



Fifth Session- Thirty-Sixth Legislature

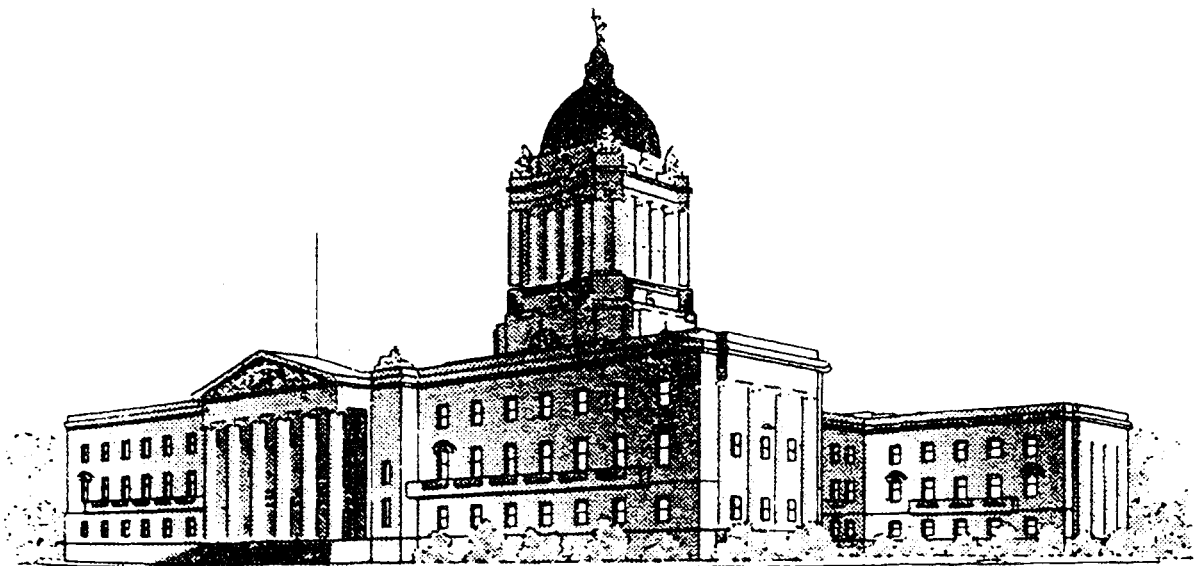
of the

Legislative Assembly of Manitoba

**DEBATES
and
PROCEEDINGS**

**Official Report
(Hansard)**

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The Honourable Louise M. Dacquay
Speaker*



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MANITOBA LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
Thirty-Sixth Legislature

Member	Constituency	Political Affiliation
ASHTON, Steve	Thompson	N.D.P.
BARRETT, Becky	Wellington	N.D.P.
CERILLI, Marianne	Radisson	N.D.P.
CHOMIAK, Dave	Kildonan	N.D.P.
CUMMINGS, Glen, Hon.	Ste. Rose	P.C.
DACQUAY, Louise, Hon.	Seine River	P.C.
DERKACH, Leonard, Hon.	Roblin-Russell	P.C.
DEWAR, Gregory	Selkirk	N.D.P.
DOER, Gary	Concordia	N.D.P.
DOWNEY, James	Arthur-Virden	P.C.
DRIEDGER, Albert	Steinbach	P.C.
DRIEDGER, Myrna	Charleswood	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	Springfield	P.C.
FRIESEN, Jean	Wolseley	N.D.P.
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, Hon.	St. Vital	P.C.
ROBINSON, Eric	Rupert'sland	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, Hon.	Turtle Mountain	P.C.
VODREY, Rosemary, Hon.	Fort Garry	P.C.
WOWCHUK, Rosann	Swan River	N.D.P.
<i>Vacant</i>	St. Boniface	Lib.

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Monday, April 12, 1999

The House met at 1:30 p.m.

PRAYERS

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

TABLING OF REPORTS

Hon. David Newman (Minister of Energy and Mines): Madam Speaker, I am pleased to table a variety of reports; first, the Communities Economic Development Fund Quarter Report for the quarter ended September 30, 1998, which has already been circulated; the Communities Economic Development Fund Annual Report for the fiscal year 1997-1998, which has been released; the Communities Economic Development Fund First Quarter Report for the period ending June 30, 1998; the Manitoba Hydro-Electric Board Quarterly Report for the nine months ending December 31, 1998; the Manitoba Hydro-Electric Board Quarterly Report for the three months ending June 30, 1998; the Manitoba Hydro-Electric Board Forty-Seventh Annual Report for the year ended March 31, 1998; the Energy and Mines 1997-98 Annual Report, and the Northern Affairs 1997-98 Annual Report.

Hon. Shirley Render (Minister of Consumer and Corporate Affairs): Madam Speaker, I would like to table a letter dated April 8, 1999, pursuant to Section 13 of The Trade Practices Inquiry Act. I have the honour to report that no inquiries were commenced subsequent to the last report.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

Bill 2—The Electoral Divisions Amendment Act

Hon. Gary Filmon (Premier): Madam Speaker, I move, seconded by the honourable government House leader (Mr. Praznik), that leave be given to introduce Bill 2, The Electoral Divisions Amendment Act; Loi modifiant la Loi

sur les circonscriptions électorales, and that the same be now received and read a first time.

Motion agreed to.

* (1335)

Bill 14—The Amusements Amendment Act

Hon. Rosemary Vodrey (Minister of Culture, Heritage and Citizenship): Madam Speaker, I move, seconded by the honourable Minister of Agriculture (Mr. Enns), that leave be given to introduce Bill 14, The Amusements Amendment Act; Loi modifiant la Loi sur les divertissements, and that the same be now received and read a first time.

Motion agreed to.

Bill 3—The Fatality Inquiries Amendment Act

Hon. Vic Toews (Minister of Justice and Attorney General): I move, seconded by the Minister of Finance (Mr. Gilleshammer), that leave be given to introduce Bill 3, The Fatality Inquiries Amendment Act (Loi modifiant la Loi sur les enquêtes médico-légales), 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, and I have here the message of the Lieutenant Governor.

Motion agreed to.

Bill 5—The Highway Traffic Amendment, Off-Road Vehicles Amendment and Consequential Amendments Act

Hon. Darren Praznik (Minister of Highways and Transportation): Madam Speaker, I would move, seconded by the honourable Minister of Education (Mr. McCrae), that leave be given to introduce Bill 5, The Highway Traffic

Amendment, Off-Road Vehicles Amendment and Consequential Amendments Act; Loi modifiant le Code de la route et la Loi sur les véhicules à caractère non routier 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. At this time I would like to table a copy of His Honour's message.

Motion agreed to.

Bill 7—The Public Schools Amendment Act

Hon. James McCrae (Minister of Education and Training): Madam Speaker, I move, seconded by the honourable Minister of Environment (Mrs. McIntosh), that leave be given to introduce Bill 7, The Public Schools Amendment Act (Loi modifiant la Loi sur les écoles publiques), and that the same be now received and read a first time.

Motion agreed to.

Bill 8—The Ozone Depleting Substances Amendment Act

Hon. Linda McIntosh (Minister of Environment): Madam Speaker, I move, seconded by the Minister of Education and Training (Mr. McCrae), that leave be given to introduce Bill 8, The Ozone Depleting Substances Amendment Act; Loi modifiant la Loi sur les substances appauvrissant la couche d'ozone, and that the same be now received and read a first time.

Motion agreed to.

* (1340)

Bill 9—The Securities Amendment and Commodity Futures and Consequential Amendments Amendment Act

Hon. Shirley Render (Minister of Consumer and Corporate Affairs): Madam Speaker, I move, seconded by the Minister of Industry,

Trade and Tourism (Mr. Tweed), that leave be given to introduce Bill 9, The Securities Amendment and Commodity Futures and Consequential Amendments Amendment Act (Loi modifiant la Loi sur les valeurs mobilières et la Loi sur les contrats à terme de marchandises et apportant des modifications corrélatives).

His Honour the Lieutenant Governor, having been advised of the contents of this bill, recommends it to the House.

Madam Speaker: It has been moved by the honourable Minister of Consumer and Corporate Affairs, seconded by the honourable Minister of Industry, Trade and Tourism (Mr. Tweed), that leave be given to introduce Bill 9, The Securities Amendment and Commodity Futures and Consequential Amendments Amendment Act; Loi modifiant la Loi sur les valeurs mobilières et la Loi sur les contrats à terme de marchandises et apportant des 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. Agreed?

Some Honourable Members: Agreed.

Madam Speaker: Agreed and so ordered.

An Honourable Member: Put on the record that she tabled the message because she forgot to say that.

Madam Speaker: The honourable Minister of Consumer and Corporate Affairs did indeed table the message.

Bill 15—The Cemeteries Amendment Act

Hon. Shirley Render (Minister of Consumer and Corporate Affairs): Madam Speaker, I move, seconded by the Minister of Education (Mr. McCrae), that leave be given to introduce Bill 15, The Cemeteries Amendment Act (Loi modifiant la Loi sur les cimetières), and that the same be now received and read a first time.

Motion agreed to.

Bill 200—The Legislative Assembly Amendment Act

Mr. Steve Ashton (Thompson): Madam Speaker, I move, seconded by the Leader of the Opposition (Mr. Doer), that leave be given to introduce Bill 200, The Legislative Assembly Amendment Act (Loi modifiant la Loi sur l'Assemblée législative), and that the same now be received and read a first time.

Motion presented.

Mr. Ashton: In accordance with our rules, I would like to make a few brief remarks on the first reading of this particular bill. This bill would enact an elected Speaker for this House in this session. I want to indicate that we are pleased that the government finally, probably some years too late for some very important matters of deliberation, has agreed to the principle of elected Speaker.

We are somewhat disappointed there was no commitment in the throne speech to pass it this session. That is what throne speeches are for, to indicate what the legislative agenda is all about. It is not that we do not trust this government—well, then again, maybe it is that we do not trust this government. We feel if there is now agreement from all parties—and I know the Liberals have been onside on this, as we have for quite some time—let us make it an opportunity this session to bring in an elected Speaker and bring our Legislature up to date with eight out of ten Legislatures and the House of Commons by having an elected Speaker elected by all MLAs, not just appointed by the Premier.

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 Speaker's Gallery where the six young persons who were appointed to the Manitoba Legislative Internship Program for the 1998-99 year are seated. In accordance with established practice, three interns were assigned to the government caucus and three to the official opposition caucus. Their

term of employment is 12 months. They have been performing a variety of research and other tasks for private members. These interns commenced their assignment last September and will complete them in August.

*(1345)

They are, working with the government caucus, Ms. Melanie Mallet of the University of Manitoba, Ms. Shelly Wiseman of the University of Manitoba and Ms. Melanie Vanstone of McGill University; working with the caucus of the official opposition, Mr. Rory Henry of the University of Manitoba, Mr. David Markham of the University of Manitoba and Ms. Renata Neufeld of the University of Manitoba.

Copies of their biographies have been distributed to the members. I would like to take this opportunity on behalf of all members to congratulate you on your appointment to the program and to hope that you are having a very interesting and successful year.

Also, seated in the public gallery we have fifty Grade 9 students from Linden Christian School under the direction of Mr. Derek Kroeker. This school is located in the constituency of the honourable First Minister (Mr. Filmon).

And, forty-three Grade 9 students from Chief Peguis Junior High School under the direction of Mr. Will Barmeir. This school is located in the constituency of the honourable Minister of Family Services (Mrs. Mitchelson).

And, forty-one Grade 11 students from Warren Collegiate under the direction of Mr. Jake Wiebe and Mr. John Smith. This school is located in the constituency of the honourable Minister of Agriculture (Mr. Enns).

And, 20 senior high students from Daniel McIntyre Collegiate under the direction of Mr. Steve Patrick. This school is located in the constituency of the honourable member for Wellington (Ms. Barrett).

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

ORAL QUESTION PERIOD

Aboriginal Children Special Needs Programs—Access

Mr. Gary Doer (Leader of the Opposition): Madam Speaker, a national study dealing with the compliance of U.S. standards on disabilities produced by Patrick Kellerman and Deborah Steinstra has produced some shocking results. One of the most appalling transgressions that they speak to is the fact that aboriginal parents living on reserves have to relinquish guardianship of their children if they have disabilities in order to access provincially funded special needs programs.

I would like to ask the Minister responsible for Federal-Provincial Relations and the First Minister: has his government taken any action on this issue, and what action is he proposing to the parents who must be in a horrible situation in Manitoba to be faced with those kinds of challenges?

Hon. Gary Filmon (Premier): Madam Speaker, my understanding is that we have had a working group that has been working on this and that the Child and Youth Secretariat along with the federal departments of Indian and Northern Affairs and Health Canada, Medical Services Branch, the Awasis Agency of Northern Manitoba, Manitoba Health and Manitoba Family Services have been working on a project designed to repatriate First Nations children with technology dependence to their home reserves. The process is near completion. The required funds have been approved, and a draft agreement has been developed with respect to the pilot project.

Mr. Doer: I will have to examine the answer of the First Minister. Madam Speaker, I am quite concerned, and I think anyone in this Chamber would be absolutely concerned, about a situation where, in order for any of our children to access special needs programs, we have to lose custody. It seems to me, whatever the jurisdictional issues here, that humanity and human rights would dictate that all of us take whatever action necessary to have programs accessible to children without families losing custody of those children.

On page 97 of the Postl report, it also talked in 1995 of this critical situation for aboriginal children for special needs. I would like to ask the Premier: since the Postl report has been produced in Manitoba and released over four years ago, has this situation been dealt with in Manitoba so parents are not faced with special needs programs versus guardianship, which I think is an intolerable situation for any Manitoban?

* (1350)

Mr. Filmon: As the member knows, among the many issues that are contained within this is the issue of jurisdiction on reserve, a matter over which, of course, the Constitution speaks. That is why this has been an issue in which technologically dependent children—we agree, I might say, with the member opposite that it should not be a situation that forces a choice of giving up the children by the parents. That is why this matter has been under development for over two years in a multidiscipline, multidepartmental study that we believe is going to result in a pilot project to try and ensure that we can provide the technology on reserve. Again, the major partner and the major authority under the Constitution is the federal government. That is why we have been a part of it, because we would want to have that matter resolved. We have certainly been urging, trying to find a way to resolve it.

Mr. Doer: On page 346 of the special needs report, it also talks about the perceived lack of co-operation dealing with special needs kids between the province, the school boards and the aboriginal community and a real lack of trust. It seems to me, if the dollars are constant for special needs programs and children are coming from First Nations communities to get those programs, that the issue of custody should not be in question and that the Premier today could say that no more kids will be taken into custody to access programs for special needs kids, that we could take a leadership stand today and say that programs for children in the jurisdictions that are being dealt with are one thing, but families and kids we do not believe should be split in order to access programs from one jurisdiction to another.

Can we get that commitment from the Premier today?

Mr. Filmon: Madam Speaker, I would agree that we need to resolve the situation and find a solution, but rather than take the narrow perspective that the member is of just simply dealing with it and saying that we are simply going to not allow the children to be taken away without providing for them the opportunity to have the technological access that they require, we think they would be condemning them to a life of poverty and ill achievement. That is not a sufficient answer, which is why we are looking at the whole solution, not just a narrow part of the solution. That is what this pilot program is intended to do, is to find a whole solution.

Aboriginal Children Government Action

Ms. Jean Friesen (Wolseley): Madam Speaker, according to the recent Steinstra-Kellerman report, aboriginal Manitobans identify themselves as facing disabilities at twice the rate of the general population. Much of this, of course, stems from issues of poverty.

I want to ask the Minister of Education why there were no aboriginal representatives on the special needs steering committee, why no hearings were held in aboriginal reserve communities and how he intends to ensure a continuum of support and services without such educational discussions with aboriginal schools and communities.

Hon. James McCrae (Minister of Education and Training): Madam Speaker, the question raised here does have quite a relationship with the questions raised by the honourable Leader of the Opposition and the answers given by the First Minister. There is indeed a need for federal agencies to put the needs of the children ahead of any jurisdictional disputes or squabbles that we might have. I know that many, many aboriginal children attend schools off reserve, and the special needs programs are available for children attending the public school system in Manitoba. On that matter, funding has doubled in the last 10 years or so to \$109 million. That

was added to just last week by another \$2 million as our first responses to the special education report. We are committed to responding further as well, and indeed in the course of doing so, we may take into account issues like the ones raised today by honourable members opposite, but without federal co-operation we have a much harder row to hoe.

* (1355)

Ms. Friesen: Madam Speaker, could the minister explain why, after five ministers, 11 years of Tory education policy, the special needs review felt compelled to point out the perceived lack of co-operation between the province, the school system and aboriginal communities stemmed from a lack of trust and there is a need for someone to take responsibility? Can he explain why, after five ministers, 11 years of this government, no one in this government took responsibility for that?

Mr. McCrae: Madam Speaker, I would take precisely the opposite view as that taken by the honourable member. It was this government that commissioned the proactive report and two years of work on special education. It was this government that saw the need to look ahead and do something about it. It was not those who simply want to criticize all the time. We took that initiative, knowing full well there were significant challenges ahead in special education in Manitoba, but we also know that is the most significant area where investment can be made to enrich the lives of young people and make them contributing members of society for their whole life. This government has shown a continuous willingness to work with the various players, be they school divisions, be they aboriginal Manitobans, whomever they happen to be, but, again, without federal participation and co-operation we are not going to make the progress that honourable members opposite want and that we want.

Ms. Friesen: Madam Speaker, could the minister who in fact initiated, in his own department's words, this review seven years ago—they have had seven years to think about this. He has been told by the special needs review that Manitoba parents, and I quote, are

not getting a full picture of what is out there. Many parents, and I quote, feel they have been lied to and misinformed. The review has advised the department to prepare a handbook for parents.

I would like to ask the minister why, after five ministers, 11 years of Tory education policy, the government has been unable to prepare a handbook, a fundamental obligation of this government.

Mr. McCrae: Madam Speaker, again, contrary to what the honourable member is alleging here today, the aboriginal education directorate of the Department of Education has been praised by aboriginal leaders and by educators throughout the province. That is not to say that all of the issues were resolved; otherwise the government would not have commissioned a special education review. We know very well, as does the honourable member, the significant opportunity that exists if we invest the dollars and the programs in young Manitobans who have special education requirements. To go further, we can be thankful that we have forward-looking people in the Department of Family Services who have placed before Manitobans the BabyFirst program and the EarlyStart program which have such an impact and make such a difference on the early years of a student's life. Reading Recovery is another program that is very, very significant.

So the questions raised by the honourable member are indeed important, and they are important in every jurisdiction across this country as a generation of Canadians is coming forward requiring special education services.

Political Advertising Electoral Process

Ms. Rosann Wowchuk (Swan River): Madam Speaker, as I read the Monnin report, it is obvious that there was a plan to subvert the electoral process. When I read that Mr. Kozminski says he will do anything to take votes away from the NDP, I wonder where Tory ethics are when they try to pass this off as an error in judgment.

