



Second Session - Thirty-Seventh Legislature

of the

Legislative Assembly of Manitoba

**DEBATES
and
PROCEEDINGS**

**Official Report
(Hansard)**

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The Honourable George Hickes
Speaker*



MANITOBA LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
Thirty-Seventh Legislature

Member	Constituency	Political Affiliation
AGLUGUB, Cris	The Maples	N.D.P.
ALLAN, Nancy	St. Vital	N.D.P.
ASHTON, Steve, Hon.	Thompson	N.D.P.
ASPER, Linda	Riel	N.D.P.
BARRETT, Becky, Hon.	Inkster	N.D.P.
CALDWELL, Drew, Hon.	Brandon East	N.D.P.
CERILLI, Marianne	Radisson	N.D.P.
CHOMIAK, Dave, Hon.	Kildonan	N.D.P.
CUMMINGS, Glen	St. Rose	P.C.
DACQUAY, Louise	Seine River	P.C.
DERKACH, Leonard	Russell	P.C.
DEWAR, Gregory	Selkirk	N.D.P.
DOER, Gary, Hon.	Concordia	N.D.P.
DRIEDGER, Myrna	Charleswood	P.C.
DYCK, Peter	Pembina	P.C.
ENNS, Harry	Lakeside	P.C.
FAURSCHOU, David	Portage la Prairie	P.C.
FRIESEN, Jean, Hon.	Wolsley	N.D.P.
GERRARD, Jon, Hon.	River Heights	Lib.
GILLESHAMMER, Harold	Minnedosa	P.C.
HELWER, Edward	Gimli	P.C.
HICKES, George	Point Douglas	N.D.P.
JENNISSEN, Gerard	Flin Flon	N.D.P.
KORZENIOWSKI, Bonnie	St. James	N.D.P.
LATHLIN, Oscar, Hon.	The Pas	N.D.P.
LAURENDEAU, Marcel	St. Norbert	P.C.
LEMIEUX, Ron, Hon.	La Verendrye	N.D.P.
LOEWEN, John	Fort Whyte	P.C.
MACKINTOSH, Gord, Hon.	St. Johns	N.D.P.
MAGUIRE, Larry	Arthur-Virden	P.C.
MALOWAY, Jim	Elmwood	N.D.P.
MARTINDALE, Doug	Burrows	N.D.P.
McGIFFORD, Diane, Hon.	Lord Roberts	N.D.P.
MIHYCHUK, MaryAnn, Hon.	Minto	N.D.P.
MITCHELSON, Bonnie	River East	P.C.
MURRAY, Stuart	Kirkfield Park	P.C.
NEVAKSHONOFF, Tom	Interlake	N.D.P.
PENNER, Jack	Emerson	P.C.
PENNER, Jim	Steinbach	P.C.
PITURA, Frank	Morris	P.C.
PRAZNIK, Darren	Lac du Bonnet	P.C.
REID, Daryl	Transcona	N.D.P.
REIMER, Jack	Southdale	P.C.
ROBINSON, Eric, Hon.	Rupertsland	N.D.P.
ROCAN, Denis	Carman	P.C.
RONDEAU, Jim	Assiniboia	N.D.P.
SALE, Tim, Hon.	Fort Rouge	N.D.P.
SANTOS, Conrad	Wellington	N.D.P.
SHELLENBERG, Harry	Rossmere	N.D.P.
SCHULER, Ron	Springfield	P.C.
SELINGER, Greg, Hon.	St. Boniface	N.D.P.
SMITH, Joy	Fort Garry	P.C.
SMITH, Scott	Brandon West	N.D.P.
STEFANSON, Heather	Tuxedo	P.C.
STRUTHERS, Stan	Dauphin-Roblin	N.D.P.
TWEED, Mervin	Turtle Mountain	P.C.
WOWCHUK, Rosann, Hon.	Swan River	N.D.P.

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Thursday, December 7, 2000

The House met at 1:30 p.m.

