there that went through the process of evaluation of the various reports, of the Cuff report and some of the other things that I have mentioned with the

special operating agencies and the Partners in Public Service, these are some of the very mature thinking that is coming that there has to be a recognition that there is a better way to do things. The fact that Winnipeg can enjoy and be part of a very strong Manitoba economy that we have been building over the last since 1988 is something that I think all residents of Manitoba and Winnipeg are recognizing so that there is an accountability factor that has to be brought forth. This is why a lot of the decisions that we see that are happening with the City of Winnipeg and the councillors themselves are showing that there is a recognition within their decisions.

Residents of Winnipeg can be assured that their civic government is prepared to make these changes and they are also able to capitalize on the growth that we are experiencing here in Manitoba. When we talk about some of the jobs that are coming to Winnipeg, very, very recently we had an exciting announcement of the huge hog plant that will be going into Brandon, and this is a huge endeavour not only for Brandon, but for all of Manitoba. Indeed, Winnipeg will benefit from it because of the fact that a lot of the jobs and the supplying of equipment and the supplying of merchandise and material, workmanship, processing, the fact of the financial requirements, these are all things that will come out of Winnipeg to a degree. There will be an economic benefit not only for Brandon but to Manitoba and to Winnipeg in the sense of Winnipeg being the major city in the region. It will benefit from the labour pool and the investment pool and the other areas surrounding.

The farmers in and around and all of Manitoba will benefit because in fact I believe that the market for the hog processing will also reach into Saskatchewan, which will draw animals out of there.

So it is a huge endeavour and it is something of a spin-off for the various components of work and supporting communities and supporting areas. There will be housing initiatives. There will be service initiatives. It is a very, very optimistic outlook for western Manitoba but, at the same time, like I say, Winnipeg will experience a lot of the growth and a lot of the economic benefit that this will all come about. We look down the road and we can look at possibly Winnport using this as a catalyst to get more

development in and around that area. Winnport is a very exciting concept, and one of the things that would really bring it to fruition would be if there was the ability to tie into the overseas market through Winnipeg and the transportation through large airplanes.

In that same manner, just recently J.M. Schneider announced a \$50-million expansion, and this looks like it is going to create almost 500 new jobs in that same particular processing area of agriculture business or agrifood business here in Manitoba. Motor Coach Industries has grown from 1,200 to well over 1,500 people. It has shown itself very, very capable of competing in the world market not only here in Manitoba and Canada but in North America. Boeing is back to its prestrike level of 1,000 employees and is expected to reach 1,500 employees or jobs by 1998. These are all areas where there is a recognition that there is a strong workforce, there is a strong work ethic here in Winnipeg and in Manitoba, that these can be built upon, and these are just recent expansions here in Winnipeg. Standard Aero currently employs over 900 people, and they are growing at approximately, from what I understand, close to 300 people per year.

We are into a lot of other sectors where there is a tremendous amount of growth. We look at the telecommunications industry. I happened to be part of the opening of the new Royal Bank telemarketing announcement out on Taylor Avenue, and a huge, huge endeavour on their end where they will be building a brand-new building. They will be servicing millions and millions, tens of millions of customers through that one central location here in Winnipeg. It is mainly because of the economic climate. It is because of the people's attitude that Manitoba is the place to work, to live and to invest in, and it has given us the ability that a lot of companies are looking at more favourable. They look at us more in the sense of, this is the place that they would like to invest in and this is where they can feel that there is a confidence, that they have the stability of a government that recognizes the ability that business and small business are the engines that make Manitoba strong. I think the figure that we have often touted is that about 80 percent of our business is small businesses that employ less than 20 people.

So it is those types of businesses that are growing. Those are the types of businesses that are the backbone

of Manitoba and Winnipeg here, where we get a lot of growth and recognition of where the jobs can come and where they will come from.

Our youth are optimistic about the future. They can see the opportunities that await them. I understand that this was one of the first few times that there has been a lot of companies that have been standing there waiting for graduates in certain fields, where they have been having competitions, almost, to get the graduates out of some of the high-tech industries of computer sciences and engineering sciences and things of that nature.

So these are the indicators that people want to stay in Manitoba and are recognizing that there is a growth potential and a growth area. I believe the latest unemployment figures that just came out in the last week or so—I do not have them in front of me, but I believe they are down to around 6.4 percent, which is the second lowest in Canada. We are almost 3 percentage points lower than the Canadian government.