Madam Speaker, 1995 was not the first time Tories tried to play with campaigns. In 1990 the Tories put out a bogus pamphlet in the Swan River constituency trying to divide the aboriginal and the white community.

I would like to ask the Premier: given that this happened under his watch, can he indicate whether he accepts this attempt to stir up racism and to divide the people, and does he condone the actions of members of the Conservative Party to do this kind of thing?

I will table the pamphlet, Madam Speaker.

* (1400)

Hon. Gary Filmon (Premier): Madam Speaker, not having seen the pamphlet that the member is talking about, I would just simply say that under no circumstances do I or my party accept racism as a means of any democratic action in this province. I reject that. The member opposite can do whatever she wants to stir it up, but I will not accept it.

Point of Order

Mr. Steve Ashton (Opposition House Leader): On a point of order, the First Minister is clearly out of order. He is attributing motives. Madam Speaker, I would like to indicate that this is a leaflet that was put out by the Conservative Party that was sent only to nonaboriginal people, a phoney leaflet on aboriginal issues, and it was, by the way, acknowledged to be coming directly from the Conservative campaign. In fact their official agent ended up paying for it.

So I would like to ask you to have the First Minister withdraw his unparliamentary comments and perhaps for once accept responsibility again for this continuing pattern of attempts to subvert elections in this province by the Conservative Party.

Madam Speaker: On the point of order raised by the honourable member for Thompson, I will take the matter under advisement to check the exact wording of the Premier and consult with the authorities.

* * *

Ms. Wowchuk: Madam Speaker, given that this pamphlet was put out by the Conservative Party and it was an attempt to stir up racism, I would like to ask the Premier if he will commit this time that his party will follow The Elections Act and ensure that members of the Conservative Party do not put out bogus pamphlets and try to stir up racism anywhere in the province.

Mr. Filmon: Madam Speaker, not only is my party committed to ensure that the democratic process is followed, but we are strengthening the legislation in accordance with the recommendations of retired Chief Justice Monnin to ensure that we go beyond requirements that were there previously.

Ms. Wowchuk: Madam Speaker, I would like to ask the Premier if he will refer this pamphlet which the Conservatives put out to the ethics committee of the Conservative Party that was created because of the vote-rigging scandal and ensure that Tories do not distribute bogus pamphlets in the next election.

Mr. Filmon: Madam Speaker, I have already rejected the pamphlet and its content. I said so in my first answer.

Monnin Report Government Action

Mr. Dave Chomiak (Kildonan): Madam Speaker, my question is to the First Minister.

We are very concerned on this side of the House about a climate as was indicated in the Monnin report, a climate and a culture that has been adopted by members opposite that seems to go beyond the area of fair play and which, in the opinion of many Conservative members, is victory at all cost.

My question to the First Minister is: what kinds of assurances can the First Minister give that future Tory candidates, future Tory members and other close people around the Premier are not involved, will not be involved, in the debacle, the tragedy and the scandal of the last few years?

Hon. Gary Filmon (Premier): Madam Speaker, as was concluded by Mr. Justice

Monnin in his report, he said: "I find no evidence that any elected PC member, any member of the Party's executive, nor any other member of the Party's management committee on which Thorsteinson sat was aware of or aided and abetted in either the plot or the cover-up.

"As far as the cover-up is concerned, it is the handiwork of three individuals. There is no evidence to suggest that anyone else knew."

I say to this member that this was after receiving testimony from 72 people, of whom 37 appeared under oath before the inquiry, and I have said unequivocally that their actions were unacceptable and that everything will be done to ensure that every step possible is taken to ensure that this never happens again.

Political Advertising Confidentiality

Mr. Dave Chomiak (Kildonan): Madam Speaker, then perhaps the Premier can explain to me how it is that a chiropractic doctor can write a letter to all of his patients advocating support for a Conservative candidate running for the nomination, doing follow-up phone calls asking for memberships for those patients, and how that can happen and how we can lobby the effects of the Conservative Party on chiropractics in Manitoba and send out a letter to patients—and I will table this letter for review by the government—how the Premier acknowledges and accepts that.

Hon. Gary Filmon (Premier): Madam Speaker, I will be happy to refer this to Elections Manitoba for their examination as to the propriety of this.

I remind the member opposite that his friends and supporters and fellow party members routinely use union lists to write to members, as they did when the Leader of the Opposition (Mr. Doer) became Leader of his party, and at the end of the day Bernie Christophe went on television and exulted: the machine works through the use of those kinds of things, as, Madam Speaker, the member himself, the member for Kildonan, used the lists of contractors to the Crown corporations of this province when the New Democrats were in

office to call on them to raise funds for the New Democratic Party. He did that. He used those lists of who received contracts from the New Democratic Party government in the '80s to call on them personally to urge them to contribute money to the party because they had received contracts from his party.

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Madam Speaker: Order, please. The honourable member for Kildonan, with a supplementary question.

Mr. Chomiak: Madam Speaker, my supplementary is to the Minister of Health, since the Premier apparently has not learned from the lessons of the Monnin inquiry when the First Minister attacked anyone that made any kind of accusation. That is why he got himself into trouble.

My question to the Minister of Health is: will the Minister of Health investigate the patient confidentiality provisions, as contained in their own privacy legislation, to see how it is that someone could take private patient lists and solicit for the Conservative Party for a Conservative candidate to work on behalf of a Conservative candidate in the next election to ensure that they can maintain themselves in office, something they have been trying to do illegally as we have found for many, many years?

* (1410)

Madam Speaker: Order, please. The question has been put.

Hon. Eric Stefanson (Deputy Premier): Well, Madam Speaker, the Premier has already indicated a preparedness to send this letter to Elections Manitoba. I am certainly prepared to look into the issue as to whether or not there has been any breach of any issues of confidentiality or any privacy legislation. I will certainly undertake to do that.

Centra Gas Purchase Acquisition Price

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Inkster): Madam Speaker, just weeks prior to the throne speech

the government went ahead and gave authorization for Manitoba Hydro to spend hundreds of millions of dollars in the acquisition of Centra Gas.

The question for the Premier (Mr. Filmon) is: can the Premier indicate to this Chamber what is the actual cost for Manitobans in that acquisition?

Hon. David Newman (Minister charged with the administration of The Manitoba Hydro Act): Madam Speaker, the actual equity cost was \$245 million. Then there is an assumption of the debt which was also a debt, of course, that was paid for by the rates charged to consumers and approved by the Public Utilities Board. That was in the order of 300 and some-odd million dollars, and I will get the exact figure. That constitutes, in effect, the price of the acquisition. The price was a price that was evaluated by two independent bodies. The price was within the range which was considered appropriate for the market at the time.

Public Input Process

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Inkster): Madam Speaker, I would ask the government: given that there was absolutely no reference to this \$100-million deal in the throne speech, does the government feel any obligation to provide a forum in which the public can have released some of these details and opposition would be able to provide more detailed questioning?

Hon. David Newman (Minister charged with the administration of The Manitoba Hydro Act): Madam Speaker, the nature of the transaction, of course, was such that it was a publicly traded company that was privately owned and then there was a public corporation, Manitoba Hydro, involved. So the vendor was unable to disclose information, as was the purchaser, with the result that there was a confidentiality agreement which guided the negotiations.

The process for public input can potentially take place with respect to the Public Utilities Board, and that is under consideration at this time by that body pursuant to applications that have been made. There is also an opportunity

for any member of the public to inquire of myself or Manitoba Hydro about facts in relation to the transaction which could be answered to the extent they are not precluded from being answered prior to the conclusion of the final deal.

Mr. Lamoureux: Madam Speaker, many find it absolutely amazing government would okay something that would require hundreds of millions of dollars.

The question specific to the minister is: is the minister prepared to look at calling a Standing Committee on Public Utilities, much in the same fashion in which we handled Repap, so the public can be given a full accounting of exactly what this government has done by giving the authority to Manitoba Hydro to acquire Centra Gas, so we can find out what the hidden message or what it is that the government is hoping to be able to achieve by this purchase, and the public will be fully—

Madam Speaker: Order, please. The question has been put.

Mr. Newman: Madam Speaker, in the due course of time, first of all pending the decision of the Public Utilities Board, which might provide the opportunity that has been alluded to—there is, of course, a committee of this Legislature which does sit, and that might afford another opportunity in the due course of time. The full details of the transaction, when they are freed from any constraints of the negotiations pending closure, will be, of course, available to the public. We made that assurance as a condition of the negotiations, that ultimately all of the details of the transaction would be made available to the public.

Fishing Industry Fish Stocks—Decline

Mr. Oscar Lathlin (The Pas): My questions are directed to the Minister responsible for Manitoba Hydro. Madam Speaker, the minister and his colleague the Minister of Natural Resources (Mr. Cummings) are well aware that the fishing industry in the Grand Rapids area at the mouth of the Saskatchewan River into Lake Winnipeg has been deteriorating to the point

where it is no longer feasible for the fishermen to go out and try to make a living out of fishing. Of course, these losses have long been linked to the hydro generating station that was installed there in the early '60s. My question to the minister is: since Manitoba Hydro had admitted that there is a serious decline in the fish stock, which requires action, why has this minister and his colleague the Minister of Natural Resources not made negotiations a much higher priority?

Hon. David Newman (Minister charged with the administration of The Manitoba Hydro Act): Madam Speaker, the history of this consequence of hydro development at Grand Rapids in the 1960s includes a period, of course, when the New Democratic Party was in office, and during that period no negotiations whatsoever took place. It was not until September 1989 that Manitoba Hydro commissioned an evaluation of the Grand Rapids project impact by an independent team of consultants, consistent with what was done with treaty land entitlement in the Northern Flood Agreements. The result of that was a settlement of \$5.1 million, I believe it was, for Grand Rapids. They were acting on behalf of the fishermen at that time and entered into releases and indemnities, with some exceptions, against the unforeseen. So the deal was settled. In spite of that, in addition, there were adverse effects—compensation agreements in 1992 and '93. There were experimental habitat improvements, which continue from 1997 to 2003 costing over a million dollars, and there is a Grand Rapids walleye spawning enhancement program operation as well.

Grand Rapids Visit

Mr. Oscar Lathlin (The Pas): I have one more question for the minister. Would the minister agree to travel to Grand Rapids and meet with the fishers there to see what could be done to resolve the situation that is developing at Grand Rapids?

Hon. David Newman (Minister charged with the administration of The Manitoba Hydro Act): Madam Speaker, we had a meeting with the deputies of the Department of Natural Resources, my deputy minister and representatives of Hydro, including the president

of Hydro, in my office some time ago. I was distracted by other activities which required my immediate attention at the time.

The result of that meeting was a decision confirmed by a letter that they were attempting through threats to extort \$25 million from the Province of Manitoba and Manitoba Hydro. The result of an analysis was that they had filed a statement of claim, and the statement of claim was sitting. Defences had been filed. They have chosen a legal route to get an adjudicated result in a situation where legal opinions differ about liability. Hydro and Manitoba believe there is no liability. So they are using a process of extortion at the moment to try and bring people back to a table which there was no basis to meet about.

Life-Lease Condominiums Exemptions

Ms. Marianne Cerilli (Radisson): Madam Speaker, when The Elderly and Infirm Persons Housing Act was amended in June of '97, there were 17 life-lease apartments identified in Manitoba where residents were going to receive a guaranteed tax exemption totalling more than three-quarters of a million dollars. The minister has confirmed that this list of apartments receiving the exemption is growing, but he is unclear of how much they are going to be and how many are going to have two to three years before being reviewed.

I want to ask the minister: if you knew there were more than 17 apartments at the time of the passage of the bill, how come they were not mentioned then, and how many more condominiums were you aware of at the time of the passage of Bill 60?

Hon. Jack Reimer (Minister of Housing): Under the present EIPH Act, Madam Speaker, I believe there are around 260 residents or apartments or housing complexes that are exempt. The life-lease portion of the exemption—there are 44 of these units that are exempt. The other day the member was mentioning one of the complexes being exempt, and the complex she was referring to, called Villa Beliveau, does not have an EIPH licence for exemption. The licences that have been

issued were issued under the existing agreements or the parameters that were in effect before, as she mentioned, November 15, 1997. Since that time no new licences have been issued to life-lease units. The qualifications and the restrictions that apply to the size and the income have to be abided by before any licence is renewed.

Ms. Cerilli: Madam Speaker, the minister mentioned Villa Beliveau. The complex is in his riding. He was at the sod turning. His name is in the ad for the complex.

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

* (1420)

Ms. Cerilli: I am asking my question, Madam Speaker. I want to ask the minister if these life-lease condominiums are being marketed using the property tax exemption, and are the residents now being informed that they will lose that property tax exemption after two or three years.

Mr. Reimer: Madam Speaker, firstly the member is right. I was at the ground-breaking ceremony for Villa Beliveau, but as was mentioned this unit does not have an EIPH licence so it is paying its share of taxes, whether it is property taxes or education taxes. So it does not qualify under the exemptions. The exemptions have been renewed on three-year bases, and at that time all of them will be reviewed for their applications as to their qualifications, not only their income size but their income requirements to be qualified under the EIPH. So they will be reviewed. They were grandfathered, like I mentioned, for three years, and they will be reviewed.

Mining Industry Claims Inspectors

Ms. MaryAnn Mihychuk (St. James): Madam Speaker, given the importance of mining to Manitoba, the vast area of Manitoba's mineral resources, it is important that our resources are managed and developed in a fair and open process. We are now in an intolerable situation where Manitoba has no claims inspectors.

Can the minister explain why he has taken no effort to replace Manitoba's claims inspectors, and in fact we have none and have a situation that is going before the mines review board tomorrow?

Hon. David Newman (Minister of Energy and Mines): Madam Speaker, at this particular point in time, there is a process considering the hiring of two claims inspectors, one for the northern area of the province and one for the southern area. There was a retirement of a civil servant long serving, and at the moment there is no claims inspector on departmental staff.

There are ways that that need can be fulfilled in the interim, but the intent is to as soon as possible engage two claims inspectors. The contingency plan, of course, is there to be operated when and if necessary.

Interim Claims Inspectors

Ms. MaryAnn Mihychuk (St. James): Madam Speaker, will the minister confirm that it is the intention to send out geological staff to be interim claims inspectors?

Hon. David Newman (Minister of Energy and Mines): Madam Speaker, it is always a decision that has to be made based on what other people are involved in, but other alternatives that are being investigated as to service in the immediate future, the suggestion that she has made is one of them. On the longer term, quarry inspectors may be available for that purpose, but there would have to be some upgrading and adjustment. Also, the representative from The Pas office, Fred Heidman, would be able to provide training, and he is also providing inspection services in the northern parts of the province at the present time.

Winnipeg Inner City Government Policies

Ms. Becky Barrett (Wellington): Madam Speaker, the government admits in the throne speech that, and I quote, "many of our neighbourhoods, particularly in the centre, have seen an unacceptable level of decay and decline," which is well known to the residents of Manitoba, as a direct result of 11 years of this

government's policies, which include but are, of course, not limited to unacceptable levels of sprawl in the Capital Region, a flight of residents from Winnipeg, and reduced financial resources to the city as a result of government examples like giving BFI a licence in the R.M. of Rosser, which has meant a loss of \$7 million and the loss of several million dollars as a net result of the province overtaking social services.

In light of these and other devastating results of this government's deliberate policies and choices, how does the First Minister expect the people of Winnipeg to believe you when you state, and I quote again, "the success of our entire province is linked to the success of Winnipeg"?

Hon. Gary Filmon (Premier): Madam Speaker, as the throne speech says, there is no major city in Canada that gets a greater proportion of its financing and funding from the provincial government. This government has increased dramatically its transfers to the City of Winnipeg, and I remind her—she would not know this because she was not here in 1988—that one of our first official responsibilities was to reverse a reduction in the Provincial Municipal Tax Sharing agreement which they—

An Honourable Member: The Schreyer agreement.

Mr. Filmon: Yes, it was the Schreyer agreement and then the Pawley-Doer government with Doer as the leader of the—

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Madam Speaker: The honourable First Minister, to complete his response.

Mr. Filmon: Yes, Madam Speaker, I can understand the sensitivity of the member for Concordia (Mr. Doer), because he was the Minister of Urban Affairs that was cutting in half the transfer of the provincial-municipal tax sharing to the City of Winnipeg at that time. We reversed that cut as one of our first responsibilities in government. Now they have the audacity to try and say that they are friends of the city when they were trying to cut their transfers to the city in those days. We did not

agree with that. We have continued to enrich our transfers to the city, and that is one of the ways, one of the strong ways that we are showing our support to the City of Winnipeg. There will be many other opportunities that we will have to work co-operatively with the City of Winnipeg. That is what our commitment is, has been, and will continue to be, unlike the New Democrats.

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

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

Education Week

Mr. Jack Penner (Emerson): Madam Speaker, April 12 to 16 this week is Education Week in Manitoba, and I encourage everyone to join me in marking this important week.

I am pleased to be a part of a government that places such a strong emphasis on education. As the recent throne speech indicated, our government remains committed to education renewal. We will continue to focus on standards and testing to ensure that students, parents and teachers know how a student is progressing so they can take remedial action at the earliest possible time, reshaping our education system to ensure that every child develops the foundation skills to read, write, problem solve, and commute at a high level, encouraging greater parental involvement so that all voices are heard as we develop an education system that will take us successfully into the next century.

Our government knows how important education is to individual success. We are shaping an education system known for excellence, results and accountability. We will continue to focus on literacy skills, early intervention and increasing technology in the classroom to help students meet the challenges of a changing global economy. Our students stand on the brink of a new millennium. Our education must prepare them for the future. It must provide them with the skills and knowledge they need to succeed in this new century. It must serve as a passport to hope, opportunity, jobs and growth.

* (1430)

Madam Speaker, this government is committed to working in partnership with Manitobans to ensure that all students receive the highest quality education ever delivered in Manitoba. Please join me in celebrating Education Week, an event that allows everyone involved in and dedicated to education to celebrate achievements and to look forward to even greater accomplishments.

Greenway School–Daycare

Ms. MaryAnn Mihychuk (St. James): Last May I brought an issue to the House regarding families in the Greenway School catchment area. These families were told by the Tory government that they were not able to get a daycare in their new school that was recently built, even though there was a demonstrated need, even though it was cost-effective to include a daycare in this new school which was being built.

Then last May we learned that the government had actually promised a new daycare in a school in River Heights, a constituency of a Tory cabinet minister. As Manitobans know, it was the Pawley government that had made it a requirement to include daycares in all new school construction projects if there was a demonstrated need, and it was this Filmon government that took this common-sense policy away from Manitoba families. What does this government have to say to the people in my area, and what does this Premier have to say to the families who were denied daycares in over a dozen schools across Manitoba? This type of favouritism, playing politics with the lives of Manitobans, is all too common with this government. I say shame on this Conservative government for, once again, putting the well-being of their friends ahead of the well-being of families in our neighbourhoods.