PRAYERS

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

PRESENTING PETITIONS

Health Centre

Mrs. Myrna Driedger (Charleswood): Mr. Speaker, I beg to present the petition of Justina Andrusiak, Mary Elnisky, Joe Elnisky and others praying that the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba request that the Minister of Health (Mr. Chomiak) and the First Minister (Mr. Doer) instruct the Winnipeg Regional Health Authority to end its plans to remove the Health Centre at 108 Bond Street from Transcona and to consider finding existing space in downtown Transcona.

TABLING OF REPORTS

Hon. Drew Caldwell (Minister of Education and Training): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to table the following reports, all copies of which have been previously circulated: Education and Training 1999-2000 Annual Report; the Council on Post-Secondary Education 1999-2000 Annual Report; Manitoba Education and Research Learning Information Networks, MERLIN, 1999-2000 Annual Report; Manitoba Textbook Bureau 1999-2000 Annual Report; the Annual Financial Reports for 1999-2000 of the University of Manitoba, the University of Winnipeg and Brandon University; and the Annual Financial Reports 1999-2000 of the Assiniboine Community College, Keewatin Community College and Red River College.

Hon. Rosann Wowchuk (Minister of Agriculture and Food): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to table the following 1999-2000 annual reports, copies of which have previously been distributed: the Department of Agriculture and Food; Manitoba Agricultural Credit Corporation; Manitoba Crop Insurance Corporation; Manitoba

Farm Mediation Board; and the Food and Development Centre.

Introduction of Guests

Mr. Speaker: Prior to Oral Questions, I would like to draw the attention of all honourable members to the gallery where we have with us today from St. Maurice School 16 Grade 11 students under the direction of Mr. Shaun McCaffrey and Ms. Lark Barker. This school is located in the constituency of the honourable Member for Fort Garry (Mrs. Smith).

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

Also seated in the public gallery from Springs Christian Academy, 25 Grades 11 and 12 students under the direction of Mr. Brad Dowler. This school is located in the constituency of the honourable Minister of Finance (Mr. Selinger).

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

*(13:35)

ORAL QUESTION PERIOD

Physician Resources Recruitment/Retention Strategy

Mr. Stuart Murray (Leader of the Official Opposition): Mr. Speaker, my question is to the Minister of Health.

Along with failing to end hallway medicine, the First Minister (Mr. Doer) has failed to attract and keep physicians in Manitoba. Manitoba is experiencing a physician shortage. We see this with the closure of the McPhillips Walk-in Clinic, a clinic in the Health Minister's own constituency. In fact, several clinics are experiencing difficulty attracting and retaining doctors with more than 35 advertised physician vacancies throughout Manitoba.

I would like to table a letter from doctors at the Park West Medical Centre, who have been running their centre short-handed for 10 months. Let me quote directly from the letter, Mr. Speaker: After 25 years of providing service to the citizens of Charleswood, especially the Westdale and River West Park communities, the Park West Medical Centre is facing the real possibility of closure by the summer of 2001. The doctors go on to write: With no help in sight we see no alternative but to fold once our lease expires next year.

Park West Medical Centre provides care for over 18 000 Manitobans. Will the Minister of Health please put the minds of 18 000 Manitobans to rest with the assurance that he will not let the medical centre close?

Hon. Dave Chomiak (Minister of Health): I thank the member for that question.

Mr. Speaker, while the member worked for Brian Mulroney, he might have been aware of the fact that—

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Mr. Chomiak: Mr. Speaker, while the member was perhaps busy with other pursuits, the former provincial government, under the leadership of I believe Jim McCrae and other Health ministers at the time, entered into a contract to fund and to assist in the funding of Assiniboine Clinic, which is referenced in this particular report. I believe the prognostication and the review of that particular report indicated that the efforts of the provincial government at the time to prop up that clinic failed.

If the member is asking us to repeat that particular experiment, I think he ought to review and discuss it with other former Health ministers, one of whom is sitting on the front bench, as to whether or not in fact that is the way to go.

Mr. Murray: Mr. Speaker, my honourable friend across makes reference to having worked with a number of people in political life. I will put the people that I have worked with in

political life beside any of the people that he has worked with in political life.