The federal Liberal government touts their efforts and their balancing of the books and everything, but I guess if you look at how they balanced their books, they balanced their books on the backs of the provinces by the cutting of transfer payments and the fact of allowing the provinces because of the strong economic growth—for example, here in Manitoba we export almost \$300 million more in UI premiums than what are paid out in Manitoba. So we are in a sense sending out more money, collected because of our strong economic growth and our strong employment record, to other parts of Canada. So we are showing our generosity to an extent, if you want to call it, in our exportation of funding through the UI fund.

As has been mentioned by one of the previous speakers, the member for Flin Flon (Mr. Jennissen), when he mentioned the fact that we should be lobbying the federal government for our share of the railroad tax, I think that this is a very commendable suggestion on his part. We have been doing that for quite a while now in recognizing that I believe it is well over \$200 million of road tax goes out of Manitoba and the federal government does not put one penny back into our highway system. Not one penny. The money we collect for road tax and gasoline tax, we put almost dollar for dollar back into our road system, so we

recognize that there is value in having good transportation, good roads throughout Manitoba and indeed throughout Winnipeg so that there is the movement of commerce and trade, because we are a trading province. In fact, I believe the figure is that we export more out of Canada than we do within Canada.

* (1650)

At the same time, our trucking industry is one of the strongest in all of Canada. I believe seven out of the 12 largest trucking firms are headquartered here in Winnipeg. It is not only because of our location, which is central, but also to the fact that we have an excellent workforce, we have an excellent work record, and a work ethic of staying and working for the people who are supplying the jobs. In fact, I understand that there is a shortage of hundreds of truck drivers right now, and their training programs are going continually, not only by the various trucking companies, but also by trucking outfits that have private training programs for trucking. So they have the ability to fill the void that is there for the trucking industry.

It is very important, Madam Speaker, because it shows that the economy is there, that it is improving, and that various sectors are taking advantage of it, filling the void, are working for, trying to get the people back to work. So, just as my colleagues around me are optimistic about what is happening and how they feel that we are working on the cornerstone of a strong foundation here in Manitoba, there is the opportunity for investment; there is the opportunity for growth; and the opportunity to continue to excel. It is through various programs like this and a strong economy that we can go forth and look at some of our social programs that have always been the cornerstone of our government, which has been the three areas of health, education, and social services.

We have shown our commitment to health care by the amount of money that goes into health care, but I think at the same time it shows that there is a conscientious effort that there is not only money that is being spent in health care but it is the accountability and the responsibility of the people that are spending the money to show what is best for our patients and the taxpayers of Manitoba so that they do receive the best

service and the best health care that is available to them. We continue to have that as our No. 1 priority; it now occupies I believe it is almost 34 percent of our budget in health care. In education, we have almost \$1 billion of expenditures in our public education, so the two areas and then the third area being family services or social services occupy almost 67 percent of our budget.

So the monies that we do collect, the monies that we have been realizing through the efficiencies of good management have been going continually back to our three priorities of government. As Housing minister, we have worked very diligently in trying to look at the best manner of efficiencies in our Housing department, and I can report that our department has been very diligent in its manner of direction for its manner of spending.

In fact, Madam Speaker, I should mention that we are in the process of looking at an offer from the federal government. The federal Liberal government is getting out of housing. They have indicated that they want to devolve themselves from that social responsibility and relinquish it to the provinces. Now this is just another area of where the federal government can say that they are balancing their books, but all they are doing is just moving the offload of a tremendous amount of costs involved with social housing and the responsibility of providing for people of need back onto the provinces. It makes them look good, but at the same time it puts a tremendous burden of decision making on the provincial government and the taxpayers of Manitoba as to the responsibilities because there will always be a responsibility to provide for those that cannot provide for themselves, whether it is through various components of social services or whether it is through housing, which is part of my portfolio.

So the benefits of having a strong economic agenda and strong economic direction through this government have indeed paid off in the last eight years—pardon me, since 1988. It has given us a strong economy. It has given us strong goals for this government, and they have been recognized. They have been recognized because of the fact that our balanced budget legislation is the strongest in North America. It has shown that we are committed to balancing our books. We have shown that we are committed to paying down our debt with

regular payments each year of \$75 million towards the debt. We have committed ourselves to the fact that there will be no major tax increases. We have also not raised taxes in the last 10 years. We have indicated through the balanced legislation that no major taxes will be increased unless there is a referendum on it.

So, Madam Speaker, we are positioning ourselves to the envy of a lot of provinces that had to go through a tremendous amount of readjustment in a very, very short time. If we look at some of our neighbours to the east and to the west of us, we have seen that there have been major restructures that have caused an awful lot of social upheaval. We look next door to Saskatchewan there where they had to close 52 hospitals so that Roy Romanow could balance his budget. He did that on the backs of the people in hospitals and the fact that he had to close these hospitals, but that is not pointed out by my honourable friends from across the way. They keep looking inwardly to say that we have cut back on our budget with health, but in essence we have continued to increase it.