World Curling Championships

Mrs. Myrna Driedger (Charleswood): Madam Speaker, I am pleased to share with the members of this House the accomplishments of a great curling team from Charleswood. Five

men, Jeff Stoughton, Jonathan Mead, Gary Van den Berghe, Doug Armstrong and Steve Gould are the members of the highly successful Stoughton rink.

Many Manitobans have been glued to their television sets in recent weeks following the efforts of the Stoughton rink. They began by winning the Safeway Select Provincial Curling Championships in Portage. This accomplishment allowed them to move on to the 1999 Labatt Brier in Edmonton. After winning the Brier, they proceeded to the World Curling Championships in New Brunswick where yesterday they won the Silver Medal.

The sport of curling has exploded on the global scene. Curling is now being played all over the world. At the World Championships, there were men's and women's teams representing Sweden, Japan, United States, Norway, Finland, Denmark, Switzerland, Germany, Scotland and New Zealand.

The Charleswood Curling Club is home to the Stoughton team, and we are very proud of their many great accomplishments. I know we are all looking forward to watching this very talented team try to do it all again next year. Manitobans are honoured to be represented by world-class athletes such as the members of the Stoughton rink. I would like to thank Mr. Stoughton as he and his teammates are wonderful ambassadors for Winnipeg and the entire country. Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Property Taxes

Mr. Tim Sale (Crescentwood): Madam Speaker, in 1999, 50 percent of the costs of public education for our schools is met through property taxes. The property tax burden in this province, and now for many taxpayers particularly in the urban areas, is comprised of more than 50 percent of taxes for school purposes.

This government cut the property tax credit by some \$75 in 1992-93. They have failed to fund public education in an adequate manner, and thereby have forced school boards, in an attempt to keep class sizes at least reasonable—although more than 600 teachers have been laid

off—in an attempt to meet the needs of special needs children, which the recent report acknowledged are not being met—those school boards have been forced to raise property taxes to an exorbitant level, to the point where the special levy has risen by 80 percent since this government took office. This government has caused the increase of taxes of the special levy by 80 percent.

In 1992-93, they provided \$732 million from the accounts of the Province of Manitoba for public education. That has fallen this year to \$709 million, a drop of some \$24 million. So let it not be said that this government has increased its support to public schools. Let it not be said that this government has not raised taxes. They have not increased their support to schools since 1992-93. It has fallen. Taxes have risen by 80 percent as a direct consequence, and that does not make up for the loss. Classes are larger, teachers are fewer. There are fewer resources. There are out-of-date textbooks.

This government has increased taxes, and it has cut support to public schools in a dramatic fashion, and that is unacceptable to the people of Manitoba.

Western Canada Bantam Hockey Championships

Mr. Gerry McAlpine (Sturgeon Creek): Madam Speaker, it gives me great honour to share with members on both sides of the House the accomplishments of local Manitoba hockey players. This last weekend, Winnipeg played host to the Western Canada Bantam Championships and our Winnipeg Hawks placed second, giving them the silver medal. The host team, the Winnipeg Sharks, placed fourth.

I would like to highlight the accomplishments of some individual players from Manitoba. Luke Molotowski was named the most valuable player for the tournament as well as best forward. Tim Boron was named best goalie for the tournament. David McDonald received the chairman's pick and received a \$1,000 academic bursary from CIBC. He was selected for his ability, sportsmanship and academic potential. Lance Monych was named as one of the three stars in the gold medal game,

and Darcy Nazar was named in the three stars in the bronze medal game.

It is important that we continue to support these fine young athletes as their pursuit for sports plays an important role in personal development. All teams demonstrated good sportsmanship and played excellent hockey. It is also encouraging to see that our athletes are receiving academic bursaries for the accomplishments in hockey, and I am pleased to see that the hockey league is encouraging our young athletes to not only excel at their sport but also in their studies.

Finally, I would like to congratulate the organizers, the players, the coaches, the officials, parents and fans of the Western Canada Bantam Hockey Championships for presenting such a quality tournament. The organizers of the tournament with chairman Al Fast and his committee, along with the Greater Winnipeg minor hockey people, have to be congratulated for such a super effort. I heard many compliments from the people in attendance throughout the weekend. There is a lot of hockey talent in this province, evidenced by the world junior championships that we had here this past winter, and this weekend was also evidence of that.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

THRONE SPEECH DEBATE (Fourth Day of Debate)

Madam Speaker: To resume adjourned debate on the proposed motion of the honourable member for St. Norbert (Mr. Laurendeau) and the proposed motion of the honourable Leader of the official opposition (Mr. Doer) in amendment thereto, standing in the name of the honourable member for Inkster (Mr. Lamoureux) who has 25 minutes remaining.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Inkster): Madam Speaker, in commenting on it on Friday, I was talking last about fiscal policy, and I will just start in essence from there, where we feel that the lower tax commission is window dressing. If the government plans to reduce taxation prior to consultation, consultation should address questions of equity and transfers to school

authorities, as well as level of taxation. The government has recognized that property taxes in Manitoba are too high, yet Tories reduced the minimum property tax credit from \$325 to \$250, a reduction of 23 percent. That was not promised by the Tory throne speech in the years prior, Madam Speaker, and the election—

Lacking, I should say, a clear vision, this particular government has incurred hundreds of millions of dollars in expenditure in the purchase of Centra Gas, yet as I indicated earlier in Question Period, we saw nothing of that being mentioned inside the throne speech. We find that is very irresponsible of the government to have done it in the fashion in which they have.

Madam Speaker, the throne speech does not inspire confidence. It is quite clear that this is not, indeed, a throne speech that is supportable. Having said that, there were a few more words that I was wanting to put on the record before I move a subamendment. That being, of course, that I have always enjoyed giving input and my thoughts and party positions on throne speeches in the past. I hope, with my constituents' blessing, to be able to continue to do it in the future. In looking at the type of a subamendment that we would bring forward, one has to take into consideration the actual amendment that the New Democrats have brought before the Chamber because it then narrows the scope of what it is that we can bring forward as a party in terms of being able to amend the amendment, if you like. If there was no amendment prior, there are many different areas which we could have commented on in amending the throne speech itself. We know the importance of health care. It is an issue which I hold very dear to my heart and believe that it is a part of what gives Canadians a sense of identity, that it is worth fighting for to ensure that we adhere to those five fundamental principles. What we should be doing is looking at ways in which we can enhance and make our system that much better. It should not be driven by the dollar per se. There is a way in which we can spend smarter and provide better quality service to all Manitobans at the same time.

It is an area in which, obviously, we would have liked to have seen more mention of, more ideas and thoughts through the throne speech. It

is an area in which the Liberal Party will be very aggressive in going into the next provincial election as we share with Manitobans a more detailed policy platform.

There is the whole area, Madam Speaker, of education. I have said in the past and will maintain that a public education is there to challenge the minds and the capabilities of all children whether it is the learning disabled or the gifted child. There is a great deal of concern in terms of direction, in particular with respect to financing a public education out there, that Manitobans have. We have seen a lack of commitment from this government to adequately finance public education, and we would call upon the government to revisit the issue prior to presenting the next provincial budget and not to underestimate the importance of this government in bringing forward a budget that clearly demonstrates that it is the province that has to play a more leadership role in the financing of public education.

Economic development, Madam Speaker, whether it is in rural Manitoba or the city of Winnipeg, is obviously another concern that we have within the Liberal Party. There was a great deal of discussion from the current Minister of Industry and Trade (Mr. Tweed), where he was actually being quoted in I believe it was the Steinbach newspaper. I quote, where it says: Mr. Tweed said that nobody in the Tory government would tell business that it cannot locate or expand in Winnipeg but that his department would vigorously promote alternative sites in rural communities.

In the second article Mr. Tweed is reported to have said he was impressed with the promotion thrust of his new department partly because it employs a team of consultants who make a special effort to attract small and medium business sized industries to rural Manitoba.

Madam Speaker, we say that because we cannot underestimate the value and the contributions that the city of Winnipeg has to offer all of Manitobans. So, obviously, the Liberal Party believes in the diversification of our rural communities. I think that our past record has clearly demonstrated support where

the government has done well in that diversification. Also, it is critical that we not neglect the city of Winnipeg and the engines that drive the economy at that level.

Those are the types of amendments that could have very easily been brought into the fold in addressing this particular Throne Speech, but because, somewhat, of the rules we were not necessarily able to address in the fashion that we would have liked to. As opposed, what we do have is a subamendment that is going to be dealing in essence with three issues: failure to call the session back in order. That is in fact— [interjection] And, you know, I look at the dean of the Chamber. He has been here for many years, more than any other member inside this Chamber. That is why he is the dean of the Chamber. I know the dean enjoy tremendously the opportunity and the privilege to be here, and we value how effective this Chamber can indeed be.

Every year, we raise and spend billions of dollars. There is a need for public accountability through this session. It offends me more virtually than any other issue, with the possible exception of the manipulation of elections, because I look at this Chamber as one of our cornerstones of democracy. Even if it means having to adjourn or recess an hour after Question Period, I believe it is absolutely essential, and Manitobans have a right to believe that their legislators are in fact sitting and opposition is being provided the opportunity to hold government accountable for the actions that it is taking on a day-in, day-out basis.

I find it insulting to democracy when a government goes for nine months without sitting inside this Chamber. This particular government, Madam Speaker, is not alone. The dean of the Chamber no doubt is very much aware that there is one incident not that long ago where the Chamber did not sit for a year, and that was under the NDP administration.

Having said that, Madam Speaker, it does not justify this government's action in not calling the session at an earlier time. There was business. There was a need for us to meet, and it is really unfortunate that the government did not see that. I reviewed the provisional rules that we

are looking at adopting. One of them was a fixed session. It is absolutely critical that this Chamber at the very least acknowledge the need to have a guaranteed number of sitting days.

* (1450)

Hon. Harry Enns (Minister of Agriculture): That is a contradiction of our parliamentary system. A basic contradiction of the parliamentary system. You cannot have it.

Mr. Lamoureux: I disagree. You know, with all due respect to our dean, Madam Speaker, I do believe that we can put into our rules something that would force this Chamber to be sitting, at the very least, 100 days in any given year. I believe that is, in fact, doable. I like to believe, having been here for 11 years, that I have a fairly decent understanding of what can, and cannot, be done inside this Chamber. I believe, as the Liberal Party and Jon Gerrard have talked at length about, of the need to have a 100-day sitting as a minimum, as a benchmark.

The other thing I want to comment on, on behalf of the party and my caucus colleague and me, obviously, is the Monnin inquiry. We find it tremendously difficult to believe that the Premier (Mr. Filmon), who sits in a chair, and the number of people that sit around him, all were aware except for the Premier.

Having said that, as I have indicated earlier on behalf of the party, the Liberal Party is prepared to accept the apology of the Premier, and it is time that we move on. Ultimately, the individuals that matter the most are Manitobans, and Manitobans will get the final say on the Monnin inquiry. [interjection]

There is, and my colleague from The Maples makes reference to the mudslinging. You know, we have got to be very careful. Someone said you do not throw a stone in a glass house. Well, Madam Speaker, I can recall, and I am going back earlier today to Question Period, it was the '88 election in which I was in and all of a sudden—I believe it was two days or three days before the election day and my apartment blocks had received a brochure and it did not have "sponsored by a political party" on it. It made it very clear that the Liberal Party opposed rent

control. To the very best of my knowledge, we did not oppose rent control in 1988, but it was a deliberate attempt from someone or some group to try to say that the Liberal Party you should not vote for because they are going to take away your rent controls. At that time, the competition was very tough between me and my major opponent.

Having said that, I cannot conclude with 100 percent certainty that it was a political party because we did not find the person that circulated the material. But we have to be very careful. I do not believe any political party, including the Liberal Party, is 100 percent clean when it comes to ethics. It is something which we have to be very careful of. What is important is that all members hold and value the office of being an MLA and respect democratic principles.

Having said that, I want to go on with the final point which our subamendment is going to deal with. Madam Speaker, if I could just get a two-minute warning, because I do have a subamendment. The final point which I want to deal with is with respect to the boundary redistribution issue. I really believe, soundly believe that the government was negligent in not calling us back into session. We should have been in session back in December or at the very least in January, February in order to pass the new boundaries. The government of the day has slapped democracy once again in the face by not seeing the importance and the urgency of having the boundary redistribution pass. Having said that, the Liberal Party wanted very much so to see this legislation passed prior to the debate on the throne speech, therefore asked the government—and we respect the fact that the government House leader requested the leave to have this bill dealt with. The leave was denied by the New Democratic Party. The official opposition has a moral obligation to do what is necessary with respect to this legislation.

Madam Speaker, I will suggest to you that in fact—

Point of Order

Mr. Doug Martindale (Burrows): On a point of order, Madam Speaker, it is not normal in this

House that house business is negotiated during Question Period, as it was that the member for Inkster (Mr. Lamoureux) is referring to, nor should it be discussed in his debate, and the bill has been introduced today. It is going to be passed in an orderly fashion, and no leave was necessary to pass the new boundaries bill.

Madam Speaker: Order, please. The honourable member for Inkster, on the same point of order.

Mr. Lamoureux: Yes, Madam Speaker, on the same point of order, I do not believe I could count on both hands the number of times which I have seen the member's opposition House leader stand up and refer to issues that are indeed on the Order Paper. In the throne speech you do not get anything more, any other form of debate that gives you the latitude to comment on virtually anything that you want. I would think, Madam Speaker, if you were to do some research, you would be able to find ample examples that would allow me to be able to comment on such an important issue that all Manitobans want to see the official opposition do the right thing on this issue, and that is to agree on the importance of passing it.

Madam Speaker: Order, please. On the point of order raised by the honourable member for Burrows, the honourable member for Burrows does not have a point of order. Indeed, when debate is ongoing on the throne speech, there is a lot of latitude allowed.

* * *

Madam Speaker: The honourable member for Inkster, to continue his debate.

Mr. Lamoureux: Yes, Madam Speaker, keeping in mind the two-minute warning I asked for, what I have indicated on behalf of the party is the importance of this particular legislation passing. If you cannot, and the government does not know when the election is going to be, the Liberal Party has done the responsible thing, has challenged, asked, prodded and told this government not to call the election prior to the boundaries being passed. The government has not given us that assurance. Because they are behaving in an irresponsible fashion does not

allow the New Democrats the same opportunity to behave in such a fashion which is totally unacceptable for Manitobans to be playing politics. And that is what you are doing.

You are playing dangerous politics on an important democratic principle that all Manitobans have a right to see this opposition party behave in a more responsible fashion that would allow these boundaries. If the boundaries do not pass, it is not only because of the Tories. It is going to be because of the New Democratic Party. You cannot guarantee that unless of course you are prepared to say that those boundaries will pass prior to the next election, and you cannot say that unless you are prepared to give leave with the government because you do not know when the government is going to call the election. It is highly irresponsible for the official opposition, even if you take some belief that, look, the Free Press editorial said that it was okay. That does not give you justification to believe that what you are doing is right. It is undemocratic. Look at Point Douglas, Madam Speaker, and your riding, 17,000 versus 30,000, approximate numbers of course.

The inequities are there. I look to the member for The Pas (Mr. Lathlin), who sighs in awe. Well, I suggest to you, you talk about fairness in the last provincial election. You are playing politics in the same fashion in which you are accusing the Tories of playing politics on a very important issue. My intention is to ensure that in fact—and it is important. One must be patient. Do not worry, the clock is ticking, and I will have to wind up, unfortunately. But having said that, back in June of last year—it has been a long time since we have been sitting, as I earlier talked about. Back in June I spoke before the boundaries came out. I talked about the importance of passing whenever this legislation comes out. I talked about the importance of calling us back into session.

Madam Speaker, I could not control the government calling us back into session. Mind you, when we were official opposition we ensured we had a date prior to letting the government—once you allow the session to come to an end, you better have a date for coming back in. That is what this particular government has demonstrated, especially over the last 12

months. So I could not control that. We cannot control when the government is going to be calling the next provincial election, but having said that, we did what we could, we got a government that is prepared, albeit through leave, unfortunately, or fortunately, we have got a government that is prepared to do what it can to facilitate its passage prior to the next election.

* (1500)

My recommendation to the New Democrats is: do not play games with this issue. Do not try tying other legislation to this particular bill as has been implied by members of your caucus. Do not try to prevent the legislation from passing because it is deemed not to be in your best interest because of one or two ridings that appear to cause discomfort from within your caucus. Do the right thing. Allow for this legislation to be passed prior to the next election. I hope I am wrong. I hope that after the throne speech, between the throne speech and the budget, in fact we are able to deal with this particular bill.

Some from the Chamber say: no problem. I will not quote the individual who said it. For once I will not quote the individual who said it. Having said that, I look to the government and request the government again, as they have done in the past on other legislation, to request and continue to request for leave to expedite this bill through the Chamber. Then I look to the official opposition to do the right thing in being able to accommodate it, and we are not saying: pass a bill that you have not seen. That bill is in fact qualified. We expect it to reflect what Elections Manitoba has brought forward and along with the traditions from the past, the most recent one being most obvious.

Madam Speaker, I see that my time has very quickly run out, and I do have a very important amendment that we would like to see brought to the floor. Again, I emphasize the scope of our subamendment does not involve the number of issues that we would have liked to have been able to bring forward in the amendment, whether it is on agriculture, health care, education, and it is only because of the limitations that we have been put on from the New Democratic Party in their amendment.

Having said that, we do have an amendment that deals with those three very important issues, and I ask and appeal on behalf of the party and my caucus colleague from The Maples (Mr. Kowalski) for support on this particular amendment. It reads:

THAT the amendment be amended by adding thereto the following words:

And that this House further regrets that this government has also failed to uphold basic democratic principles by its failure to call this House back into session for nine months, its failure to introduce fixed sittings of the legislative session, and in its delay of implementing the proposed electoral boundary changes.

Madam Speaker: It has been moved by the honourable member for Inkster, seconded by the honourable member for The Maples (Mr. Kowalski), that the amendment be amended by adding thereto the following words: And that this House further regrets that this government has also failed to uphold basic democratic principles by its failure to call this House back into session for nine months, its failure to introduce fixed sittings of the legislative session, and in its delay in implementing the proposed electoral boundary changes.

The amendment is in order.

Hon. David Newman (Minister of Northern Affairs): Madam Speaker, speaking to this subamendment, which of course, is opposed, I just wanted to add to the record something that happened, of course, in the Winnipeg Free Press editorial page suggesting that there could have been an earlier resumption of activity in this House, the implication being from the editorial that somehow or other, given the tabling of the report of the Boundaries Commission sometime around December 21, I believe, of 1998, we could have resumed activity in this House either over the Christmas period or sometime earlier in the new year, at a time when the Monnin inquiry report had yet to be completed and the hearings had yet to be completed.