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Mr. Murray: Mr. Speaker, during the 1999 election, the Premier (Mr. Doer) and I believe the now-Minister of Health promised a physician resource plan. They said: It is an achievable plan and it is a credible plan. He promised the plan again in the 2000 Throne Speech.

If this is such an achievable and credible plan, why, 14 months later when McPhillips Walk-in centre is closing, when Park West Medical Centre is threatened with closure because it does not have enough doctors, has the Minister of Health not shared his physician resource plan with Manitobans?

* (13:40)

Mr. Chomiak: Mr. Speaker, I can indicate that the member was wrong in his statement. The McPhillips centre is not in my constituency. Notwithstanding that, the WRHA has worked with McPhillips centre. Because of retirements, they are working with McPhillips centre to see if anything can be done in that regard.

I might add that we have attracted more physicians this year to Manitoba than last year or the time under the previous Tory administration. So we have managed to turn that around. I might add that we have been able, for example, this year to attract a physician who left, Dr. Michael West, under the former Conservative government, who would not stay here under that regime, who has now come back, given the future of health care in Manitoba and the positive response that we have seen.

Mr. Murray: This is a very serious issue. The Health Minister said he had a plan for recruiting and retaining doctors but instead of delivering on that plan we have seen them do nothing while medical centres in Manitoba struggle to keep their doors open because they do not have enough doctors. If the Minister of Health and in fact if the government opposite has a plan, let

me be the first to break the news it is not working. We need immediate action.

Will the Minister of Health tell Manitobans what immediate measures he intends to take to prevent any other medical centres from closing?

Mr. Chomiak: Within several weeks we will be announcing our comprehensive physician recruiting and retention plan. I am also very pleased to announce that, contrary to what happened during the decade of Conservative cuts and negligence in our health care system when the numbers of doctors training in Manitoba were reduced, we will be announcing for the first time in a decade more doctors being trained in Manitoba, expansion to the faculty for the first time in a decade.

Cardiac Care Surgical Waiting Lists

Mrs. Myrna Driedger (Charleswood): I recently received an e-mail from Mr. Henri Hamonic entitled: Please help. Mr. Hamonic has been waiting nine months for heart surgery for one artery that is 100 percent blocked and another artery that is 80 percent blocked.

What is this Minister of Health going to do to respond to Mr. Hamonic's plea for help and to ensure that he receives his heart surgery as soon as possible?

Hon. Dave Chomiak (Minister of Health): The member knows that I cannot discuss the specifics of a particular individual in this Chamber. If she will get me the details of that situation, I will look it up, and I will forward the situation.

I think it is atypical. We are doing more cardiac surgeries. We are very pleased to announce a comprehensive cardiac surgery program in Manitoba for the first time also in a decade where we are going to rebuild the cardiac program in Manitoba.

* (13:40)

Mrs. Driedger: Will the Minister of Health just admit that, with this man waiting for nine months for cardiac surgery, his cardiac plan is

not working because this man, Mr. Hamonic, this 57-year-old man on disability, just wants to get back to work? He has a job waiting for him. All we are asking is will this minister admit that his program is not working? This man did e-mail him yesterday. He should have that information. Will this Minister of Health agree to meet with this gentleman?

Mr. Chomiak: When individuals bring cases to the floor of the Legislature, which happens, we treat it very seriously, and I will follow up on that case.

Mrs. Driedger: I would like to ask why the Minister of Health will not agree right now to meet with him because when he was in opposition he made sure that he went to every home of people that came forward to him with their problems.

Will he not now be as accessible as Minister of Health as he was so eager to do as an opposition Health critic?

Mr. Chomiak: Mr. Speaker, as the members know, and the members opposite know how we have responded to their individual questions and matters they have raised on health matters. We have followed the tradition that has always been the case in this Legislature when matters are brought forward, that they are dealt with expeditiously and dealt with in the intent that all of us have in this Chamber and that is to try to deal with health problems, and a health care system where there are 14 million transactions a year, 14 million transactions a year. We try to do our best. We are not perfect, but one thing we have done on this side of the House, we have been able to reduce the majority of waiting lists. We have expanded services. I think most Manitobans recognize that the health care system has improved dramatically in only a year's time and will continue to do so.