We can look even further west to our neighbours in Alberta that have gone through a fair amount of readjustment fairly rapidly. They are in an economic position because of their natural wealth through oil where they have been able to ride the crest upwards again with the revenues through there, so they have been able to adjust themselves fairly rapidly that way.

In B.C. we see quite a difference where we have actual—I believe the government was being sued by one interest group because they alleged that the—and I am just saying that they alleged—government of Mr. Clark stretched the truth, if you want to call it, regarding their balanced budget when they were going to the election. In fact, the stretching of the truth came to a point where he said that they had a surplus, and then after the election when they got into the books, there was a huge deficit. So there was a group that decided that they were going to take Mr. Clark to task on that. I am not too sure where that is right now, but that shows you how when our honourable colleagues across the way say that we say things at one time during an election and mean another, they do not have to go too far to look at some of the promises that have come about in the last little while.

Madam Speaker, the Ontario government next door to us has had to make some serious adjustments from the horrendous debt that they inherited from the previous NDP government. When everybody else was entrenching for the inflation and everything, the NDP government of Ontario at that time believed that they could spend their way out of debt and just racked up a huge amount of money that now the taxpayers of Ontario have to try to readjust.

So, Madam Speaker, we here in Manitoba have put ourselves on a course through the various initiatives that we started back in 1988 of making Manitoba a better place to work, to invest and raise a family. We are coming to that point right now where there are a lot of things that we are instituting that have come about. They have not been disruptive in a sense where we have had massive turnarounds of industry or jobs or social upheaval or social discomfort to a degree that has caused great anxiety in the population of Manitoba. That has mainly been because of good management and good prudent decision making through our government, and this throne speech that we witnessed in the last week is a continuation of those efforts. People recognize that what we are doing, we do best. We can make it better, and that is exactly what we are trying to do with the throne speech. It is not a throne speech of wild, exuberant promises like our friends across the way would do because there is some extra money in the bank account, if they want to call it, through the rainy day fund or through the surplus fund. They would spend that 10 times over and even more, because the easiest thing for government to do is to spend money, to make promises, to raise taxes, to borrow money. Those things are easy.

It is the prudent decisions, it is the way to make a groundwork for economic gain through the private sector, through working with our employees not only within the various departments but employees of our government that recognize that they can make a change and they can do things better. Through various initiatives, through various departments, a lot of the various departments are already recognizing that they have a very valuable contribution to make through better methods, management of the departments, through the Manitoba government. These are all having a positive effect on the outlook and the direction that Manitoba is taking. So it is a focused and a strong

provincial government that we see before us through this throne speech, Madam Speaker. It is these types of initiatives that I think we can create long-term employment, we can assist people in finding the jobs, we can create a safe and healthy environment here in Manitoba.

* (1700)

I should comment briefly about some of the initiatives that have taken place with Urban Affairs and some of the programs under the Winnipeg Development Agreement. We have had some very strong and positive initiatives come through the Winnipeg Development Agreement along the lines of the Urban Safety program. Some of the initiatives that we are looking at regarding riverbank development now, some of the positive initiatives that have also come out of the very recent announcement by the North Main Development area in which there is an exciting new concept of redevelopment in and around the Higgins and Main Street area where we can look at the partnerships of working with the private sector, working with the aboriginal community, working with the people in the area, the business in the area, the nonprofit groups, the for-profit groups, so that we can start to recognize that there is a role and a place for the area in and around that part of Main Street where there can be some positive growth and some new exciting programs that can come forth. These are the things that—a lot of them—are the initiative of people that have got together, have been able to look at areas of development and make things happen in the area. So through the Winnipeg Development Agreement, there are a lot of catalysts that we can utilize for growth.

As we go into this year we have areas through housing for high-risk groups that we will be looking at through the Winnipeg Development Agreement and work up initiatives through that. There will be other areas regarding the ability of further expansion of community infrastructure programs and other areas that we can work to try to build partnerships in the community.

The urban safety programs have made some significant partnerships with the downtown business association in which we have the Downtown Watch, which has proven to be very beneficial to try to keep

and put a safety factor into the downtown area. These are the type of initiatives that not only have shown great acceptance by the people downtown but also the businesses, because it is the business downtown that will be eventually paying the total cost of this type of operation. It is one of the partnerships where we act as a catalyst to get it going and then we slowly withdraw our funding over the years. The business association picks up the difference, and in fact the business association has been so successful with it that it has been studied by cities in other areas of Canada, and Winnipeg.