So what was done, I submit, was responsible and prudent in the best interests of the public.

April 6 was the resumption of activity in this House, and at the earliest possible opportunity seeking the approval of members opposite, we sought to move forward with the new legislation so that we could all be confident that we are proceeding under the new boundaries. So I would submit that everything reasonable and responsible has been done by this government to move forward in the public interest under the new boundaries.

It is most unfortunate, as the member for Inkster has pointed out, that the official opposition is, it appears, playing games with this issue, rather than responsibly and in the public interest making very clear what the public can expect at the next election. To the extent that they do act irresponsibly in this matter, the public will be negatively affected and I hope would exercise their judgment in an informed way to once again reject the New Democratic Party candidates in all of the constituencies within which they run. Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Mr. Gregory Dewar (Selkirk): It is a great privilege to rise today to speak on, I believe, probably the 10th throne speech that I have had a chance to speak on over the years.

I would like to begin by welcoming the new pages to our Chamber. We do not know whether our session is going to be a long one. We do not know if it is going to be a short one. We do not know exactly what role they are going to be playing over the next number of days.

I guess we are all waiting. All of us who are seeking re-election are anxiously waiting for that date. I know that you will enjoy your jobs here, and I hope your experience here does not taint your appreciation of our democratic system.

Point of Order

Hon. David Newman (Deputy Government House Leader): Madam Speaker, really speaking as the deputy House leader, I had thought that there was a subamendment to a motion that had been tabled, and it was in order. I understand the member for Selkirk is speaking now to the throne speech. What has happened to the debate on the subamendment to the motion?

Unless I have misinterpreted what the member for Selkirk says, maybe he is debating the subamendment to the motion.

Madam Speaker: On the point of order raised by the acting government House leader, Manitoba practice has been that there is a lot of flexibility allowed when members are allowed to speak to the throne speech. As a direct result, I am certain the member for Selkirk will be speaking to the subamendment during the course of his comments as well.

* * *

Mr. Dewar: Madam Speaker, is it possible to get a copy of that subamendment so I can see what I am speaking to?

* (1510)

Madam Speaker: You may continue with your previous debate.

Mr. Dewar: I would like to, as well, wish all of those members who have indicated that they will not be seeking re-election, I would like to wish them all the best. I want to thank them as well for their contribution to our political process here in the House.

I would like to pay tribute to our colleague the late Neil Gaudry, whose untimely passing has affected all of us. I would like to pass on to his wife and his family my condolences. This place does not seem the same without his warm personality and his great sense of humour.

Madam Speaker, I spent my time away from the Chamber the last eight, nine months contacting my constituents. I believe the member for Inkster (Mr. Lamoureux) said he was going to go out and knock on 2,000 doors. I will have to say that I upped him by a thousand, because I went to 3,000 doors in my community over the last number of months. I want to tell you that my constituents are very disappointed with the members opposite.

Having listened to some of the speeches that were given by members opposite I can see why. Just the other day I sat in here and I listened to the member for La Verendrye (Mr. Sveinsson) as

he gave sort of a travelogue of his constituency. All we need the next time he speaks, we need some slides in here. He is treading, and some members opposite would agree with that, on very thin ice, which is dangerous to do at this time of the year. It is not only him but other members of the government that believe, they are beginning to believe their own press releases. You get to that state, it is a dangerous place to be in when you start to believe your own press releases.

We know the members opposite. They have a very ambitious PR program here in the building, and they are able to pump out material. When you start to read and believe your own press releases I think you have some serious problems there.

Madam Speaker, throne speeches are usually very vague, but this one I think is exceptional for its lack of content. It talks about a number of issues. Again, we do not know the length of the session. One would assume that we are in this pre-election situation, and it is very likely that this will only be a very short session. When you read the throne speech, you can pick out those things which indicate that. They talk about health care. They said there is a promise of enhanced public representation on governing bodies, whatever that seems to mean. Hopefully, they are going to be addressing the problem that the regional health authorities are stuffed with Conservative appointees.

Madam Speaker, another grave problem facing Manitoba is child poverty, and the concrete action that the government is going to take on this is they are going to set up a round table on healthy communities. That is to be led by the Premier (Mr. Filmon) himself. So what we are going to have is a set of consultations across this province which is intended to excuse a government from taking any action, any steps to address a nation-leading child poverty problem.

There are some things that they can do. They can institute a campaign of regularly increasing the minimum wage. They can improve access to child care. They can end the clawback of the child benefit. Most of the promises in the throne speech are clearly driven

by a pre-election agenda or, as my colleague from Transcona was able to indicate in his speech, are poll driven, where he was polled prior to Christmas and he took down—he reported, jotted down the questions that he was asked and then he referred back to the throne speech, and, in fact, a number of the questions that he was asked and issues that were raised were reflected in what was presented here in the throne speech.

Madam Speaker, what the government has done, of course, over the last number of years is they have hoarded revenues raised by lotteries, by the sale of MTS, in this pre-election fund, this pre-election slush fund that they are going to use in a couple of weeks as a gimmick to get re-elected. We know that the government opposite, the members opposite, the party opposite will do anything, anything, to get re-elected. I think it was Bob Kozminski who said I will do anything to defeat the NDP. Then he was forced—after he realized he went a bit too far, he came back and said, well, you know, anything within the law.

Madam Speaker, it is the culture of the members opposite that they will do absolutely anything at all to get re-elected. Winning is everything to them and it is reflected in their actions in the past, and it is reflected in what was presented here in the throne speech.

They have been able, over the last number of years, to build up this pre-election fund through reduced investments in health and education. We all remember that prior to the 1995 election or during the 1995 election, they promised \$600 million for capital, but once the government was re-elected, unfortunately, they withdrew that promise. Now they are doing that again. [interjection] Well, as my colleague points out, the same thing with the Jets, where they said: we are going to save the Jets at any cost. They were going to save the Jets at any cost. Now the Jets are in Phoenix.

They are prepared to do or say anything to get re-elected. What they are going to do with the money is they are going to be using this \$500 million, \$600 million they have in the so-called rainy day fund, the Fiscal Stabilization Fund, to once again try to induce Manitobans to vote for them.

Madam Speaker, in the throne speech there was mention of initiatives for First Nations and aboriginal people, something that they promised in '88, something that they once again promised in '91. Again it was mentioned in 1996; again in the 1997 throne speech but with little follow-up. We all remember that in the early '90s the government had a chance to do something regarding an urban aboriginal strategy and that was with the friendship centre movement here in this province, and what they did was they, in fact, cut the provincial government funding to the friendship centres, not only here in Winnipeg but in many urban centres across this province.

But what they have done in this throne speech is they have mirrored some long-standing NDP policies, Madam Speaker. One is the election of a Speaker, something that my colleague the member for Thompson (Mr. Ashton) raised today that we in fact could do that now. The Liberal Party is going on about the boundaries, but we have a chance to do that now if the government decided we should do this.

Another promise was on the classification of home video games and the public participation in health care boards. But what also is quite interesting to see is that the Tories are taking credit for some NDP legacies, Madam Speaker. Two things that they raised in the throne speech, two things that you raise in the throne speech, were low hydro rates and MPIC rates. I should remind the members opposite that they were opposed to Limestone, as I recall. They were opposed to Limestone, and when the Schreyer government formed MPIC in the early '70s, they led the opposition to the formation of Autopac in this province. Now they are suggesting that these are the bright spots in the Manitoba economy. Again, there was no mention of the Tory opposition to Autopac or to Limestone. No mention at all about the MTS rates, and we all know what happened with MTS in this province.

We have a situation. Again, it is beginning to echo itself, and that is the situation regarding Manitoba Hydro, where we see the government—during the last election, they promised not to sell off MTS, and once they were elected, they did. What was at stake in Manitoba as it relates to MTS? Jobs, rates, ownership of the shares. In

Selkirk, we had over 400 MTS jobs, and now I understand there are just over 100 there. Our rates have gone up, and now the ownership of MTS—I am afraid it is owned by outside Manitoba. All the profits that are generated because of rate increases, because of the jobs being cut, all those revenues that MTS are now generating are leaving the province.

Madam Speaker, there is no mention regarding some of the problems faced by the rural economy here in Manitoba, no mention about the farm-aid package, or transportation issues, commodity prices. I understand that even the issue of mining, for example, was not raised.

* (1520)

Madam Speaker, what we need here in this province is some concrete action to end the crisis in health care, dealing with the nurses, doctors, bed shortages. A capital health plan that moves along as quickly as casino expansions. We see that, when it comes to financing capital construction as it relates to casinos in this province, there is no shortage of money. As I drive home down McPhillips Street, I really note with concern the expansion of that casino. I do not know how much they spent. They are now \$20-, \$30-odd million, and it is getting larger. There is no money for dialysis services in Selkirk. There is no money for palliative care services in the Selkirk hospital, but there certainly is lots of money for casino advertising.

We also note that the government has spent over \$500,000 on shameless self-promotion ads in terms of the health care in this province, \$500,000. People are coming to my office with this leaflet, and they are upset that they are seeing their tax dollars being wasted and squandered in this way.

I know the member for Charleswood (Mrs. Driedger) was dealing with this in her presentation to the House where she was saying that some of the waiting lists for services are being reduced. Well, they are the government that has caused the line-ups in the first place. As we head to a provincial election, the government is finally taking some action to deal with some of these issues. As I said, there is no mention of the dialysis unit in the Selkirk hospital. I had

written to the Minister of Health in 1997, asking him to put a dialysis unit in the Selkirk Hospital. He had written back in July of that year saying that we would qualify for one then. Now I understand, after a great community effort—and I must applaud those in my community who worked so hard to pressure the government to do so, and I hope they are successful. We will find that out. There was no mention, of course, in the throne speech, but I hope that, when the budget is announced, there will be funding for such a unit in the Selkirk area.

Another thing, Madam Speaker, and that is the funding of a palliative care unit at the Selkirk General Hospital. The mayor of Selkirk had said, and I will quote: We have taken the stance that palliative care is a part of health care and should be funded by the provincial government. The reeve of St. Clements has stated: Health care is the responsibility of the province and the federal government. I do not think it is our responsibility. I do not think we should have to contribute.

The situation now is that the R. M. of St. Andrews as well has pulled out, so it is not likely that it is going ahead. It is regrettable, because I understand that in the city of Winnipeg this service is funded by the provincial government. It is my position that palliative care has become a core service, and I believe it should be funded out of the health care system. Those are just two issues that are important to my constituents.

Another one is, as we head into the spring and into the summer, Coast Guard services and the dredging services that were once offered by the federal government, and I am interested to know what the provincial response is to this. I know that I raised the issue in the House last year with the Minister of Highways, and the problem is that I have written to the federal Minister of Fisheries and Oceans, David Anderson, and received a response back from him. He states: To date, we have not had any major objections to the fact that the government is now cutting federally funded dredging on the Red River. What has the government opposite, members opposite, what have they done? Did they—

An Honourable Member: Nothing.

Mr. Dewar: Nothing is exactly right. Did they approach the federal department? We do not know. When I asked the question of the Minister of Highways and Transportation last session, along with my colleague for Rupertsland (Mr. Robinson), his answers were very vague, and it is a problem that we are going to be faced with this spring. Every year the dredging services have dredged the northern part of the Red River and the mouth of the river to allow large vessels to enter into Lake Winnipeg. This year will be the last year, so what are we going to do next year? We know that there is the boat, the Poplar River, which supports communities on the east side of the lake which provides them with supplies. The captain of that vessel has said publicly that he cannot continue this service to those communities—the communities of Bloodvein, Poplar River, Berens River, and so on—unless the river is dredged out.

The owner of the cruise ship, Lord Selkirk II, mentioned that—again, publicly, he made the statement that he was considering recommissioning that ship. Again, he will have problems getting that ship up the river. I am bringing it to your attention; I am bringing it to the attention of the government. What are you going to do? What have you done? Have you lobbied the federal government? Have you written to the federal minister? Have you raised it with federal authorities? Madam Speaker, I just want to bring it to the attention of the members, because it is something that we are going to have to deal with in the next number of weeks as the river and lake open up to service.

I want to talk in the brief time that I have—I think that members opposite over the past have wrongly accused us of not presenting any positive ideas or alternatives—but I want to talk today about something that I have been putting a little bit of work in. I think it is an initiative that we here in Manitoba can work at, and I think one that would be very productive, and that is the issue of using wind as a source of energy and a source of power.

We as a community and as a country and as a society have not looked at wind power because of an abundance of energy that we do have, that we do possess here in Canada and Manitoba. We have an abundance of fossil fuels and, of

course, in this province we are very blessed with our ability to produce energy from using hydro. But we also, Madam Speaker, as a country we are the highest per capita users of energy in the world. That is partially because of our cold climate, partially because of the vast distances that we have to travel here in Canada, but it is also part of the fact that we have low rates, that we have the abundance of energy. But this has a tremendous opportunity of an environmentally friendly industry.

I had a chance recently to tour the Isobord plant in Elie. When you go through that plant and you think about what they are doing, that they are taking straw and they are turning it into a building product, I think it is just a great idea.

But here is another one that I think I want to bring forward to the Legislature, and I offer it up as what I like to think is an alternative for the government to look at as a good idea. Just last week on "The Nature of Things" hosted by David Suzuki, he was talking about this issue, and it was his impression that 40,000 jobs could be created by using wind power. We are lagging far behind here in Canada in terms of this issue.

In the 1990s, wind power has become the world's fastest growing energy source. Global wind generating capacity stands currently at 9,600 megawatts, and this is enough power to power three and a half million suburban homes. It is also becoming one of the world's most rapidly expanding industries. We have an opportunity here in Manitoba, I would suggest, to take advantage of this industry. We are situated in an excellent location. You know, we like to say we live in a windy province. You know, the corner of Portage and Main, the windy corner. We live in obviously a flat land. There is little to impede the exchange of air. It has been estimated that in the United States, the states of North Dakota, South Dakota, and Texas have sufficient wind capacity to provide all of the electricity needed for the United States. I mean, here we are in virtually the same location. We are at the centre of the continent. We have little to impede the flow of air.

* (1530)

Madam Speaker, I am suggesting that it has a great potential for remote communities, which currently, as members know, rely on diesel, on fossil fuels for the production of energy. As well, what can be done is, if the government takes the initiative, well, we do not know if they will or not, but it has the potential to increase the exports of hydro generated electricity. There are new technologies being developed for the efficient storage of electricity. Currently now it is not that efficient to store electricity. Batteries are heavy and bulky and have a limited life.

But we have the opportunity to develop that technology. We have an energy industry in this province. We have got Manitoba Hydro. They should be a leader, I would hope, in terms of energy and power. So I offer this, Madam Speaker, as an idea to the Legislature, to whatever political party is or will be in office, as I would assume that an election is coming and Manitobans will have a chance to judge us on our ideas. Again, we are situated in an excellent location to produce the power, to create some high-tech, high-paying employment in this province, something that the government should look at, and I offer that up.

I want to speak in the final moments here about ethics. I had a chance about a month and a half ago to meet with some young people in Selkirk, the youth parliamentarians, and had a chance to address them. We talked about ethics and politics, and, you know, they are young and they are a little bit concerned by what they have seen in Manitoba, but not only in Manitoba, all across Canada recently. Things have really hit bottom, but we do not want them to lose interest. We do not want it to be a situation like the United States where, you know, you get 30 percent or 40 percent out to vote, and that is considered to be a high turnout. I believe this past year, in late 1998, which was an election year in the United States, they had about a 30 percent, 35 percent turnout.

Mr. Ben Sveinson, Acting Speaker, in the Chair

The only place they had a higher turnout was in Minnesota where Jesse Ventura was elected, Mr. Acting Speaker, but, again, that was young people coming out to vote. He was an appealing character; he appealed to them.

But, you know, the government in the last campaign, the last election, they campaigned to save the Jets. They campaigned to put \$600 million into health care capital. They campaigned on saving and maintaining MTS as a public utility. But what did we get in the end? We got the Conservatives re-elected and we got the Monnin inquiry. I know some of the characters in this, have known them for awhile, and it was, I think, a low point, Mr. Acting Speaker, a low point in politics here in this country and in Manitoba. I know that whatever the Premier (Mr. Filmon) says and however many apologies he made, Manitobans still do not believe him. I know the polls indicate that, and it is true, they just do not believe him.

When you begin to add everything together, I can understand why—you know, the denials and the accusations. The situation, however, that really stretches it was the situation surrounding Jules Benson writing all these cheques and participating in an advertising—or reviewing the advertising contract. I believe Mr. Benson was also involved in reviewing the budget. But think of the chain of command there. If he was doing this, who was he reporting to? Why would Mr. Benson go out there and review this if he was not reporting back to somebody?

We at our local level have election planning committee meetings, and our chair says, okay, let us go over—we have a list of items to deal with. Number one might be the budget, so someone will report back about the status of our election budget. Then we have a line dealing with advertising, so the person who is looking into advertising and promotion during the campaign, well, he or she would then report back to the chair.

Yet it seems that there was no line of communication there. What was Mr. Benson doing? Who was he reporting to? Why was he doing this if he was not reporting to somebody higher up? To me, that really begins to stretch it. That stretches it for me when I look at those types of issues.

So, Mr. Acting Speaker, as I said, the government opposite can do whatever they want, but I am afraid that this issue will not go away for them. We sense that and Manitobans know

that. I listened to the CBC on Friday, and the member for Arthur-Virden (Mr. Downey) was on there; the member for Thompson (Mr. Ashton) was on there. It was quite interesting. Every single caller, every single caller took issue with what you were saying, with what the government was saying. Every single caller to that show supported my colleague from Thompson. Whether the Premier's (Mr. Filmon) apology was good enough, I believe, was the question. Nobody supported the member for Arthur-Virden as he scrambled around trying to get an answer to their questions. I think that is a reflection of Manitobans. That is a reflection of Manitobans.

I remember, you know, in 1997, in the federal election, how Mr. Gerrard got his nomination. I remember my M.P., Mr. Fewchuk, said: I am going to run. Come with me. I am going to run. I am going to run in Winnipeg North-St. Paul. I am going to run in Selkirk-Interlake. He was determined he was going to run. I know Ron. He was determined he was going to go. The next thing you know, the Selkirk paper came out. Well, I have had a change of heart, he said. I have decided to retire, probably for my health. He retired for his health or he retired to spend more time with his family, whichever one.

He left public office and a seat became available for Mr. Gerrard. Mr. Gerrard also got a seat in Selkirk-Interlake, which he lost. Mr. Pagtakhan got his seat in Winnipeg North-St. Paul. Where did Mr. Fewchuk go? Well, Ronnie went into the Freshwater Fish Marketing Corporation at a hundred-and-something thousand a year. At a hundred-and-something thousand a year, Ron went into that.