First Nation Casinos Headingley Proposal

Mr. Leonard Derkach (Russell): Mr. Speaker, the Premier (Mr. Doer) and the Minister of Gaming assert that Swan Lake's casino in Headingley was never considered because of the April 5 vote. That was something that was

reiterated today on radio. Yet this Government has stood by and watched while both communities have spent thousands upon thousands of dollars putting their positions forward even to the extent of going through the anguish of yet another plebiscite.

If this Government has been so clear then can the minister explain to Manitobans why Eric Luke, the \$165,000 chair of the implementation committee, said on September 6, 2000: Swan Lake and Headingley have to have another opinion. They have to overcome that negative plebiscite. Why would Mr. Luke have said this?

Hon. Steve Ashton (Minister charged with the administration of The Gaming Control Act): Mr. Speaker, I realize that the member opposite throughout the implementation process for First Nations has I think consistently failed to look at the RFP and the process that was put in place and that is indicated by the questions that he has asked.

I can indicate that following the vote that took place in April we received notice from Headingley by resolution indicating that was the will of the people for Headingley. When Headingley asked us to ignore that I wrote back in September after taking the matter to Cabinet indicating we would not do that. The decision to hold another referendum, the wording of that referendum, the timing of that referendum, was entirely the decision of the Municipality of Headingley.

* (13:45)

Mr. Speaker, as well, I would like to indicate to the House that earlier today at the request of Swan Lake—[interjection] If members opposite would like to be aware that Swan Lake at their initiative met with myself and my colleague the Minister of Northern and Aboriginal Affairs (Mr. Robinson) and indicated that due to circumstances in Headingley surrounding the Red Sands Resort and casino project, it is Swan Lake First Nation's intention to withdraw from the casino project in Headingley, Manitoba. We will be in touch to make final arrangements and agreements to complete our withdrawal. I would like to table that in the House.

Mr. Derkach: Mr. Speaker, the minister and the Premier (Mr. Doer) both stated on CJOB radio this morning that indeed the casino in Headingley was not considered because of the April 5 vote.

I would like to ask the Minister responsible for Aboriginal and Northern Affairs (Mr. Robinson) to clarify his remarks of June 1, when he said in reference to the casinos, quote: One is going to be located in Headingley. Was the minister misleading people of Manitoba, or was he in fact unaware of his Government's position on Swan Lake's proposal?

Mr. Ashton: Mr. Speaker, I find it very unfortunate with what has happened with the First Nation's gaming initiative that members opposite, apart from perhaps the Leader of the Opposition (Mr. Murray) who I thought took the responsible course—

An Honourable Member: The high road.

Mr. Ashton: —the high road in indicating that his position was the same position that we have indicated publicly, that we recognize the original vote in April, but members opposite throughout this process have not focussed in on what admittedly is a new process in Manitoba, largely because for several years after the release of the Bostrom report they did nothing. In setting up the process, we recognized that it was not a perfect process, but our intention has always been to put in place a process that is eventually going to lead to a number of First Nations casinos. We always said it would be up to five, and that stands. We continue to work with proponents to achieve that.

Point of Order

Mr. Marcel Laurendeau (Opposition House Leader): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker, *Beauchesne's* 417: "Answers to questions should be as brief as possible, deal with the matter raised and should not provoke debate." If this minister chooses to rise and answer a question that was directly asked of another minister upon a statement that the other minister spoke, we wish you would at least speak a little bit relevant towards that answer rather than sitting here and provoking debate within this House.

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. The honourable Government House Leader, on the same point of order.

Hon. Gord Mackintosh (Government House Leader): Just trying to discern the argument of the member, I believe the minister was answering the question that was posed to him, clear and simple. Mr. Speaker, if the Opposition feels provoked, it is because they feel sensitive. Debate was not being provoked.