So, Madam Speaker, I think that I could speak onward to a lot of other topics that I think are very, very important to Manitobans as we go. [interjection] If I remember. But I think all members in this House will be supporting this throne speech. I look forward to when the opposition and this government can go forth to work together on a lot of the initiatives that we both feel are important for Manitobans, because it is through these types of initiative that I think that not only our children but our grandchildren and children after us will benefit from some of the initiatives that this government has brought forth.

Madam Speaker, it gives me great pleasure to be part of the Throne Speech Debate at this time. I thank you very, very much for your time. Thank you.

Mr. Oscar Lathlin (The Pas): Madam Speaker, I am also pleased to rise this afternoon to add my comments to the record regarding the throne speech. I also would like to welcome the young people who are here in the legislative Chamber as pages. I welcome them here and I wish them the best of luck in their term here in the Legislature.

Madam Speaker, my comments on the throne speech will be limited to two areas, areas that I have talked about at some length in previous debates and sometimes during Question Period.

The first area that I wanted to cover has to do with the aboriginal people and this government's track record in its dealings with aboriginal people.

The second area which I wanted to touch on has to do with the northern economic development or lack of it,

again a subject that I have talked about extensively in the communities that I represent and also here in the Legislature during the seven years that I have been here.

Now, Madam Speaker, when I listened to the Premier (Mr. Filmon), or the throne speech being read approximately a week ago, I was disappointed, to say the least, because this government and this Premier once again have failed to give us a plan that outlines any substantive development program for aboriginal people.

I was always given to understand, Madam Speaker, that the throne speech serves the purpose of informing citizens of Manitoba about its plans for this session, a blueprint that is based on what the government plans to do in the session. The throne speech, as far as I understand, is to talk about the future plans, and it is supposed to provide, I think, a vision for the citizens of Manitoba.

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

Now, Madam Speaker, rehashing old issues, I am sure you know, does nothing to advance an enhanced state of aboriginal development. This Premier decided to talk about initiatives that have been going on for several years now. The future, I would like to advise the Premier, we are interested in now. We are interested in the future now. What are you going to do now and in the future? We are not interested in talking about the past.

This Premier decided to talk about, for example, treaty land entitlement again, which is frankly an issue or a debt that is over 125 years overdue and one he can take little credit for resolving. This Premier could only talk about what is there now when he has failed to give any leadership in any direction, and he has failed to provide a vision when it comes to aboriginal people, and I for one am not surprised. No, not at all, I am not

surprised, because this is the same Premier that I once saw on TV being interviewed on the subject of child poverty in Winnipeg.

Madam Speaker, I was so shocked when during that interview, instead of taking responsibility and leadership about child poverty which was the highest in Canada at the time, the Premier (Mr. Filmon) proceeded to lay blame on the aboriginal people. His words were and I kid you not: Our statistics on child poverty would be a lot better if it did not include those aboriginal people who come to Winnipeg from the North.

* (1710)

Now, Madam Speaker, I ask you, what does that really say about the character of the Premier if he is making those kinds of statements? This Premier through this throne speech tried to play us for fools, meaning the aboriginal people. Throughout the document he tries to come across as a friend and as a supporter and a partner to aboriginal people.

Madam Speaker, let me tell you, this Premier (Mr. Filmon) and his government are no friends of aboriginal people. Aboriginal people know this because it is this Premier who has gutted all those programs that were geared to the betterment of aboriginal people, and I am talking about the programs like Access, BUNTEP and New Careers. This Premier has eliminated funding for the Assembly of Manitoba Chiefs, the MKO, the Manitoba Metis Federation, the friendship centres, and, again, this is the same Premier who cut funding to the women's crisis centre in Flin Flon.

It is the same Premier who ridiculed or who ignored the AJI when it was first released. His Justice minister at the time reviewed the report and said that it was but the work of two men and that it should not be taken seriously. Madam Speaker, over 100 recommendations were made by the commissioners, recommendations which could have been implemented by this Premier. He could have implemented those recommendations because those recommendations were doable. The Premier and his government had jurisdiction to do so, and yet only a few have been implemented to date—and he claims to be our supporter, our friend and our partner?

Further, this same Premier and Manitoba Hydro in the Northern Flood Agreement, Article 109, have now twice appealed the arbitrator's decision to award a bridge to the Cross Lake First Nation under the Northern Flood Agreement. If this Premier were truly a friend and a supporter and a partner that he claims he is with aboriginal people, why then does he continually appeal the arbitrator's decision? Twice now he has appealed it. I ask you the question, Madam Speaker, when will this Premier and Manitoba Hydro take the arbitration process seriously and honour the arbitrator's decisions?