Well, Ron worked at that for a while. In fact, a couple of my colleagues from Crescentwood and Transcona and, I believe, Swan River, had a chance to tour Freshwater Fish. A number of people from Selkirk work there. Mr. Fewchuk took us around, but it was not long after that Mr. Fewchuk again decided that he could not continue, regrettably. He had to quit, he says, because of his health. I hope he is feeling okay. I am sure that the severance package he received would go a long way to helping him recover from his illness.

That is how Mr. Jon Gerrard got his opportunity to run federally. You know, the Liberals are higher than the high and mighty when it comes to the ethics here in this Chamber, but that is how they do it over there.

The government has lost the authority to govern, Mr. Acting Speaker. It is time for an election, and we are prepared, as we have all said. I am prepared to campaign under those new boundaries. I know that we are prepared to pass them. It does not bother me either way. I am prepared to go, but I know that I will not be supporting the throne speech. As it relates to my colleague with his amendment, I have not had a chance to look at it yet, but I am sure the Liberals' amendment is worthy of note. I will certainly take a look at it before I vote on it.

I will say, though, I will not be supporting the throne speech. I will be voting against the throne speech, and by voting against the throne speech, Mr. Acting Speaker, I hope to be able to defeat this government. Thank you very much.

Mr. Albert Driedger (Steinbach): Mr. Acting Speaker, I thank you and I appreciate the opportunity to participate in the throne speech debate. Having served notice that I will not be seeking re-election, and with an election being eminent, I expect that this possibly will be the last time certainly that I will be speaking to a throne speech.

I do not know how many more times I will be speaking in this House, period. I have not done it for the last number of years, but I thought that maybe today I would sort of do a bit of a recap of my last 21-and-some-odd years in this Legislature.

Mr. Acting Speaker, I might take certain liberties in terms of wandering a little bit off the throne speech subject, but when I heard the member for Broadway (Mr. Santos) singing a song the other day, I thought that I would probably have a bit of latitude as well.

An Honourable Member: Are you going to sing too, Albert?

Mr. Driedger: No, I will not.

Mr. Acting Speaker, I want to basically conclude my speech in the House here by dwelling on the activities within this Legislative Building. There will come a time, I think, when I will have the opportunity to maybe address the concerns of my two ridings that I represented, the Emerson riding for almost 13 years and the Steinbach riding of which of I am the MLA at the present time. I want to take this opportunity before I get into the other part of my comments, to thank the voters of the Emerson constituency and the Steinbach constituency for the many years, six elections, that they have supported me. I have really enjoyed the opportunity. I feel very humbled by the fact that I had the opportunity to represent them all those years.

One thing that I have always enjoyed is the fact that when you look back, the many people and the many friends that you have gotten to know over the period of time, Mary and myself—and I want to put on the record to recognize my wife who has been a very faithful supporter all the time. Many people have said many times that she should have been the MLA, not myself. Possibly that is the case, because she probably got a lot more votes than I did, but she has been great in supporting me. We are looking forward when the time comes now, after the next election, to further our lives with other things. It has been a great life out here.

* (1540)

Anyway, I just thought maybe for the record and for the interest of many of the new members here, I want to recall a little bit of the time when I first was elected in '77. I won my nomination in March at that time, and the Sterling Lyon administration at that time won the election October 11 defeating the Schreyer government. I can recall coming into this House the first time. I think almost everyone of the members here, bar very few, would probably feel the first time you walked in here sort of intimidated and awed by the building itself.

Over the many years that I have sat here listening to boring speeches I have looked up at the architecture here. What an architect basically that developed this building—[interjection]—and the engineers. Yes. That is right. What a great building. In all the years I

remember my first speech, because the first one you are allowed to read, at least that is sort of the understanding. It was a terrible speech, but I read the thing. But you go through that process, and I think all of us do, where we feel sort of really challenged and we want to hit a home run the first time right away. It does not always happen. In fact, it does not happen very often, period.

Over the years, almost every time that I have had the occasion to participate in debates in here, there is always a little bit of sensitivity. You always feel a little nervous about it, and even to this day today, in making my fanfare speech, I thought about it and said, boy, you feel this is the last time but—[interjection] I do not think so.

Anyway, Mr. Acting Speaker, there used to be this show on television. I think it was a detective show. It said, this city has one million stories, eight million people or eight million stories and the—

An Honourable Member: The Naked City.

Mr. Driedger: The Naked City. That is it. Okay. Thank you. This Legislative Building has a million stories, and they are stories that can be told. They are stories that maybe should be told, and there are stories that should never be told about what has happened over the years in this building. I can only talk about this span, the short span of time that I have been here, not like my colleague for Lakeside, who has been here a lot longer than that.

To start off, Mr. Acting Speaker, I just want the new members to think a little bit. When I got elected in 1977, the basic indemnity for an MLA was, and I am going to put it into the record, \$8,229.27. That was the indemnity, and then you got a portion of that pay before the session started and the balance when the session was over. Heck of an incentive to get out of here, you know.

I was thinking, has anything changed in this building in terms of the politics and the way we debate things? Not really that much, but certain things have changed and I think it has gotten a lot better. We used to sit—during the session we sat three nights of the week and we sat Friday

afternoons when we started. That was very challenging at that time, and that goes back to some of the stories that maybe should or should not be told.

An Honourable Member: That was 1986?

Mr. Driedger: No, no. I am talking 1977 now, because that was actually when the Schreyer government had come on and had two terms of office, and that sort of upset the apple cart between the Liberals and the Conservatives. At that time there was the St. Regis Hotel and that is where the Liberals and the Conservatives all stayed when the session was on. It was during those years when the racing and chowder club developed. I am going to give you a little bit of history because what happened and why it got that name was because Friday at noon when the session stopped we took the lunch break. Everybody rushed down to the St. Regis, and we would sort of have little cluster meetings there drinking tea, et cetera, and then when it got close to session time again we would all rush downstairs, have a bowl of chowder soup, because they had good chowder soup, and rush back in here for a very noisy Friday afternoon session as a rule. The tea did that.

Ultimately the decision by the wise people in charge at that time decided that there would be no more Friday afternoon sessions because they were not really that productive. So that was one of the changes that took place. But we did sit three nights a week, and at that time we did not have any limit on the Estimates process. There was no limit, and you could sit as long as—of course, the strategy was, at that time, I remember when I got to be chairman of Committee of Supply during those days and we did the Estimates process and that was a matter of grinding down the opposition until they finally approved things. We would sit until two or three o'clock at night, and it got nearly to fisticuffs. The intelligence level was not that high at three o'clock in the morning either, but ultimately people like Sam Uskiw gave up and let the Agricultural Estimates go through. That was sort of the process at that time.

Then in our wisdom at that time—and some of you maybe remember Warner Jorgensen who at one time was a member of Parliament and

then ran provincially, and he was the House leader on our side. He felt that there had to be some rhyme and reason put into this whole process. So, together in consultation, as we do now all the time too—you know, it was an evolving thing; it is not always simple—ultimately a decision was arrived at as to a limit on the hours of Estimates. Once you establish that, that was the max. Of course, that is the minimum too.

An Honourable Member: About 350?

* (1550)

Mr. Driedger: I do not know what it was. It was just a wild thing, and that was basically one of the changes that took place.

Ultimately for those of you that are thinking now that things are tough in here, I mean we do not sit evenings that much anymore. There is some committee stuff and stuff like that, but the grind at that time was much more challenging than it is now, and look at the kind of money you are getting paid now compared to the \$8,000-something at that time. Those were two payments that we got, and then we were allowed a few trips then, because you know a mileage type of thing. So basically we have done well in terms of evolving the benefits for members.

I can recall in our caucus at that time we were government and I was a backbencher and backbenchers always sort of feel that as soon as they get elected they should be on the front bench somewhere. That was my feeling, getting elected. I defeated an NDP out of the Emerson riding, and that alone should have made me a minister, you know. Well, I will tell you something, the Premier of the day, Sterling Lyon, did not see it that way, not at all in his four years in tenure. That is fair enough because lots of things have to be learned and we all have to learn. It is a long process.

In our caucus at that time, the backbenchers and we were in the office where basically the NDP has the office now, and we had the big table where caucus meetings took place. The MLAs all had one little corner, and Jim, the member for Arthur at that time, will remember this. But he got to be a minister, see, so he had

his own office, but us poor backbenchers, we each had a little corner with a telephone. We did not have offices. We had our own telephone, and there were three secretaries basically that did all the correspondence for everybody. [interjection] I do not think we had one at that time. It was very limited.

Anyway, during that '77 to '81 period as a backbencher, we basically shared three secretaries, all of us, and we were always upset with the ministers when they came and impinged on the time that was entitled for the backbenchers. Then there was a fellow, and I want to make reference to him—and I will be referencing some names here today, and with some that I do not, I hope nobody gets upset. But Wally McKenzie was the member for Roblin-Russell at the time; Roblin, just Roblin. [interjection] Yes, I will come to that. Wally was the kind of guy, he did not have the patience to basically wait for the secretaries and stuff like that. All the mail that he got, basically he responded in handwriting and did his job. He was a fantastic campaigner and a fantastic politician, played the bass fiddle, and when he was out campaigning, he was in a band and he was playing the bass fiddle, and that is how he conquered his constituency, very unique politics.

I want to make some reference to—like, I will be rambling a little bit in terms of all the things that come to mind in terms of what happened. Some of you who probably think that our Clerk of the Assembly here started here when this building was built, that is not quite true, you know, because with all due respect to Binx, the Clerk of the House, we used to have an individual here by the name of Jack Reeves. [interjection]

Yes, I think somebody served under him, but Jack was a very meticulous individual. He wanted things to be just right. The prestige of a Legislative Assembly and all of the things that went with it, it was very important to him. If you did not address things right, he had a look on his face that almost—I do not want to use the wrong expression, but he could look very, very disgusted if you did not do it right, you know.

Madam Speaker in the Chair

I can recall one time, sitting here, and my colleague, the member for Lakeside (Mr. Enns), was sitting in the far corner there and making a speech. We were government at the time, and he was sort of disgusted with supply management and the fact that an individual farmer could only raise a hundred chickens, you know, outside of the quota, the supply management system, and if you had more, then inspectors would come and they would count the chickens, and then you would have to get rid of them. In trying to make his point—and the member for Lakeside was always a great orator, and I will make reference to some others—he came around that corner there, and he is showing how the inspectors are counting the chickens and killing them, and walks right up to the Clerk of the House's desk. Jack Reeves nearly fainted, you know. He had that look on his face. He was just abhorred with what Enns was doing. But Harry did other things too that we will not necessarily talk about at this point in time, and so did many others.

The member for Thompson, who I used to call—my favourite expression was, I called him landslide, because he defeated a good friend of mine, McMaster, at that time by 55 votes or something like that. [interjection] Well, he is exaggerating. It was 72; I thought it was 55, you know. So we gave him the nickname calling him the landslide, and from time to time members gave each other nicknames here. But he has changed that; I cannot call him that anymore.

But he made reference to the fact that in this House you cannot make displays, and we try and test that. I mean the NDP have come in with bags of mail trying to illustrate a point and stuff like that, but none I think that was as cute as when we were in opposition, and Wally McKenzie came in one day—and he was a very good speaker. He had a way of really embellishing things a little bit. He was concerned because he thought the government of the day, which was the NDP under the Pawley administration, was poisoning the pigeons around this building.

So as he is raising these questions, he all of a sudden reaches under his desk and pulls out a dead pigeon, displays it, and of course the uproar took place ultimately. These things have

happened from time to time, so, when you think you have come up with some innovative ideas about what you are showing off here, they have been done many times in this building.

As I am dwelling back and found things that I am thinking about or remembering, I want to dwell on some of the great orators in this building. There are many speeches that took place here, great speeches. I mean, some of these people had just the gift, where you sat and you listened and you were almost petrified with the great speeches that they made. [interjection] Yes, my colleague Harry Enns did some of those, wildly enthusiastic, and ultimately made a point. I can recall people like Sid Green who, as a lawyer, had a unique way of making speeches. I always said he could take the head of a needle and speak for half an hour and you would be enthralled about the big speech that he had. Then, after it was over, you did not know what he was talking about, but you really got into this thing. There were great speakers.

Larry Desjardins. Larry could make great speeches, but he could not make great speeches if he was not heckled. He needed heckling to respond, and then he really got his engines charged up and going on. Russell Doern, who met an unfortunate end, but he was a great guy. He would be standing and he would ramble around, and he would look around and pick out guys and concoct stories. It was just wonderful to listen to, but there was nothing there. Interesting debates. If anybody would ever go through all the debates that have taken place in this building, it has been great. A lot of history here, and that is only in my short tenure. Some people here like the member for Brandon East (Mr. L. Evans) and the member for Lakeside (Mr. Enns), who have been here a lot longer, could really embellish on all the things that have happened.

I remember the perception—I smile a lot now when I sit here, because my political career is coming to an end. However, when I see the posturing and the puffery that takes place in terms of the Monnin inquiry, you people really think you have a point, and that is the reality of politics in here. I can recall the French language debate under Howard Pawley when he made a mistake, the government of the day made a

mistake, in terms of trying to bring in the constitutional changes related to the French language debate, and then that is when we started ringing the bells. See, there was no limit on the bell ringing at that time. We rang them 24 hours a day for—help me out—two weeks.

An Honourable Member: About two weeks.

Mr. Driedger: About two weeks. Every day we came down, and we did not sit in the House. You could not shut the bells down. They rang 24 hours a day. It drove staff nearly nuts. So the bells kept ringing. The staff were all crazy, and we came in and decided, are we going to go in or not? No, we will let it ring again. So at that time we had the public on our side to such an extent, because it was a very emotional issue, that we felt confident that if the election was called, we would win all 57 seats. The polling showed that everybody was with us, that we would win. But somehow the Premier of the day, Howard Pawley, at that time, chickened out and he would not call an election after four years. He decided to go almost to the max—

An Honourable Member: As you are doing now.

* (1600)

Mr. Driedger: Oh, no, no. I think the member should listen a little bit because we had an election in '81 and then we had an election in '86, and it was in '86 we thought it was a walk-in. We ended up losing the election by one vote—

An Honourable Member: One seat.

Mr. Driedger: By one seat, yes. So what happened then? We just could not believe what had happened, the disaster. It should have been ours automatically, but with that thin majority it was in '86, and '88 during a budget debate, you know, the favoured vote that took place. I remember sitting over on that side there where the member for Interlake (Mr. C. Evans) sits now, and I was a party Whip at that time. There had been speculation that maybe the member for St. Vital, Walding, would take and vote against his government during the throne speech, and that did not happen. So actually that day when

the vote took place, and I think it was an evening vote—[interjection] No, no, evening vote—[interjection] No, was it not an evening vote? [interjection] Evening vote. It was an evening vote at that time, if I am correct. Maybe I should check my records on that. Anyway, the vote took place, and the media assumed, because Walding had not voted against the government of the day on the throne speech—they never thought about the budget thing. There was actually no camera—there maybe was one camera that took part of it—when Walding got up and voted against his own government. I am talking about some of the highlights of my career.

An Honourable Member: And history was made. The government fell.

Mr. Driedger: That was phenomenal; that was phenomenal.

An Honourable Member: A government fell to its knees.

Mr. Driedger: The devastation that we saw in the eyes of government when this happened—

An Honourable Member: Sheer horror.

Mr. Driedger: I remember the member for Churchill, Cowan, and Pawley. It was like somebody had slapped them down. It was awful, you know, in their minds. We were elated. We had defeated the government, and we had subsequently an election. At that time Doer was the interim Premier for, what, a week, whatever the case may be. Anyway, we went to the election and we thought, now we got them, now we got them. We ended up with a minority government.

Of course, from there on, things started getting better. That was when my career, of course, took a high point because, by and large, I had the opportunity to then become a Minister of Highways and Transportation, Government Services, and those are always things that I think every member here, it is an important part in your life to be able to be in the part of the front bench and part of cabinet. A distinction, it is a proud thing. And when it gets taken away, you are not that proud either. I can talk about that element of it, but be that as it may.

I want to talk a little bit about the attitude in the Legislature among caucuses, the way we used to have it at that time. There was a different comradeship that took place in this building at that time. I guess it is sort of, I think, personally that it took a dip when we started having cameras in here, the television cameras. Until then, there was sort of a different attitude about the whole thing, and once cameras came in here, now all of a sudden everybody wanted to be an actor. People got on there and they had to take and posture and stuff of that nature. Maybe at times it would have been good maybe to have a camera prior to that because things got a little out of hand from time to time, and I am surprised that there were not sometimes fisticuffs. It got close sometimes. Probably you have heard the expression "over the top, boys." You know, when we would go at them, get you guys, and stuff like that

But a caucus is operated differently because we were sitting years ago—we sat three nights a week—and all the guys that came in from the rural areas—I mean, what are you going to do? We would be sitting in the evenings so when we adjourned for supper we would go to one of the apartments that were rented—

An Honourable Member: Oh, let us not talk about that.

Mr. Driedger: —and we would all have supper together.

An Honourable Member: Oh, have supper. What was after supper?

Mr. Driedger: Yes, well, Gilles is something else yet. That is another story. Everybody got together. It did not matter whether you were a minister, a backbencher. We had supper together, or whether it was at Dave Blake's apartment, Jim Ferguson's apartment, some of the colleagues that were sort of the leaders of the group at that time. Many decisions actually got made outside of the building. When we came in here, it was a little different. I do not think we have quite that kind of a relationship between caucuses now, but I thought it was an important thing.

I want to make reference—I made reference to the Jorgenson era. Lloyd Axworthy was the single Liberal member at that time when I got elected. Schreyer, who had been such a hero for everybody and brought the NDP onto the map, basically felt very defeated, I guess, badly when he lost the government to Sterling Lyon. Then, of course, Howard Pawley came in and got it back. We all know the history of the elections, how it went.

During those days, at the end of a session there was a tradition, and some traditions have died. Incidentally, I can tell you that early on we smoked in this Legislature.

An Honourable Member: That is why they died.

Mr. Driedger: And having been a past smoker at that time at certain times—no, I am still alive—at certain times, after Question Period—was it not after Question Period?

An Honourable Member: When the mace was off the table.

Mr. Driedger: When the mace was off the table, we would ask the pages to bring us ashtrays, and we would sit and we would smoke. Things have changed and probably some of it for the better, not all of it, for sure. But we used to have at the end of a session, and I recall this, and I was always very excited about it because as backbenchers there were not too many things that we could participate in other than stand up and vote with government or whatever the case might be, but at the end of a session we used to have these what we called paper fights. You recall that? Some of you must certainly remember that because, you know, when finally the Lieutenant Governor left, as he walked out that door, we would start throwing things at each other. It was sort of done in jest, and everybody sort of got together after the whole thing was over.

But these paper fights sort of started escalating, because there were some pretty hard feelings, and it was not always love with the media either, who all sat up there at that time at the end of a session. We started rolling up the Hansards and taping them and they ended up

being like missiles really. Ultimately, you would take and go after the guys or the people that you basically wanted to, and it got to be pretty vicious. In fact what happened, a bunch of these speakers got knocked off at the time. I think somebody got hurt up in the news gallery, so then ultimately the decisions were made. No more paper fights.