* (13:50)

Mr. Speaker: On the point of order raised by the honourable Official Opposition House Leader, I would just like to take this opportunity to remind all members that questions are put to the Government and it is up to the Government which minister they wish to answer the question.

At this time I would just like to remind all honourable ministers that, according to *Beauchesne's* Citation 417, answers to questions should be as brief as possible, deal with the matter raised and to not provoke debate. I would ask the co-operation of all honourable members.

* * *

Mr. Derkach: Mr. Speaker, my last supplementary. If Headingley would never be considered because of the April 5 vote, then why did this Government not allow another community to be selected? Can this Government tell us now, can the minister tell us now which community was left out as a result?

Mr. Ashton: Having been in Opposition for a number of years, I realize that an opposition party does not have to take a position on issues, but to come in with two separate positions, two totally different positions on the same issue—this party, the Conservative Party, failed to bring in First Nations casinos when they were in government. Since they have been in Opposition, they have opposed the process, and now the member gets up and says he is—

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Mr. Ashton: —concerned about other communities that have been left out. Give me a break, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: Order. I would like to remind all honourable members that a point of order is a very serious matter, and I ask the co-operation of all honourable members. The honourable Official Opposition House Leader, on a point of order.

Point of Order

Mr. Marcel Laurendeau (Opposition House Leader): Mr. Speaker, if anybody knows *Beauchesne's* 417, it is this minister. "Answers to questions should be as brief as possible, deal with the matter raised and should not provoke debate." There is not one area of that citation that this minister has not crossed over on.

Mr. Speaker: On the point of order raised by the honourable Official Opposition House Leader, he does have a point of order. *Beauchesne's* Citation 417: Answers to questions should be brief as possible, deal with the matter raised and to not provoke debate. I would ask once again the co-operation of all honourable ministers.

First Nation Casinos Headingley Proposal

Mr. Darren Praznik (Lac du Bonnet): Mr. Speaker, what is absolutely clear here is the inconsistency in which the Government—

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Speaker: Order.

* (13:55)

Mr. Praznik: In April of this year the people of Headingley voted. The Government remained silent until just a few weeks ago. They allowed Mr. Nadeau to come forward a month or two later naming Headingley as the No. 1 choice. They hired Mr. Luke at \$165,000 a year to tell Headingley they could have another referendum. The Premier's own press secretary just a few weeks ago said this was only one of 97 considerations and the plan may continue. Now,

just a few weeks ago, the Government says we will stand by—

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. The honourable Government House Leader, on a point of order.

Point of Order

Hon. Gord Mackintosh (Government House Leader): I am going to develop a new technique, Mr. Speaker. I am going to fake I am getting up and this will work just fine.

Of course, Citation 409, a question must be brief, a preamble need not exceed one carefully drawn sentence.

Mr. Speaker: Order. On the point of order raised by the honourable Government House Leader, he does have a point of order. *Beauchesne's* Citation 409(2): A preamble should not exceed one carefully drawn sentence.

* * *

Mr. Praznik: I would ask the First Minister, given that his Government did not commit to abiding by the April vote until just a few weeks ago, is the reason that they have made a policy decision to have a downtown casino in Winnipeg and did not want the competition of the Headingley casino.

Hon. Steve Ashton (Minister charged with the administration of The Gaming Control Act): I am surprised at the member opposite because he obviously has not been following what has happened. I mentioned before, and I think it is important to put on the record, that it was in June that the Municipality of Headingley by resolution of council indicated that it was their position to adopt the vote that had taken place in April. That was their decision. We were requested to ignore that result and in September, not a matter of weeks ago, in September of this year, we wrote to the municipality in Headingley. We said we accepted the results of the plebiscite which is one of the factors, one of the many factors that is involved in the consideration for it.

So the member is incorrect once again, and I wish, in addition to a little more consistency

across the way in terms of their position on First Nations casinos, they would get their facts straight.

Mr. Praznik: I would ask the minister then if he is being forthright and accurate. Did the minister inform the Swan Lake First Nation that his Government would reject the Nadeau report, would accept the April vote and would not be granting a casino licence to them in Headingley? Did he tell them that to prevent them from incurring any further costs in pursuing their proposal?