It is the same Premier and Manitoba Hydro who have now come up with a policy in the North, in Cross Lake, that refuses hydro services to new houses in Cross Lake even though that community pays to Manitoba Hydro through their hydro bills about \$3 million a year. For Manitoba Hydro that is revenue.

The same Premier and his government refuse to spend any money that could be used to upgrade and pave northern roads, again which lead to aboriginal communities. Northern roads have seen severe cuts ever since this Premier took power in this province. Spending, for example in the 1980s and up to 1990 worked out to between 13 and 22 percent of the Highways budget being spent up North. Since 1900 this Premier and his government have budgeted only about anywhere from 4 to 6 percent of the Highways budget for northern Manitoba, and he is truly to tell us that we are his friends, he supports us, and that he is our partner?

Again this Premier, through one of his senior ministers at the time, right after the election in 1990 got up in this Chamber and he told the Chamber that the North unfortunately did not know how to vote right. Again, Madam Speaker, and he is going to convince us that we are supposed to be happy and be grateful and be satisfied just because in the throne speech he tried to convince people that he is a friend and a supporter and a partner of aboriginal people? No, not at all. Not for one minute do we believe him.

Madam Speaker, it is the same Premier (Mr. Filmon) and his government, through the process of health reform, have refused to recognize aboriginal people as being stakeholders in the area of health care,

particularly in northern Manitoba. This Premier has steadfastly refused to recognize that in the North the aboriginal people are in the majority and therefore should have at least half of the seats in the regional health authorities in Norman and in Burntwood. Again we ask: why not? Aboriginal people are in the majority. Does it not make sense for them to at least have half of the seats in the boards?

This Premier (Mr. Filmon) and his government did not want to listen or hear from aboriginal people requesting for a proportionate representation on the regional health boards, and now this Premier is trying to convince us that he is a friend, a supporter, and a partner of aboriginal people. Well, Madam Speaker, I for one do not believe this Premier one little bit because, during the seven years that I have been here, I have seen how this Premier treats aboriginal people. He has refused to work for aboriginal people, and he has refused to work with them, and he has refused to listen to them. Now, why should we listen to him? Why should we believe him when through the throne speech he has tried to convince us that he is going to do all of these wonderful things for aboriginal people.

A lot of the programs, Madam Speaker, and the services that he talks about are really programs that have been going on for a while now, how many times is he going to take credit, for example, on the treaty land entitlement? You know, I am willing to predict right here that in the next throne speech that this government puts out there, again, for I do not know how many times, again will take credit for the treaty land entitlement.

You know, Madam Speaker, if I owed you something for 125 years and I finally got around to paying you today, after 125 years, would you feel like patting me on the back and say how wonderful I am? I do not think so. I do not think the people on the government side would do so either. In fact, I know they would not.

* (1720)

This Premier, through the throne speech, is trying to convince us to believe that he is truly a friend, a supporter and a partner, and we say we do not believe him. Madam Speaker, a lot of it is rehashing of programs, and there is really no new money that I could

see for aboriginal people. As I tell the ministers here from time to time, I will tell the Premier himself, that I cannot, we do not feel like celebrating with the Premier because, really, there is nothing to celebrate for. Indeed, there is much to be sad about. All we need to do is look at the socioeconomic condition of the communities that I represent and also those being represented by the members for Rupertsland (Mr. Robinson), Flin Flon (Mr. Jennissen) and Thompson (Mr. Ashton).

When the Premier talks about economic conditions of Manitoba improving, he forgets or refuses to acknowledge that aboriginal communities are not included in the surveys that determine the unemployment picture, for example. The Premier and his government know very well that those statistics are gathered only in places like The Pas, Flin Flon and Thompson, but they are not gathered in places like Shamattawa or Tadoule or Pukatawagan, where I know the Premier and his government know that the unemployment situation could be as high as 90 percent. If the Premier were to include those numbers, the picture in Manitoba would be quite different, I guarantee you. But again, the Premier, although he likes to call himself a friend, a supporter, and a partner for aboriginal people, does not want to include them in his statistics, because to do so would mess up his otherwise impressive statistics, Madam Speaker.

Now, Madam Speaker, I wanted to close off by touching briefly on northern economic development. Again I have stood here in the previous debates and also during Question Period and during Estimates, and I have asked repeatedly of government ministers what plans they have for northern Manitoba.

Well, at one point, before I even thought of running for office in the province here, I heard about a commission that was talked about of being set up by this government, and then when I was elected in 1990, again I heard mention of a commission being set up by this government. Finally, about two years later, it was set up and it was mandated to go around the North, collect information for the purpose of establishing goals and objectives with respect to how economic development should take place in the North, Madam Speaker.