I just wanted to touch on these things because that is how my political career developed, and it was always exciting to go through that process. We have mellowed to some degree with some of these things. We still do the active debate that we have in the House where we try and upstage each other. [interjection] Who?

An Honourable Member: The media.

* (1610)

Mr. Driedger: Oh, yeah, you do not see them around anymore. That is different too. They used to sit in Committee of Supply. No matter how late you sat, there were always representatives sitting there listening to all the debate.

Anyway, these things have not changed. The debate has not necessarily changed, whether it is the government trying to put down the opposition and vice versa. Of course, the challenge is more for the opposition to try and find whether there are weak spots with government, and that is a normal type of thing. So I am not necessarily—you know, I can see some people getting very emotional with this thing. I sort of smile and say, you know, it has all been done before. Why are we getting so excited? From time to time I got excited. I really had, you know, a vendetta against some individuals and you sort of try and upstage them with the debate. Big deal, you know. At the end of the day I think it is a good system. I think the system has proved itself time and time again. It is not perfect.

But one thing I just want to say for all of the members' benefit here is that I in my years that I have been here have always been proud to be a politician. In spite of the fact that the general public regards us with cynicism and stuff of that nature, I honestly believe each and every one

that gets elected, irrespective of your political background, is here to try and do the best for their constituents. The approach might be different, views might be different, and especially because of the political system we end up doing things that—we think that, yeah, this is how we get things done. At the end of the day, no matter what you do, the public will decide what they want. I have not always agreed with what the voters have said, but ultimately they always do the right thing. No matter what we all do and say, and we can take and play the games that we do in this House—I am starting to sound like the member for Broadway (Mr. Santos), who preaches to everybody. I do not want to preach.

An Honourable Member: And sings.

Mr. Driedger: And sings. I will not sing and I will not necessarily preach.

Madam Speaker, I am sort of wandering all over the map here. How is my time doing? Okay, fine. I thought I would just make a few comments, and I am getting carried away here a little bit. I want to sort of maybe just make reference to some of the people who have served in this building over the period of time. I looked at the picture from the Legislature, and I hardly recognize anybody from the old group. They are almost all gone.

So I think back to some of the people who have died and who served in this building. I am talking about people like Arnie Brown who had an impact on my life. He always was a nice guy. I do not think anybody could ever be mad at Arnie Brown. Those guys like Abe Kovnats, he was a politician his own way. Then you have people like Ric Nordman who was not that outstanding but a tremendous guy, a nice guy, you know. Just like our colleague Neil Gaudry. I had a meeting with him just two days before he passed away. I nearly hit the ditch when I found out that he had passed away. These are people who have all basically had impacts on our lives as politicians here, and there are other people who basically are still around, who served their time and gave up politics as I am doing now.

Most of you must remember David Blake. Ah, what a guy. I mean, he was an entity unto

himself, no matter where he was. He never fought with the opposition, but he always could tell stories, and he was direct with some things too. But he was a great guy. It was always nice to have Dave Blake around.

Then you had people like Jim Ferguson, very astute and austere, very abrupt with everything. He was party Whip at that time, and, well, no reflection on our Whip—

An Honourable Member: Our Whip is humane.

Mr. Driedger: The member for Gladstone at that time, Ferguson was a very tough Whip. In fact, he taught me how to do that.

But there are so many people who have played a role here, and as we come and as we go, everybody ultimately will go through that scenario.

Harry Enns probably will be here another 30 years, but not all of us have the kind of tenacity to hang in that long, I guess.

But I just want to say in conclusion that I feel very proud that I have played some small part in the history of this province, and I have heard this comment more lately than I have for a long, long, time, the fact that members are saying that they are proud to be politicians and they are proud to be Manitobans, and I think we have a right to do that.

Now, having said all these things, I have to get in a little bit of a political shot, and I just want to say to the opposition members, do not get yourselves too excited about all the issues that you think you have. If you have something to offer to the public of Manitoba, put it on the table. Bring it out in the open, and the government, if they cannot defend what they have done, the voters will never vote in somebody; they will vote out the government of the day. It happened with the Conservatives federally. That was a good example. When you get arrogant and if you do not deal with your constituents and the voters of the province, I will tell you something, the public will show you the way.

Ultimately, that will happen in this election, and I am expecting it should happen in a very short time. At that point in time, then, I want to say that I have been proud to have been affiliated with each and every one of the members who have been elected, some maybe more proud than others. But I really enjoyed it, and I know that once I leave this building, that I will be looking back from time to time and reminiscing in my own way and will be saying I am glad that I walked this road, that I have been there and got to know all of you. So the best to all of you. Thank you.

Mr. Gord Mackintosh (St. Johns): Madam Speaker, I really appreciated the comments of the member, and I think back from time to time, his contributions in this Chamber and to the government of Manitoba. This was a member with whom I enjoyed camaraderie at times, when I served at the table. I have always respected him as a fine legislator, a person who is a lot of fun, a nice guy. I also want to just reflect on a few of the comments that he offered here. I think it is important from time to time that we do that kind of reflection on where we have been and not just individually but as an institution.

I remember, of course, the pigeon story that he spoke of. I remember not so much the surprise when the pigeon came out from underneath Wally's desk, but when he tried to table the pigeon. I guess there was a flurry of activity, references to Beauchesne, and it was discovered that indeed I do not think you could table a pigeon or perhaps it was an exhibit. There was something wrong. So it was decided ultimately, I think, very quickly, that the pigeon should at least be provided then to the Minister of Environment. I believe that was Jay Cowan at the time. So you can imagine the horror of the page, then, being called over to pick up this pigeon. We had this young woman from one of the local high schools carrying this dead pigeon. I do not think there was even a plastic bag or anything. She was carrying this dead pigeon over, and just as it was coming near the minister, somebody grabbed the arm of the page and went like this—boom, put the pigeon right into the face of Maureen Hemphill, and she screamed. Her arms went up in the air. If you are going to

make a point, I think Wally really did the ultimate job there on that one.

I remember these paper fights, of course, and the member was right. It became extremely dangerous to be anywhere near these fights. I remember Jack Reeves telling me to get out of the House as soon as the Lieutenant Governor is up near the bar. Do everything you can just to get out right away. The doors will be open for you, because, as the member said, those Hansards were rolled up. They were all tied up using string. Of course, what happened was the microphones were damaged. I think the damage to the microphones was as much a reason as any public perception problems that led to the banning of this paper fight.

I remember going back in the archives. The photos from the 1950s. There was Doug Campbell over there, and he was throwing this huge Hansard across the table, and they were coming the other way across the table. Of course, what goes along with that are recollections. What many members would not recall is how we used to hammer the desks in here. We never would clap our hands. When the member reflects on the role of television and changing behaviour in here, I think that was one of the changes that were made, not because it was wrong, but because there were concerns about the public's perception as to how we operated in the Chamber.

* (1620)

Those are unique parliamentary traditions that are going by the way for good or for bad. One other member that, I recall, was in the cadre of people that the member talked about was Henry Einarson. He was an individual who consistently raised the issue of the Port of Churchill and really put himself on the record for that cause.

I think the significance of the member's speech is also found in the fact that he for one perceives that the government has done its time. We are heading into an election, and we do not hear a speech like that from someone who has much time left in the Chamber. I think it also reflects on the fact that the government is slowing down in every way.

I used to start my speeches in the community by using the joke that after speaking before the Legislature, it is nice to have a live audience. That kind of joke comes from moments like this where giving speeches in the House—and one often wonders if anyone is paying attention or what the significance is to the contribution to the debate. Anyway I have not been able to use that joke for some time because of course the government has been hiding from Manitobans, and the Legislature has not sat for what is a modern-day record.

It actually came to the point where we went to consult with the Charter of Rights and Freedoms to see what the actual constitutional requirement was on governments, as to how often they had to meet. That is how bad it was getting. Of course, over the past nine months, has the government been producing policies and making announcements? Well, no, Madam Speaker. If we are the government in waiting, they are the government in hiding.

An Honourable Member: You can do better than that, Gordie.

Mr. Mackintosh: Nope, they are out of steam.

If you have ever wondered if indeed the government was out of steam, you just had to be here for the day that throne speech was delivered. That was a real snoozer. That was something else.

You know, they often say that throne speeches are vague, but this one was downright obscure. At a time when in Manitoba history there are some very, very serious challenges to be dealt with, one would have thought that this government would have put its best foot forward during that throne speech. We expected some dicky birds and butterflies, lots of announcements to be made, detailed or not, but that is not what we got. No, indeed, Madam Speaker, they are out of steam.

Before I go on to deal with the throne speech, I wanted to comment briefly on the scandal. This is an issue that has affected all Manitobans. It is not a matter of their concern or interest particularly in the vote rigging itself or what happened in terms of details or individuals.

What has happened is that Manitobans' historic or innate sense of distrust of politicians has been vindicated to a certain extent. To that, I think that all people running for public office and serving the public have been damaged by what was uncovered, but Manitobans also now have a particular distrust, a deep distrust of the current government. It is focused in no small way on the Leader of the Progressive Conservative Party (Mr. Filmon), the Leader that the members opposite have long believed was responsible for their successes. By putting their eggs in the one basket of their leadership, they are now indeed suffering, each and every one of them. The party as a whole and all of their candidates will suffer, I expect, Madam Speaker.

Manitobans do not believe that the Premier (Mr. Filmon) did not know of the scheme, and they are well founded in their belief, I believe. You know, I was in the Premier's office two or three years ago, and as I recall, Jules Benson had an office within the Premier's office. That is what I saw. The people that were implicated in this scandal are the people all around the Premier that he spends each and every day with, that he does all his strategy with and indeed personal engagements with. I think the best observation of the whole situation was made by the former member for Kildonan, Marty Dolin, and I think it was a one-liner, a letter to the Free Press where he said: if you are standing in the middle of a cesspool, how could he not smell something? I think that really encapsulates what the belief of Manitobans is.

Madam Speaker, I recall in particular when the First Minister came into this House just after being told by Taras Sokolyk that we were on to something, and looking across into our eyes and resting on every word, he said: it did not happen. It did not happen, he said, when what the right thing to do would have been to say: I have some information, I will take this under advisement and I will tell you of my decisions as soon as I have made the inquiries. Not only did he reject what he was just told, but he did not make the inquiries. He only called the inquiry so that he could get out of here for the summer and put something away at least for now. He was forced into it. It was damage control. It was not ethics that were being practised. Now, when from now on you never again, and I do not

know if we will ever hear the Premier say, well, our government has never really suffered a scandal until Monnin, Manitobans will from now on conclude that they simply just never got caught, Madam Speaker.

I certainly did not expect to hear from the Liberal Party any loud commentary on the Monnin findings. After all, it was the Liberal Party in Manitoba which, for the first time I believe in Manitoba history, was found guilty in a criminal court of law of a breach. What kind of a breach was it? Was it a lack of filing? No. Was it some, you know, ethical issues? No. It is my understanding that there was a bribe that was made. But it involved an aboriginal candidate of the New Democratic Party. I believe it was in Ste. Rose or Minnedosa. Joe Anderson. Joe Anderson was the candidate for the New Democratic Party.

But, Madam Speaker, I do not want to go on about this any further than to again conclude that this hurts us all. We have significant changes to make, each of our parties. Within this Chamber we have changes to make to the laws. Each of us has to think of what is the ultimate goal. Is it power or is it good government?

When I think of the atmosphere that must have existed at the time of this vote rigging, you can imagine that phone calls were being made to individuals saying, hey, could you help us out with this scheme, help with a little money, or could you help cover it up, and the response is, well, sure, cut me in. You really have to ask yourself how low have political ethics sunk in this province, here, in Manitoba. What kind of environment, what kind of atmosphere existed in the Progressive Conservative Party to make this kind of activity a norm?

Well, Madam Speaker, I want to turn to the particulars of the throne speech. This document, I think, in terms of throne speeches, is really the most pathetic that I have seen in my five and a half years since I have been elected. It is not just because expectations were relatively high heading into an election season. This document proves once and for all that the government indeed is bankrupt in terms of its ideas. It is out of steam. It is bunkering in. It is looking backwards rather than forwards. I expect to hear

many more speeches similar to the member for Emerson's (Mr. Penner) speeches looking backwards.

* (1630)

Of particular note in the throne speech is its lack of a plan for the economy, while at the same time the throne speech acknowledges that the status quo is not an option in terms of the economy. The throne speech warns that the economy could slide into decline with all the consequences a decline implies. Interesting words for a throne speech. There is an ominous tenor to it, Madam Speaker. The throne speech says—and I do not think it is between the lines—that the economy is currently tenuous in this province. That is a signal that has been given from many different quarters, even though certain measurements are relatively positive right now. I look at the nonaboriginal, or nonreserve unemployment rates. But what does the throne speech then go on to offer as the options, the alternatives following this bit of concern? I cannot find a plan in here. There is talk about lower taxes, but there is no plan for lower taxes, just a commission to look at the issue. Reducing the civil service by 10 percent, and I do not know what department the 10 percent will come from. Is it one or two programs, or is it 10 percent across the board? I cannot imagine a 10 percent reduction in the Prosecutions branch right now with the way that the cases are being dealt with. Can you imagine a 10 percent reduction in Maintenance Enforcement? Can you imagine a 10 percent reduction in the Family Violence Court? I am just looking in Justice. How about 10 percent reduction in Corrections. Is that what they plan? Well, of course, they cannot figure that out. They just throw out the number. That is not even qualifying as a plan.

They talk about the need for knowledge-based industries and the growth in that sector, but there is no plan in here as to how to accomplish that. They talk about where there have been some successes, and I look for one at the film industry. They ask who could have forecast the rapid growth, and I think that that forecast could have been made back even perhaps at the time of the Pawley administration when some of the seeds were planted. The same

thing goes for the growth in the health care products industry.

But, when it goes on to talk about telecommunications, I have to question this. This is the government that has gone out of its way to stimulate the call centre industry, a low-skill, low-wage economy, that kind of economy, that kind of sector development which can easily be outbid on by low-wage, low-skill economies. It is not the kind of sectoral development on which you can rest your economic development plan. When we asked the minister responsible for the Manitoba Telephone System before privatization was put into effect if his numbers documenting the growth in the telecommunications industry and employment in that sector included call centres, he said yes.

Well, Madam Speaker, the people who are experts in this, the economists of the world and those in government who try to plan for the stimulation of the economy in sectors that will bode well for a jurisdiction, they do not include call centres when they talk about development in the telecommunications industry. This government does. I would just say to the government opposite that if only they had spent as much time developing other high-skill, high-wage sectors as they did call centres, we would be much better positioned today, and the throne speech would not have its warnings that it has.

Well, the throne speech then goes on to talk about health. Well, Manitobans know all about health care under this government, but I guess, aside from the speeches of members opposite that look backwards and the announcements almost daily now, we have this blue, very blue brochure that has been delivered, I believe, to every Manitoban. I know as well there have been a number of television advertisements as well to go with this, but this Tory blue brochure is not published by the Progressive Conservative Party. It is published by the Honourable Eric Stefanson, Minister, Manitoba Health.

Well, I hear members opposite clapping and cheering on. Well, I have received a number of calls. In fact, I have received a great deal of expressed anger from Manitobans about the government's blue brochure, and they are not very complimentary compliments. If the

government was going to try and put a positive spin on health care, they did not do it with this brochure. This Tory blue brochure just feeds the cynicism out there, but in particular it enhances the distrust felt about this particular government. When there are people in the hallways who are dying, this government has the gall to produce its blue brochure telling them how wonderful things are, spending, I understand, half a million dollars, perhaps more on their public relations efforts.

Madam Speaker, it is not as if the government has to go very far to know how Manitobans are suffering under this government in terms of health care. I think of some of the situations that have been brought to my attention. I have to trust that the members opposite receive the same kind of complaints and concerns from their constituents, because this is affecting all Manitobans. It is affecting Manitobans of all walks of life and I am sure in every constituency.

I think, for example, of a fellow by the name of Joe who lives up the street on Cathedral Avenue. He was in bad need, serious need of a hip replacement. He was in a great deal of pain and had very great difficulty walking. He was told that he had to wait 18 months for that operation. The doctor told him, though, because of his grave condition maybe some people could shuffle the cards and he could get in earlier. Well, he got in earlier, at 11 months.

I think of a woman, Fanny, on St. Anthony. Something went wrong with her heart. It started beating rapidly. She started feeling dizzy and weak. She went to the doctor and was diagnosed with a heart condition which needed further examination, but an echocardiogram was not available for six months. Six months, Madam Speaker, and that was just for the test to get a diagnosis. That was not for any cure. It just worsened her condition.

I think of another constituent, Mike, who was diagnosed with cancer and was in and out of the hospital, in and out of the hospital. When he came home from the hospital, they could not get the home care help they needed. When he was in the hospital, he was in the hallways. One time he ended up in the hallway of St. Boniface

Hospital for 12 hours and no food was offered to him. The family finally discovered this and went and got him food.

What is happening under this government is that Manitobans are becoming more afraid of their health care than their health.

* (1640)

I think of another constituent, Wasyl, who needs dialysis twice a week. He was offered a taxi ride to Morden to get his dialysis and the cab will wait for him while he is getting the treatment. Somebody else was just offered to be flown to The Pas and be put up at a hotel there for a period of time for dialysis. Then I think too-well, there is Grafton, North Dakota, as the alternative now to the suffering that Manitobans have had to endure. Someone, I believe it was a constituent of the member for Kildonan (Mr. Chomiak), went to Grafton and was speaking to one of the operator's of one of the machines, perhaps an MRI, and the operator said: you know, I would love to come back to Manitoba, because that is where I am from, that is where I am trained, but there are no positions open there. That speaks volumes of the government's health care record. Those are the stories. That is the pain, the suffering of this government.

Of course, in the throne speech there is no plan. When the government does come out and make an announcement, there is just no trust. Why should anyone trust the government when they make an announcement promising some improvements to health care, because we have heard it all before. They have had the chance and they blew it.

The next issue in the throne speech that is dealt with is children. Most parents are trying their best, but now many must overcome tremendous odds in this province. We all hear it. In fact, perhaps we are getting immune to it, getting immune at least to the title, but Manitoba has the highest child poverty rate and is known as the child poverty capital of Canada.

I understand that Manitoba has the highest teen pregnancy rate. I understand that Manitoba has suffered the highest rate of children in care. I understand Manitoba has the highest high

school dropout rate. Perhaps not surprising, then, it has had the highest increase in violent youth crime of all the provinces since 1990, and we have to ask is this the best that we can do for our children? Is this the best that the Conservative government can do for our children? What does this mean for our future well-being as a province, and what does it mean for the future well-being of those families and those particular children who are suffering? The word "investment" comes to mind, Madam Speaker, and nowhere is investment more important than in our kids because that is where the future is assured.