Mr. Ashton: Once again the member opposite shows that he has not done his homework, and I would quote from the selection committee report, and he just referenced that report, which stated quite clearly that taking into view publicly expressed views was not part of their consideration. Taking into account such views is the role of government. The Government will undoubtedly consider the views of the public as well as the proponents and all other stakeholders in deciding whether and on what basis to proceed with any one or more of our recommendations. That was right in the selection committee report. We followed that, and I would suggest the member do his homework before raising these questions.

* (14:00)

Mr. Praznik: Since the minister has admitted it is in the purview and responsibility of government to make the decision, I would ask him: When did he let Swan Lake know that his Premier (Mr. Doer), his Cabinet, had accepted the vote of the residents of Headingley, had rejected the recommendation of Mr. Nadeau for a casino, so that that First Nation would stop incurring costs in pursuing this matter? I ask him as well: Is his Government prepared to reimburse both Headingley and the First Nation for the cost they incurred by his failure to inform them of a Cabinet decision?

Mr. Ashton: Once again the member opposite is not informed because if the member will recall what I said just a moment ago, the resolution of Headingley was in June. We were asked to ignore that, but we indicated in September we would not do so. That was public information. I

believe it was released immediately to the media by Headingley. That has not changed.

I want to say again that in terms of Swan Lake—and I will put this on the record—I do believe they have dealt in good faith throughout this process. They, I do not believe, had any real say over some of the developments in Headingley. I do not think anybody in this province would have expected a situation where a municipality would invite in a First Nations community, then have a referendum, then adopt it, then try and have it rejected, then have a second referendum on a casino or trailer park.

I want to say, Mr. Speaker, we will deal fairly with Swan Lake who, at their initiative, requested a meeting today and have now indicated their intention to withdraw. We will deal in good faith with Swan Lake because they have dealt in good faith all throughout this process.

Income Tax Reductions

Mr. John Loewen (Fort Whyte): Like the last Throne Speech, this one is more noteworthy for what is not in it. Last time there was no mention of changes to labour law. This time there is no mention of changes to reduce personal income taxes.

My question to the Minister of Finance: I would like to know if he understands that, as a result of his decision to delink from the federal tax system, as a result of his decision to set tax rates where they are set today, a middle-income family in Manitoba, a family of four with one earner earning \$60,000 will pay \$203 more in income tax in the year 2001 than they would have had he done like the rest of his colleagues, which is nothing.

Hon. Greg Selinger (Minister of Finance): Once again the member opposite is going back to an issue where he has never been able to yet put forward any empirical evidence of somebody's pay stub showing a reduction in their taxes. As a matter of fact, when we did our research this year and we looked at the ranking for taxes of a two-income family of four, and the income taxes paid in 2000, they were the second

lowest for people \$25,000, \$30,000 and \$35,000; the third lowest for a family of \$40,000; the fourth lowest for a family of \$50,000; and the fifth and sixth lowest for families of \$75,000 and \$100,000. Very fair and competitive taxes.

Mr. Loewen: This Minister of Finance promised the people of Manitoba tax reductions. Will he do his homework so that he comes to understand fully that, as a result of the rates he set and his decision to delink, not only will a family of four earning \$60,000 pay more, that in fact an individual earning \$25,000 or more will pay more income tax in the year 2001 than if he had done nothing? Will he do his homework and prove that to himself?

Mr. Selinger: I think the member opposite should do his research and take a look at the results that were analyzed by the Canadian Tax Foundation where our taxes for families below \$50,000 are in the low half of the country and, as a matter of fact, among the most competitive. If the member has any quibble with that, he should check that research before he makes any more allegations.