Well, since then, of course, that Northern Economic Development report has been completed, and it has been released to the government, and nothing has ever been done to implement those recommendations for northern Manitoba, Madam Speaker.

I want to close off my presentation here by saying to the Premier (Mr. Filmon) and his government, you see, when I get up to raise issues in the House or during Estimates or during Question Period or debates like these, we are told, well, it is the old NDP that are saying this, or when the Premier and his crew travel, occasionally go up North, and they meet with citizens of northern Manitoba, they say, well, those are NDP supporters, or they say those are unions and you should not take them seriously, because they do that all the time, they complain and they criticize.

Well, Madam Speaker, as the member for Flin Flon (Mr. Jennissen) earlier said, there was a prebudget meeting in The Pas, and there were four people from Flin Flon who were planning to go to The Pas to meet the Finance minister on the prebudget meeting. The member for Flin Flon quite correctly describes the group as being four members of the Flin Flon Chamber of Commerce. In other words, they were not NDP MLAs, they were not NDP supporters, and they were not unions. They were not even aboriginal people. These four were members of the Chamber of Commerce. They are Tories. They are Conservatives, and as the member for Flin Flon told us earlier, at least two of them are former candidates in the federal and provincial elections.

So you would think that this government would be listening to their friends when they tell them things like this government has to spend more money in the North. The provincial government must start doing things for the North, for northern Manitoba, is what the chamber types are saying. We are not saying that; they are saying it. The other thing they are saying is this government must equalize or must be fair on hydro rates, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker, we are not saying these things. It is their Tory friends that are saying that. I have said repeatedly in this House during Estimates and in Question Period, I have written letters to the Minister of Highways (Mr. Findlay) regarding roads up North. The

chiefs and councils, the mayors and councils from the northern communities have repeatedly made representations to various ministers and members of this government in the past regarding northern roads, but nothing gets done, and now these Tory supporters, your friends, not mine, your friends, are saying to you, you should spend more money on northern roads.

Well, maybe you will listen now because they are not NDPers saying that. They are not unions saying that. They are not NDP supporters, and they are not even aboriginal people, Madam Speaker. Maybe now the government will listen.

So that is all I wanted to say this afternoon, Madam Speaker. Of course, I am, naturally as I said, disappointed in the contents of the throne speech, because it really did not do anything in terms of enhancing the state of development for aboriginal people. Thank you.

Hon. James Downey (Minister of Industry, Trade, and Tourism): Madam Speaker, I do not want to deny my chance, my full 40 minutes to speak, so could you give me some guidance as to whether or not there would be a chance for me to speak after the vote?

Madam Speaker: The honourable minister has one minute to speak on the subamendment and then speak on the actual throne speech.

Mr. Downey: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I just want to take this opportunity to first of all congratulate the pages and also our new colleague from Portage la Prairie, who is certainly a welcome addition to the Assembly, and, of course, our former colleagues the former member for Portage and the former member for Charleswood and their contribution to the government, to the province, and to the people of Manitoba. I think it is extremely important that we do that, that we acknowledge the contributions of those individuals who have put in a lot of long, hard hours to accomplish the goals that we have been able to accomplish.

I also want to acknowledge and recognize all members of the House in the Christmas season. If I have a chance to speak later, you will get the opportunity to see how generous I am in my giving, particularly maybe of some advice to the members

opposite. Also, to say that I think that we have had one of the more productive years as it relates to not only the economy, but the policy implementation of this government, continues to be what I believe the people of Manitoba have expected and are appreciative of.

* (1730)

Madam Speaker: Order, please. Pursuant to subrule 40.(3), I am interrupting the proceedings in order to put the question on the motion of the honourable Leader of the official opposition, that is, the amendment to the motion for an address in reply to the Speech from the Throne.

Do members wish to have the amendment read? Yes.

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

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

- (a) failing to provide adequate and timely compensation to Manitobans who were driven from their homes by the Red River flood while holding the flood victims themselves responsible for the losses that they suffered; and
- (b) failing to respect the rights of Manitobans victimized by crime, in particular making it mandatory (as in most other provinces) that crime victims be given opportunities to present victim impact statements to the court prior to sentencing; and
- (c) forcing Manitobans to bear the cost of privatizing the Manitoba Telephone System through escalating local phone rates intended to boost the profits of private shareholders; and
- (d) failing to respond to Manitobans' frustrations over the lengthy waiting list for medical procedures and surgeries; and
- (e) failing to implement the key recommendations of the Pedlar Commission, many of which were repeated in the recent report of the Lavoie inquiry; and

- (f) failing to implement the key recommendations of even its own report on the health of Manitoba children; and
- (g) failing to prepare Manitoba youth for the 21st Century by committing to stable funding for the public school system; and
- (h) failing to support the Canadian Wheat Board as a single-desk seller despite the overwhelming support for the Wheat Board's role among Manitoba producers and its strategic position in the Manitoba economy; and
- (i) failing to implement the recommendations of the AJI while cutting the funding for friendship centres and to the Access and BUNTEP programs;

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

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

Some Honourable Members: No.