Again, I do not know if the members opposite have deaf ears, but I get calls from constituents and concerns and complaints raised. I think, for example, of a six-month-old—I will call him little Mac—who lived on Lansdowne. His skull was fusing together the top of his head, and he needed surgery urgently to avoid permanent brain damage. But, Madam Speaker, every time that surgery was scheduled and they would go down to the Children's Hospital, time and again it was cancelled. One time they waited four hours to be admitted, only to be told that there were no beds. They went home. A family in such stress sought out help from my office, and we dealt with the minister's office, just adding to the burden on that family.

I do not think that anything has struck me as more heinous than the following anecdote. On the same street, a four-year-old who was about to enter into kindergarten spoke with the abilities of a two-year-old, was diagnosed with a particular communication disorder. They went to the Health Sciences Centre then, to the Communications Disorders program for assistance because the family knew that if this little girl entered the school system without the problem being addressed, she would be ostracized. She would not learn like the other students in the class. She may not have friends. It could affect her whole sense of efficacy. Her sense of well-being could have a permanent scarring effect.

When they went to the Health Sciences Centre, Madam Speaker, they were told that there were 500 other children ahead of her. They were told that this child would have to wait

two years for help. But, and I guess this was the good news, according to the staff there, who were very frustrated—it is not their fault—they said she could go and get private therapy because there was a new industry growing in Manitoba of private help for communication disorders, speech and language therapists. Well, when they looked into it, they discovered that the rate for these private clinicians was \$3,000 to \$4,000 a year.

Just after this incident arose, the father lost his job, and their difficult circumstances were made more difficult. I have never seen an example of not just two-tiered health care but two-tiered opportunities for life. I know the government made some announcement last week on funding for communication disorders, and I ask, where have you been for 11 years? Report after report—and the last one being the Postl report three or four years ago—says it: you have to do something about this. It is so wrong. It has been raised in this House again and again. It has been raised in the media again and again. Not only has this government blown 11 years of opportunities of many, many children, because many of those children who were denied speech and language help 11 years ago are in Grade 10 today. I wonder where the costs of that bad decision making from the government, that carelessness, that heartlessness is going to end up costing us, not just in terms of the diminished personal sense of hope and achievement, but are the costs being borne in the social services sectors, perhaps in the justice sector, and the education sector, whether through special needs or needed attention, behavioural disorders? Madam Speaker, that was a very unwise and callous rejection by this government of a recommendation from many reports and a need from Manitoba children and families.

Quite frankly, in terms of the announcement just made the other day, Manitobans and I just do not believe that the government is serious about dealing with communication disorders. They have had the time. They have had 11 years. You had your chance. You blew it.

Madam Speaker, the problems facing our children, though, are also problems and challenges that of course families are dealing with and the adults are dealing with. It is under

this government that an economy has grown—the Filmon economy, I will call it—that has purposely left certain individuals out of it. Those people who are being left out of the Filmon economy are disproportionately youth and are disproportionately aboriginal peoples. But I harken back to the Hughes report on the Headingly riot when he said: Beware. He said: Consider the real solution. The real solution: marketable skills and job prospects for those who are being left out of the economy.

* (1650)

There are programs out there, Madam Speaker, that can ensure that the economy is shared, that the benefits are shared, by all Manitobans. I think, for example, of an organization in my constituency currently funded under the Winnipeg Development Agreement called the Urban Circle Training initiative. But why programs like that are funded on a pilot basis or funded on a temporary basis under a three-year or five-year program is beyond me. A program like that has proved itself, where almost all the graduates from that program, after coming to deal with personal challenges and using the medicine wheel, go on to learn skills in particular areas, and virtually all of them get jobs. You turn around entire families. You all of a sudden open the doors of opportunity for children who otherwise were being kept outside. We must open the doors. But we need a strategy to build opportunities, not just jails, as I think the current government is relying on, short-term solutions that are not solutions at all.

So, Madam Speaker, I think that this next election is not so much about the people of our generation and the adults in Manitoba. The next generation is for the kids. It is for the ones that we have an obligation to ensure the future of and whose futures have been terribly compromised by the policies of the members opposite.

Now the throne speech goes on to then talk about safety. I was quite amazed at how scant that section of the throne speech was. After all, safety was an issue that was front and centre for the Conservatives in the last election campaign. They certainly used the crime issue to attract voters by a myriad of promises. What I saw in

this throne speech was for the first time since the threat of street gangs, and I might also add biker gangs, became obvious to Manitobans, to every Manitoban except members opposite, the word "gang" was finally mentioned in a throne speech. Gangs were finally acknowledged as a serious issue of concern to Manitobans.

But, unfortunately, after having mentioned the word "gang," there was no plan associated with it. There is nothing in here. I fail to understand when the government is going to understand that the suppression and the prevention of gang activity are critical to the well-being of Manitobans. Then they go on to talk about victims in here. Well, I do not think this government should have been talking about victims. We know the record of this government when it comes to victims of crime. I do not have to go back any further than January of 1999 when the government proclaimed the victims' rights legislation, the so-called victims' rights legislation, because, Madam Speaker, it was in that legislation that at least 16 benefits under the victims' compensation scheme were eliminated or reduced. Imagine stripping crime victims of their rights and of the dignity that can come from some fairness following the wrongdoing being put under legislation that was called victims' rights law.

Then they went on to talk about family violence, and I do not have to go further than this week to recall how this government rejected the major recommendations from the Lavoie commission of inquiry when it came to bail, which, after all, was what Lavoie essentially was about—the lightning rod, if you will, or the public outcry centred around the release on bail of Roy Lavoie twice. But the government has yet to ensure that the recommendations first to move bail and family violence cases into family violence court and, second of all, to have bail risk assessment done be implemented.

Well, finally, I want to say, Madam Speaker, that the government seems to have some lip service now for the challenges facing certain, perhaps many older neighbourhoods in Manitoba but particularly in Winnipeg. Action is required. It was required years ago. There are in certain pockets of this city serious challenges around housing stock. There is a need for infill housing.

There is a need for assistance for those who cannot afford the down payment for a mortgage, and there is a need for renovation programs. Of all the times in this city's history for there to be no renovation program offered by the provincial government, the government has chosen now. Indeed, they had a renovation program a few years ago, but you had to pay \$5,000 to get any benefit. It was not a program that was very helpful. It certainly did not meet the needs of older neighbourhoods, but this is a time for the government to get way beyond issues of literacy and lighting and that is what they talk about, although I appreciate the need to address those issues. But this is way beyond literacy and lighting. When you have sections of a city being described as a fire zone—erroneously, I might add—when you have sections of the city that are facing very serious decline, we cannot any longer afford a government as we have here in Manitoba at the provincial level. There has to be a serious change; there has to be a government that is willing to engage and empower communities but with the partnership of a provincial government that cares. Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Hon. Mike Radcliffe (Minister of Labour): Madam Speaker, I rise today to put a few words on the record with respect to the throne speech, which we have before us for contemplation.

But before I do that, I would like to congratulate our new Lieutenant Governor, the Honourable Mr. Peter Liba, for his address to this House and through us to the people of Manitoba. I would also like to welcome the new Sergeant-at-Arms, Mr. Mac Allen, who has joined us, and I look forward to a long and happy association with this individual. Of course, too, we have the six new pages who have joined us for a work experience, and I am sure that they will see all ambits, all aspects of human behaviour as they have the opportunity to observe us perform in this Chamber.

Now, Madam Speaker, I had the opportunity to sit here in my seat, and I was jumping with indignity at the aspersions that were being cast abroad by members opposite. They were spurious. They were without foundation. The last member to speak, the honourable member for St. Johns (Mr. Mackintosh), I wonder if this

member has really read the same report from Mr. Justice Monnin that I have had the opportunity to read, because I look at page 50—and the member for Osborne (Ms. McGifford) is mumbling surreptitiously in the House, but on page 50 Mr. Justice Monnin states as follows: there is absolutely—and I will repeat this in a loud voice so that the members opposite who may be hard of hearing, although that would be speculative on my part, but I would suggest or I would recite that Mr. Justice Monnin said unequivocally there is absolutely no evidence that the party through its duly elected officers or as a collectivity had any knowledge of Mr. McFarlane's actions. I am thus unable to find the PC Party vicariously liable for Mr. McFarlane's actions.

Then, further, on page 54, Mr. Justice Monnin, as he then was, the former Mr. Justice Monnin states: "Premier Gary Filmon testified that he was not aware of the plot or the cover-up and I find his evidence to be credible." I will repeat that for the benefit of members opposite, because I have been listening to their maunderings in this Chamber, Madam Speaker, and they seem to be under a total disillusion that they are coming to an adverse conclusion from their discourse. I will repeat this: ". . . I find his evidence to be credible."

* (1700)

Madam Speaker, if you cannot attack somebody on the substance and the merit of their activity, then you try to choose some other spurious way to attack them. I would like to cite the anecdote of an eminent jurist in this province before whom I had the opportunity to plead in years gone by. That was the Honourable George Eric Tritschler, and he was the Chief Justice of the Queen's Bench in his day. He said to me, young man, if you are weak on the law you pound the facts, and if you are weak on the facts you pound the law, and if you are weak on the law and the facts, you pound the table. Well, this is what the honourable members opposite—[interjection] You like that. Yes.

That is what members opposite are trying to do in an allegorical way in these last few weeks. They are trying to make, I would suggest, an attack on the integrity of our Premier (Mr.

Filmon). One cannot assail the political performance of this party. One cannot assail the results of the leadership in this province. We can only look to this throne speech which outlines exactly what has happened in this province. The throne speech starts off by reviewing the recent past. It tells us that the budget has been balanced.

Now the honourable colleague opposite was speculating as to the future of our children. This government has been so concerned about the future generations in this province that they are not going out to saddle future generations with the oppression, with the despondency that members opposite would impose upon the future generations by unbridled accumulation of debt. [interjection] Members opposite are referring to a remark that I made a number of years ago about, I believe it was, the member for Osborne who was dispensing Stygian murk in this Chamber.

An Honourable Member: Stygian might I said.

Mr. Radcliffe: Stygian might she says. Well, perhaps she is not familiar with the individual who was rowing the boat across the River Styx to the underworld because that is where the concepts and the policies and the theories of that party belong. They belong in the underworld, and they will be kept in the underworld.

Madam Speaker, we are not driving our children to despair. We are paying off the responsibilities of this government. We are not living beyond our means. We are proud of that fact and all the rest of our public policy. The disposition of money flows from that concept of rational fiscal probity. We can look at the management of our public agencies that have been conducted under this administration. Our Manitoba Hydro has some of the lowest rates in the country for service, and that has been under the guidance and tutelage of this government. Manitoba Public Insurance Corporation—it is cheaper to drive an automobile in Manitoba than it is in Quebec, in Ontario, in British Columbia. And we look at Workers Compensation Board. Workers Compensation Board had been an opportunity for the previous administration to do their political handouts and social engineering.

We have now put this on a sound fiscal foundation and restored it to the purpose for which it was originally intended.

Madam Speaker, I would dread the day that members opposite ever got their hands on the Treasury of this province. We can only anticipate what would happen by looking at what has happened in the province of British Columbia. There is a proud province, a province that has been blessed with incredibly, almost limitless resources, and what have they done there. They have brought—the NDP government of that jurisdiction—that province to its knees. They are riddled with debt. They are saddled with endless red tape. [interjection] A Soviet style of forestry management.

I said at one point a number of years ago in this Chamber that that type of thinking was the reason why a lot of our ancestors left Europe in the first place. We must be vigorous to make sure that that never comes to pass again in this province.

Madam Speaker, we then look at what happened in one brief administration in the province of Ontario. The province of Ontario was the engine of the heartland of this country, and this concept of political administration did bring that province to its knees.

Madam Speaker, they allege that we have no plan. They stand by their desks on the opposite side of this Chamber, and they sound off about doom and gloom. I suggest, with the greatest of respect to my honourable colleagues opposite, because they are all honourable colleagues in their own right, however misguided they may be for their perception of reality, that this throne speech presents a balanced view of government.

The members opposite come forward with their anecdotes and say and recite individuals who are suffering, and they pretend that they have a monopoly on compassion and concern. That is not so. I want to set the record straight. This government, the Filmon government, has moved ahead to make a strong economy so that we have the money, we earn the income to put into health care despite the ravenous depredations of this federal government that has clawed back hundreds of millions of dollars on

transfer payments. They have asked this government to balance its budget—sorry, they have tried to balance their budget on the backs of this poor provincial government.

Madam Speaker, this is iniquitous, and so for members here in the middle of this Chamber to have the temerity to stand up—[interjection] This was a benefit of a public education I would be happy to inform my members opposite, but for these individuals to have the temerity to stand up and criticize this government and this throne speech after their colleagues have committed the rape and pillage of our treasury is iniquitous.

* (1710)

Madam Speaker, despite this unfeeling from Ottawa, our government has been able to manage in a sensible, balanced, careful manner. The priorities of this government speak for themselves. You can see from the percentage and the distribution of funds where the heart and soul of this government is. We look firstly to health care. Members opposite are going the way of the dodo. They are going to be redundant. In fact, I would allege with the greatest of respect that their political philosophies probably are redundant at this point in time.

They call themselves, euphemistically refer to themselves as the New Democratic Party. I think that we are looking at an incredible oxymoron right there. There is nothing new about their ideas. There is nothing democratic about their ideas. All they can say is that they are a party of tired old hacks. This government is moving ahead to reform health care. We have taken a system, health care of the '70s, of the '60s, which was based on institutional delivery, was based on bricks and mortar, and we are changing that. We are saying that our vision of health care, which is presented in this throne speech, is based on community delivery.

What have we done? Madam Speaker, we have been able to put our money where our mouth is with this government. Over one-third of the available funds to dispense for the provision of service to the people of Manitoba have been allocated to health care. This

government has gone out and purchased new equipment. We have worked aggressively to reduce the overcrowding in our critical care institutions. We have tripled the home care budget in as many years. Dialysis and breast care programs have been significantly expanded.

Now, the member opposite was grinding away that people were having to be taken to Morden, Manitoba, for dialysis. Madam Speaker, there are more people being maintained today on dialysis than ever before in the history of this province. Why? Because this government sees this as a priority. The members opposite try to take broad concepts and apply a legal principle of *reductio ad absurdum*. They always can come up with an anecdote whereby they think that the whole system is decaying and dying because of one exception. I do not decry that there may be individuals who are falling short, and there will ever be ongoing need. That just goes to show that our job is not yet done. There is more work to be done. But if we let those people get control of the treasury and get control of government policy, this place would be a ruin.

We can look forward around us today that we have the lowest unemployment in 20 years in this province. We have more people at work in Manitoba than ever has been before. I would suggest that the touchstone of this government, the touchstone of this administration is to cause people to think better for themselves, to provide for themselves. We want people to be able to be resourceful, rely on their own means of support, not be subjected to the dependency of handouts.

Now, I do not decry for a moment that members opposite have good intentions, but their remedy to all the social ills that we suffer, and I am not for a minute deprecating the fact that there are individuals out there who have been suffering and who are suffering and who will continue to suffer, but their remedy for this is to go and throw money at something and then make everybody suffer. Their attitude is to reduce successful people to a common mean instead of extolling excellence, instead of encouraging people to achieve. All they want over there is a lot of little red ants running around. They will reduce this province to an

economic wasteland, whereas look what has happened today with this province.

We are exporting more goods and services than we ever have in our history before. There are more people at work in Manitoba. Madam Speaker, it is abominable the criticism that they try to level against the concepts in this government. I would have respect for an opposition, for Her Majesty's loyal opposition, if they were to stand up and have some cogent, practical alternative. But what do they do? They are the masters of doom and gloom. All they can do is criticize. If I thought like that, if I woke up in the morning with that sort of mentality I could not face the day. I would slash my wrists. I do not know how they have the temerity to come to work every day with their feckless postulations that they bandy about in this Chamber.

Madam Speaker, the theme of our government as represented in this throne speech is the concept of empowerment and what we want to do, and what we are doing, is that we are going out to every level of our community and giving people the resources and the opportunity to empower themselves to lead a fruitful, happy, fulfilling life. One of the ways that we are doing this is with our promotion of education in this government.

Our Premier has stated on previous occasions that education is the opportunity and the means by which somebody of the lowest social order, of the most humble origins, can achieve prominence and excellence and achievement inside of one single lifetime. This has been the goal of different waves of immigration that have flooded our province, that have made us the rich cultural place that we are today. Madam Speaker, we have acknowledged that, and we have promoted that. We look through our commitment to education, which is probably, next to health care, the next most important priority in our government, and what are we doing today? This throne speech speaks to updating The Licensed Practical Nurses Act, The Registered Nurses Act, The Psychiatric Nurses Act and The Physiotherapists Act.

An Honourable Member: And they still will not vote for you.

Mr. Radcliffe: Now there I think the honourable member for Flin Flon (Mr. Jennissen) says: And they still will not vote for you. And that bespeaks their crass mentality, that they think they only do something because they are currying vote and favour. Madam Speaker, this government does things, passes legislation, because it is the correct thing to do, because it shows leadership, because it shows vision. That is the difference between members opposite and members in government on this side.

Madam Speaker, we are going to take that difference to the people of Manitoba in this year, and we are anticipating and looking forward to a unanimous endorsement of this government. This government has introduced standards and testing in the face of vituperative abuse from members opposite. They have assailed every move that our government has made with regard to assessing and measuring and determining whether people are on the right track or not, whether our children are, in fact, receiving the education and the direction that they need. Why? One can only imagine. They are afraid to ask if somebody is achieving a standard. because they want everybody the same. Well, you know what, not everybody is the same. We all have different resources; we all have different abilities; and we all have different goals and visions in this life. Members opposite, by their criticism of our education policies are trying to deny a fundamental characteristic of human life.

Madam Speaker, our commitment, we have committed our government, our education policies, to promote literacy and numeracy.

An Honourable Member: How about the right to work?

* (1720)

Mr. Radcliffe: Ah, that brings forward another issue on the differences in the visions. Members opposite, at one of their annual general meetings a year ago, they passed a resolution—and Madam Speaker, I am glad you are sitting down, because I am sure that you would be benumbed in disbelief and shock when I inform you and inform this House that members opposite at an annual general meeting had the gall, the

shortsightedness to pass a motion at their meeting promoting 32 hours of work in a week as a goal, and they wanted to be paid for 40 hours. Have you ever heard of anything more inane, more ridiculous? Now, maybe, maybe, there would be more value in one of our people in the workplace working 32 hours a week than members opposite trying to work 40 hours a week, but I would not be so aggressive as to say that.

Madam Speaker, another one of their issues that they brought forward—and, fortunately, they have seen the light of reality, the perception of reality, in their last annual general meeting because they said at least that they were no longer going to try and buy back Manitoba telephone shares. But—[interjection] That is right, there is an awful lot of heaving on this side and a lot of heaving on that side over there.