Some Honourable Members: Yes.

Voice Vote

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

Some Honourable Members: Yea.

Madam Speaker: All those opposed, please say nay.

Some Honourable Members: Nay.

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

Formal Vote

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

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

Division

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

Yeas

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

Nays

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

Mr. Clerk (William Remnant): Yeas 22, Nays 26.

Madam Speaker: The motion is accordingly defeated.

* * *

Mr. Downey: I want to again acknowledge the new member, as I indicated, for Portage la Portage (Mr. Faurshou) and the contribution of my former colleagues.

I think it is important to note that the former speaker, the previous speaker, was talking about vision. I can tell you that this province has moved forward in the last nine years because there has been not only one member—yes, we have had a Premier with vision, but we have had a group of women and men with a vision as to what they wanted this province to be, and you know what? It is coming to reality, Madam Speaker, the wishes and the desires and the vision that was put forward by every one of our colleagues on behalf of their constituents. Day after day after day, we see evidence of positive developments in this province.

* (1750)

I also want to clearly point out how proud I am that our Premier (Mr. Filmon) and the leaders of this country, particularly the premiers that met in Calgary,

continue to work as a team of women and men to bring together Canadians, to bring together a framework to go to the people of Manitoba to again ask them what their opinions are, to bring Canadians together so that we can have a united Canada, Madam Speaker, because without a united Canada we all lose. We all lose. We cannot afford one province or one part of a province or anyone to bow out of the country of Canada.

So I am extremely proud of the work that our senior premier, the senior premier in Canada, Premier Filmon, continues to put forward, the leadership on a national basis. I do not care what part of Canada you are in, our Premier (Mr. Filmon) and this government are looked upon with respect and vision for not only the province of Manitoba but for our country. That, Madam Speaker, makes me extremely proud, and I am sure each and every one of my colleagues feels exactly the same way.

Madam Speaker, I could say the same about the opposition members if they would only come out of their time capsule. They are trapped some 25 or 30 years ago. They are in a time capsule, and I would invite them to come forward to the 21st Century.

Who would have ever expected out of the New Democratic Party that they want to go to a 32-hour week, a 32-hour work week? What did the NDP Leader do? He did not stand up in front of his delegate body and say that is the wrong thing to do; we need more productivity. No, he sat idly by and they steamrolled over him. Where is the repeal of the balanced budget legislation? Why do they not bring forward the balanced budget legislation repeal act if they do not like to balance the books? They have committed to do that. Where is it, Madam Speaker?

The member for Thompson (Mr. Ashton) was so bold that he said that he wanted to repeal the sale of the Manitoba Telephone System to the people of Manitoba. Where is the proposal from the opposition members? But, no, what have they relegated themselves to do? To personally attack you, Madam Speaker, because they could not get their own way. I say shame on them to go to personal attacks.

What is the crime? The Speaker was representing her constituents; my goodness' sakes, a terrible, terrible

crime. Well, Madam Speaker, I congratulate you on representing your constituents. You do a fine job of it, and you will be there for a long, long time, not like the former NDP Speaker. Where is she now? Well, of course we know where Mr. Walding is. He is probably ready to go to heaven because of what he did to his NDP party.

I can tell you one other little story, and it can go on the record because he said put it on the record. Mr. Sid Green at a meeting the other day—I had a few visits with him—and the member for Brandon East (Mr. Leonard Evans) can concur or not concur in this. When they were trying to pass major government policies such as Autopac, they would have been tied, and he, the Speaker of the day, Mr. Hanuschak, knew that he would have to vote in favour of that if it was going to pass. He did not have to because Mr. Beard came across the floor and supported it. But there is no secret that Mr. Hanuschak would have taken his Chair and voted on the major government policy.

So let them not sit there with their halos so shiny, Madam Speaker, because they were not any better than anybody else. So that is just a little bit of history for the record.

Madam Speaker, I compliment you for representing your constituents, and if that is all they have to talk about, individual attacks, then they have stooped right to the bottom.

I just heard the member for The Pas (Mr. Lathlin) speak. You know, I for the life of me cannot figure out where he has been. He has not seen that we have—

An Honourable Member: Not too many people know.