An Honourable Member: Ashton said one thing; Doer said another.

Mr. Radcliffe: That is right. Now, who is in charge over there? Madam Speaker, when I look across this Chamber and I see the individuals popping up like marionettes, one wonders who is in charge. Are there strings being pulled here? [interjection] Ah, the honourable member for Flin Flon (Mr. Jennissen), he must be the *éminence grise*. He is the *éminence grise* in that party. I see, he is pulling the strings because we over here thought that they were advocates for the labour unions, that they were advocates for self-interest groups, that they did not have the broad vision that this government has, as evidenced in this throne speech.

But, Madam Speaker, we would be ground down to the bottom of the pail within months if our workforce was encouraged to work for 32 hours a week and be paid for 40. I have never heard of anything as absurd and ridiculous. [interjection]

Now, the member for St. James (Ms. Mihychuk) is trying to raise some interference by suggesting that I object to the minimum wage, and that is not so. We are proud to note that we have raised our minimum wage in this province, effective April 1, to \$6 an hour from \$5.40, a significant rise. Now, if these members

opposite were not in this Chamber and being paid at our rates, maybe they would have knowledge of the minimum wage if, in fact, they were paid for what they were worth, but I would not be so aggressive as to say that.

Madam Speaker, another issue that this throne speech has addressed, which I think shows the compassion, the sensitivity and the awareness of the needs of our people in this province, we commissioned an education report on special needs. This has been reported back to government, and we will now be proceeding to implement this report. We are not going to be just blindly throwing more cash, more taxpayers' dollars. We are not going to be raising taxes.

Now, see, again, there, members opposite, their mentality is that they say: ah, but it is an election year, so therefore you must throw more money at it. Madam Speaker, there is an eminent order in the British Commonwealth, the Order of the Garter, and the motto of that order is: *Honni soit qui mal y pense*. *Honni soit qui mal y pense*, which basically means, govern yourself, or you judge others by your own actions. Madam Speaker, that is the sort of foundation for the abuse that emanates from benches opposite. They are trying to judge us by the way they would behave themselves. This is an indication of what would happen if, for some grave misfortune, those people ever got their hands on the Treasury. They would waste it within months. They did it before, absolutely, and it would happen again.

Madam Speaker, our throne speech addresses a number of issues on justice. We want Manitoba to be a place where people can be taken care of when their health fails. We want a place where our children can be educated to take their places in the future. We do not want to burden the next generation with their extravagances. We are paying off the debts in our own time.

Another tenet that we are addressing is that of justice. We want Manitoba to be a safe place to live, to work, to raise a family. We have given direction to our Crown prosecutors to oppose bail where there are offences of personal violence. We are committing significant assets to the Manitoba Warrior trial.

Here is a government that has a commitment to justice. Not only do we talk about it, we do something about it. All we hear across the way is talk, talk, talk, talk, talk.

An Honourable Member: Nattering nabobs of negativism.

Mr. Radcliffe: There it is. There is a byword. Nattering nabobs of negativism.

Ah, and the honourable member for Flin Flon has just walked in, as I indicated that appellation.

Some Honourable Members: The Pas.

Mr. Radcliffe: Oh, The Pas, excuse me. The Pas. That's right.

Madam Speaker, we are introducing through this throne speech the most vigorous antijohn legislation to reduce prostitution—

An Honourable Member: That's the last election, Mike.

Mr. Radcliffe: Ah, but there is more to come. We are enforcing vigorous drunken driving laws in this province. We are applying this to snowmobiles and to off-road vehicles. Madam Speaker, we are saying that we want to eliminate the lack of respect, the potential for violence, when people go out and imbibe recklessly and put our citizens at risk. When any one of us could be innocently going about our daily regime and be struck down by the senseless violence of a drunken driver, this bespeaks a government who is concerned, who is aware, and who is following through with sensible, balanced, thoughtful legislation.

We can look to the future. What kind of future do we find in this throne speech? We look to a bright future of economic development. We look forward, we as this government, and we are saying to the people of Manitoba that they can look forward to economic prosperity. Madam Speaker, you can look today to people in Manitoba who are back to work.

*(1730)

Now this is a foreign concept to members opposite, I know, but I entreat them, I tease them, I inveigle them to consider this novel prospect which, I know, does not enter into their realm of reality, but this government wants to enable people in Manitoba to work for a living, to avoid the evils and the desperation of dependency. We want to give them increased access to secondary education. We want to give them the opportunity to upgrade their working skills.

On the one hand, these vigorous, thoughtful, effective social policies are outlined in this throne speech, and, on the other hand, we also are not forgetting about the people who are producing the revenue. We are making a commitment in this throne speech to reduce taxes. This shows that this government is prepared to meet the needs of everybody across the social spectrum.

We are addressing the issue of taking back the streets, and again we are not coming in with some hierarchical, centrally financed, bureaucratic, overladen scheme. We are saying to individual communities that it is your initiative. It is your initiative to go out and work street by street. It is your opportunity to take back the streets, to use your initiative in order to restore peace and prosperity and respect in our province. Now, again, these are issues that members opposite stand up on their benches, and they criticize, and they say it is a vague speech with no vision, with no direction. We are speaking to the fundamentals of respect and self-initiative and pursuit of excellence.

This throne speech goes on to say that we will continue to support the urban municipal government of the City of Winnipeg and all our municipal governments. This province has the distinction of giving the highest level of support to their municipal governments of anybody in western Canada. We are prepared by this throne speech to show our co-operation with the different levels of government. We have commissioned a Capital Region report in order to again intellectually discern what the needs, what the solutions, what the alternatives are for the ever-growing expansion of the city of Winnipeg so that it can be done in a balanced and a proper fashion. What would members

opposite do? I can only speculate, but they probably would freeze development all around the city of Winnipeg. I think they even did that once before under one of the misguided policies of the Schreyer, Pawley governments, and all that did was drive up the price of real estate in the city of Winnipeg.

Madam Speaker, I want to address a few remarks to the revisions to The Elections Act. This government at its first available opportunity after this House was called introduced this legislation, and as a gesture were they prepared to accede and made a declaration to the city and to the people of Manitoba that they were prepared to advance this legislation? No. They wanted to slavishly adhere to the rules of this House, and this shows the mentality of these members opposite.

Madam Speaker, I could talk for hours on the abilities, on the wonderful attributes, but I see my time is up. With regret, I will take my chair, but I commend the virtues of this throne speech to members opposite. When they sit down at night in quiet contemplation, I know that they will accede to the values and the goals and the vision that is set out in this statement. Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Ms. Diane McGifford (Osborne): Madam Speaker, it is, of course, always a pleasure to follow the member for River Heights (Mr. Radcliffe) and to listen to his unique and somewhat esoteric points of view, I might say, although I wish somebody would inform him that the value of thought is not weighed by the length of his word or words, but rather by the quality of his ideas, so I give him that information.

Several of my colleagues have spoken of this throne speech as being without substance, as being ephemeral, if you will. It appears to be a throne speech without clear planning, with no definite ideas. Certainly, there are not any policies spelled out in it. In fact, as one of my constituents remarked to me—and having been warned by you, Madam Speaker, last week, I will be very careful what I say. As one of my constituents remarked to me, she said: I cannot believe that they are not embarrassed to get up

and mouth such drivel. It seemed to me— [interjection] They are never embarrassed, says the member for Thompson (Mr. Ashton).

Madam Speaker, last year, we spoke about the throne speech as being rethermalized and pointed out that last year more than food was being rethermalized in the province of Manitoba. I realize this year that cooking metaphors may be ruled out of order, so I will be careful.

I would like to take this opportunity to wish all the best to our retired Sergeant-at-Arms and welcome our new Sergeant-at-Arms. We certainly congratulate him on his appointment and look forward to working with him.

I would also like to especially welcome the six new pages. I know that some people have commented on the gender configuration, and it gives me only comfort. I know that with six young women, we will be very well served, so I welcome the pages to the House.

I would also like to welcome my colleagues on both sides of the House back to the House after a 270-day hiatus. I think it is very interesting, Madam Speaker, that during 270 days one can conceive, gestate and deliver a child. I do not know if anyone did it. Why would we know, but it certainly would have been a possibility.

Before I speak directly to the throne speech, I, like many of my colleagues, want to make a few remarks about the Monnin inquiry and the report of the Monnin inquiry. Last night, I was reading Shakespeare's Julius Caesar Act III, Scene ii. You might remember, Madam Speaker, Anthony's eulogy to Caesar, which begins, I come to bury Caesar and not to praise him. During this eulogy, Anthony repeatedly assures the audience that, and I quote: Brutus is an honourable man. Then he goes on to refer to Brutus's cohorts, and he says, so are they all, all honourable men.

The thing is, Madam Speaker, that Anthony repeats this over and over again, so gradually the audience begins to see a distance between the words that Anthony is using and Brutus's actions. Eventually, the audience in the play begins to question Brutus's actions, begins to

question Brutus's honour. I think my point is obvious.

* (1740)

So with this Premier. This Premier has so repeatedly assured us of his innocence, and other members opposite have so repeatedly assured us of his innocence, that I think this is one of the additional reasons that many of the public are beginning to question that innocence.

I know I heard the member for Arthur-Virden (Mr. Downey) on CBC radio on Friday with my colleague from Thompson (Mr. Ashton), and I heard these dulcet tones wafting over the air. I heard the member for Virden assuring all Manitobans of the honour of his Premier and the honour of all his colleagues and so on and so forth. I said to myself, I wonder when he is going to start talking about the sands in Saudi Arabia, and sure enough it was the next statement. In fact, he is indeed predictable and growing stale, but he will have time to recollect in tranquillity once he retires. Even the callers into the radio program were saying, did that not happen 20 years ago? And, of course, it did happen about 20 years ago, and the member for Arthur-Virden is sorely out of date.

The last couple of statements about the Monnin inquiry, the vote-rigging scandal and the cover-up, and I think it is clear that this kind of affair, these kinds of events taint us all, that nobody really wins, really wins, when this kind of activity takes place. Certainly, perhaps the primary victims in this scandal are aboriginal people. They appear to have been deliberately targeted, and they know this and they have been very hurt by it. The Premier has made an apology. I do not know how widespread its acceptance is, but certainly aboriginal people were targeted.

Of course, Madam Speaker, all Manitobans have been insulted and damaged by the activities that preceded the inquiry itself. All Manitobans have basically been treated as fools and will resent it. When I go door to door in my constituency, I hear it at many doors, but, of course, I took the opportunity to quote from some of my constituents earlier on that matter and I will not do it again.

When the member for Transcona (Mr. Reid) was speaking last week, he talked about this as being the opinion poll throne speech. In a very carefully documented speech, he pointed out the questions that were asked him by opinion poll were turned around and later appeared as policy in the throne speech. One of the things that he particularly cited was the 10 percent cut in the civil service.

Madam Speaker, I want to cite the statistics in Culture, Heritage and Citizenship, which is one of the departments that I am responsible for. There has been an erosion of numbers in that department over the years, and by my reckoning a 10 percent cut in that department would mean 30 fewer positions. I simply cannot begin to imagine how this department could function with 30 fewer positions. In fact, I think that our already demoralized civil service must be thoroughly demoralized by this throne speech and this threat to their workplaces.

I know that in doing constituency work I currently have to wait and wait to get phone calls back. I know my constituency assistant does. I heard this from other MLAs, people with whom I work. I think it is in Maintenance Enforcement that you never get phone calls back. These phone calls are often on very serious matters. For example, maintenance is a very serious matter. Social assistance when you do not get your cheque is a very serious matter. So I cannot begin to imagine how the civil service will function with a 10 percent cut. I know currently we have the lowest ratios to population in Canada, and this government wants to reduce them further.

The obvious question is *quo bono*, for whose benefit? Who is really going to benefit from a further reduction in the civil service? I would suggest certainly not Manitobans, certainly not Manitobans who require services, certainly not the government workers who are trying to do a good job in the civil service and whose numbers have already been seriously reduced.

I think it was the member for St. Johns (Mr. Mackintosh) who said: where is the plan? Here is this kind of raw fact dumped into the throne speech. Where is the plan? Where is the policy? Where is this 10 percent going to come from? Is

it going to come from Justice? Is it going to come from social assistance? Is it across the board? Where is it going to come from? What services will be affected? What will the results for Manitobans be? What will the effect on the lives and rights of Manitobans be?

Madam Speaker, as far as I can see, this is clearly ideological. It is clearly a policy or an idea. I hesitate to call it a policy or an idea. It is something put forward probably in case there are any possible Reform Party candidates thinking of running in the next election, because this is extreme right-wing republican thinking. I suppose it is a way to try and win those kinds of voters, those kinds of members over to the Filmon team. So I am not in favour of opinion-poll thinking or government policy based on an opinion poll. We need to be a little bit more thoughtful than that would suggest.

One of the ideas in the throne speech is an elected Speaker, and I think that we on both sides of the House—at least on this side of the House and presumably on that because it is this government which has introduced this idea—well, good and proper. It is about time we had an elected Speaker. I think we are trailing most Canadian legislatures in this aspect. We are certainly two years too late, but I suppose better late than never.

One of the things that I found interesting was the Premier's idea to create an Order of Manitoba Act, with himself as chancellor. Well, fine. I guess it is sort of a way of acknowledging what donors to the Tory party, Tory hacks—I do not know, but all the Order of Manitoba Acts in the world and, in fact, all the Order of Manitoba Act recipients are not really doing anything to address the very, very serious issues in this province. Of course, this side of the House has some ideas which I hope to get to.

Madam Speaker, I did want to comment on the Minister—I presume it began with the Minister of Culture, Heritage and Citizenship's (Mrs. Vodrey) plan to introduce a bill. In fact, she did first reading today on this bill. Her plan to introduce a bill which would establish a classification system for video games, I have heard that imitation is the highest form of flattery, and I am certainly flattered, suitably

flattered. Because as this Minister of Culture well knows, for the past several years, through a private members' resolution and in Estimates, I have been talking about the classification of video games.

* (1750)

I think it was on October 20, 1997, to coincide with the YMCA week without violence campaign, that I first introduced this video game resolution. I would quote from it, but time is running out. So I will not. At last year's Estimates, in 1998-99, the Minister of Culture apparently did not know anything about this plan to classify video games, because when I asked her about it she gave me to understand that nothing had been done. Then later on when I submitted requests through the Freedom of Information, all I received was the not unusual denial of information. It was that that really led me to suspect that the minister had caught on to the excellent idea that began at this caucus and in fact would move forward with it.

Well, Madam Speaker, as I said, imitation is a high form of flattery, and I am duly flattered. I look forward to seeing the bill, and I look forward to working with the minister. I hope it is a bill that this side of the House can endorse, and until then there is little that can be said. As I say, I look forward to seeing the bill.

Madam Speaker, along with many of my colleagues I spent a lot of time this last fall and this spring and some time in the winter visiting with my constituents, and I wanted to take this opportunity to put some of their concerns on the record. You will not be surprised to know that their concerns basically are with health care, with education, with public safety, but I am going to be a little bit more detailed. [interjection] Yes, many of them were concerned with integrity. The member for St. James (Ms. Mihychuk) is perfectly right.

About health care, Madam Speaker, I heard from household after household the fear that our once proud system, our health care system, was in dire straits, and people really worry about the health care system for the future. Will it be there for them?

Madam Speaker, I note the principles of the Canada Health Act. Our five health care principles are public administration, accessibility to services, portability of services, universal coverage and comprehensive coverage. People in Manitoba, at least in my constituency, and I do not think my constituency is greatly different from other constituencies, but people in my constituency are very, very nervous that our commitment to the principles of the Canada health care act is wavering.

People are concerned about health care in all its manifestations. Many constituents express their concern about health care workers. I think it is 1,500 nurses that we have lost in this province. I think it is something like 600 beds that we have lost in this province, but in addition constituents were worried about nurses, for example, working under incredible stress and in demoralized circumstances. Quite rightly, people wonder how demoralized and stressed health care professionals can perform the kinds of services that Manitobans need and deserve.

So this was an incredible concern, Madam Speaker. Of course, my constituents were also concerned about waiting lists. They were also concerned about waiting for diagnostic testing. The member for River Heights (Mr. Radcliffe) had spoken about dialysis, and I called across the floor to him that I know one of his constituents who is in desperate need of dialysis, in fact, is slowing dying and cannot get dialysis because of the wait list. So, Madam Speaker, the health care issue is a huge one, both in my constituency and without my constituency.

I also heard from constituents who are extremely concerned about Pharmacare. There is a young man who lives down the street from me, a former Tory, I might add—

An Honourable Member: Not anymore.

Ms. McGifford: Not anymore. That is right. I certainly heard I am never voting Tory again. This young man, Madam Speaker, has a physical condition which necessitates that he take medication every day. His income is such that he has to spend \$900 before he gets a cent back,

and, of course, his \$900 usually—he usually does not reach the \$900 limit on the 31st of March so he gets no Pharmacare back.

You know, Madam Speaker, when I think about this young man who I assume is about 30 years old, I think for the next, what, 40 years, 50 years, if this government has its way, he will be putting out a thousand bucks year after year after year simply because he has a physical condition over which he has no control, something that is not—well, I was going to say a matter of choice, but clearly it is not a matter of choice.

So my constituents are extremely concerned about health care and extremely concerned about the \$50 fee to get eyes tested. I know, Madam Speaker, I am at the age where my prescription is changing rapidly. This means frequent visits to the ophthalmologist. I believe our health care plan allows us to cover one of those visits, but there are many constituents out there without any Blue Cross who are of my age, so this means that these constituents make several visits to their ophthalmologist and have to pay that \$50 time after time after time.

Madam Speaker, another major issue, as I indicated, was education. I know that under this government since 1988, approximately \$500 less is being spent per pupil in Manitoba schools. Most parents, as my colleague from St. James is telling me, believe that education is at an all-time low, and I totally concur with her. That has been my experience in conversation with my constituents. Yesterday, I was speaking to a neighbour and I mentioned this fact to her, and she said it is really clear to her when she walks into Churchill High School and sees the terrible disrepair in that building. She understands the teachers and the principals and everybody in that school are working their hearts out, but they cannot do those physical repairs. The money is not there. This \$500 less is clear in the textbooks, or rather I should say the lack of textbooks that Manitoba students have. I know the member for Wolseley (Ms. Friesen) brought in some of the antiquated and tattered examples of textbooks that Manitoba school children need to use.

You know, Madam Speaker, I remember being in school and having my textbooks and

them being an extremely valuable resource to me. I remember reading my textbooks, liking my textbooks, even learning from my textbooks, but they are not available anymore. Instead, our students get tattered bits of xeroxed material or books that have been around since I was in school, and that is too long.

We also know that there is a paucity of resource teachers, a paucity of resource

materials. We know that our teachers are not getting the professional development—

Madam Speaker: Order, please. When this matter is again before the House, the honourable member for Osborne (Ms. McGifford) will have 15 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, April 12, 1999

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