Mr. Downey: Good point. Madam Speaker, but he has not acknowledged the North Central power agreement where this government and the federal government and Hydro put \$117 million to \$135 million into giving nine northern native communities the same kind of electrical service everybody else in this country has. Why would he not recognize that major accomplishment, the signing of the Northern Flood Agreement with four communities, the Grand Rapids forebay settlement, the land claims?

Yes, Madam Speaker, I want to as well take this opportunity to congratulate two individuals who have advanced. I want to congratulate Mr. Fontaine who has gone to become the leader of the federal Assembly of Chiefs. I think he will do a fine job. I also want to congratulate Mr. Rod Bushie, who has become the head chief of the Assembly of Manitoba Chiefs, who, I think, will do an excellent job in that capacity as well. I have not heard those people speak out negatively about what this government has done. In fact, I have heard them speak very positively about the things that have been accomplished. I think credit should be given where credit is due.

Now, I do not have a lot of time left, but there is one point I want to make before we conclude. Madam Speaker, we want the members opposite to come out of the time capsule, and I compliment this Premier (Mr. Filmon) and my colleagues and all members for standing in their place and taking the criticism that came when a major policy was made as it related to the marketing of hogs in this province. Without it we would have not been able to enjoy the benefits of a major initiative. It raises the question: Should we now not be debating what is happening in other marketing boards as it relates to the restrictive marketing policies? Should we not be debating those policies? I say that is what this place is all about. That is what a throne speech is all about. I would like the members opposite to come forward with what their position is as it relates to other marketing boards because we know what their position was on the last one. It is unfortunate.

Well, I have to say, Madam Speaker, that I am quoted last week in the Manitoba Cooperator, and they brought an old article out that at one time I said the Canadian Wheat Board was a bureaucracy and should be wrestled to the ground. That was reprinted this week for some particular reason. I do not have any problem in saying it was true when I said it. But I can tell you it will not be governments that change the policies. It will be the pressure of farmers. So, if it worked in the hog industry, maybe it would work in the grain industry.

Maybe, if the farmers had the opportunity—yes, we have to have the Wheat Board, and I am a strong supporter of the Wheat Board as it pertains to marketing, but I think it is time we give a choice to the farmers. Let us let the farmers decide, as we have let them decide with the marketing of hogs, as maybe we

should let them decide where they should go with their grain. I have no trouble with that because truly, truly it has demonstrated itself in the marketing of hogs. It has happened that we have thousands of jobs, hundreds of million dollars of investment, and it is time that we debated that issue in this Assembly. Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker: Order, please. When this matter is again before the House, the honourable Minister of Industry, Trade and Tourism (Mr. Downey) will have 30 minutes remaining.

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

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Monday, December 8, 1997

CONTENTS

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS			
Reading and Receiving Petitions		Dewar; Praznik	268
		Hickes; Praznik	270
		Santos; Praznik	270
		Chomiak; Praznik	271
		Struthers; Praznik	272
Domestic Violence			
Mackintosh	259	Riverview Health Centre	
McGifford	259	McGifford; Praznik	265
Barrett	259		
Cerilli	260		
Tabling of Reports		Break and Enters	
		Lamoureux; Filmon	265
1996-97 Report, Manitoba's Women's Advisory Council		Personal Care Homes	
Vodrey	260	Sale; Praznik	268
Ministerial Statements		Education System	
		Friesen; McIntosh	269
Blood Donor Clinic		Betaseron	
Praznik	260	C. Evans; Praznik	271
Chomiak	261		
Introduction of Bills		Speaker's Rulings	
		Dacquay	272
		Ashton	272
Bill 2, Elections Amendment Act	261	Members' Statements	
Bill 3, Elections Finances Amendment and Consequential Amendments Act	262	Hockey Exchange Program	
Bill 15, Dutch Elm Disease Act	262	Penner	274
Bill 16, Water Resources Administration Amendment Act	262	Health Care System	
		Ashton	275
Oral Questions		Operation Red Nose	
		Laurendeau	275
Health Care System		Occupational Health Centre	
Doer; Praznik	262	Sale	276
Martindale; Praznik	263	R.W. Bobby Bend School	
Wowchuk; Praznik	264	Helwer	276
Cerilli; Praznik	264		
Mackintosh; Praznik	266		
Lathlin; Praznik	266		
Mihychuk; Praznik	267		
Ashton; Praznik	267		
Jennissen; Praznik	268		

ORDERS OF THE DAY

Throne Speech Debate
(Seventh Day of Debate)

Lamoureux	277
McIntosh	280
Jennissen	289
Reimer	296
Lathlin	302
Downey	305