Mr. Loewen: I can assure the minister I have done my research. It is unfortunate that he will not do his. In light of the fact that he will not answer the question—because the question is about tax reductions that he has promised—I would ask the First Minister (Mr. Doer) if he would instruct his Minister of Finance to do his homework and advise the Premier of the full cost to Manitobans of the changes that this Finance Minister has made to Manitobans' tax system, and if he will instruct him to do his homework and inform him and inform Manitobans why he found it necessary to raise income tax rates so that Manitobans would pay more this year than they would have had he left the rates alone.

Mr. Selinger: I thank the member for that very precise and brief question.

The member opposite will know that January 1, very soon to be upon us, \$68 million in personal income taxes will roll out over and above the \$75 property tax credit, which we promised in the election. We have exceeded

what we promised in the election and we have made the new system fair for families and all individuals in Manitoba.

United General Contracting Certificate of Performance

Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights): Mr. Speaker, yesterday when I asked the Minister of Conservation about the Government's procurement policies, which have been very slow in coming, the minister indicated that the contractor who produced the contract for the Knapp Dam was qualified. Yet I was told yesterday, and this was again confirmed to me this morning by Mr. Gary Kurz, president of the Manitoba Ready-Mixed Concrete Association, that United general contracting which produced the concrete and built the dam did not have the plant and facilities certification standard for Manitoba, that is the Manitoba Ready-Mixed Concrete Association certificate of conformance for concrete production facilities.

Will the minister now acknowledge that United general contracting did not have this appropriate certification?

Hon. Oscar Lathlin (Minister of Conservation): As I indicated to the member yesterday when he raised the question, I am still reviewing the situation in The Pas and I am told by my people today our staff will probably have the information ready by tomorrow. As soon as I have it, I will make sure the member receives the same information.

Mr. Gerrard: Will the minister acknowledge that the building of a dam structure like the Knapp Dam is important enough that companies producing the concrete should have the Manitoba Ready-Mixed Concrete Association certificate of conformance for concrete production, just as companies in Ontario are required to have the Ontario certificate when they tender on government work?

Mr. Lathlin: Mr. Speaker, unfortunately, at the present time, I cannot confirm anything until I have received the information that I asked for yesterday.

Government of Manitoba Procurement Policy

Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights): I ask the Premier (Mr. Doer) to acknowledge that delays in producing a proper procurement policy, which includes proper certification process, is really evidence that the Government's procurement policy is in a shambles.

Hon. Oscar Lathlin (Minister of Conservation): Yesterday I indicated to the member that the procurement guidelines are in the hands of the Manitoba round table for review. As I indicated to him again yesterday, within about a week to 10 days I will be able to make an announcement.

Gaming Facilities Downtown Winnipeg Casino

Mr. Darren Praznik (Lac du Bonnet): My question is to the Minister responsible for the Manitoba Lotteries Commission. I would ask this minister today: Does her Government have any plans at the current time, any intentions at the current time for the construction or placement or issuing of a licence for a downtown casino in conjunction with any other project going on in the province of Manitoba?

Hon. Diane McGifford (Minister charged with the administration of The Manitoba Lotteries Corporation Act): I would like to thank the member opposite very much for the question. The answer is, unequivocally, no.

Corporate Tax Provincial Comparisons

Mr. Jim Penner (Steinbach): Mr. Speaker, this Government talks about keeping Manitoba competitive, but as other provinces move to lower taxes, this Minister of Finance was on the news the day of the Speech from the Throne wondering if his Government could afford to pay their commitments.

Can the Minister of Finance explain how this Government plans to ensure Manitoba's competitive advantage among other jurisdictions when Alberta plans to cut its corporate income tax rates in half in three weeks?

Hon. Greg Selinger (Minister of Finance): Well, first of all, the commitment made in Alberta was if affordable. At the time that commitment was made, oil was selling at \$34 a barrel. It has now dropped below that, and the Minister of Finance in Alberta has hedged his bets. It depends on whether he has the extra \$5 billion through energy revenues.

*(14:10)

What we will do in Manitoba to keep ourselves competitive is exactly what we promised in the election. We will educate more young people so that they can enter the labour market with skills; we will have a health care system which provides for the needs of Manitobans which is a huge advantage in terms of international competitiveness; we will create safe neighbourhoods where people can live in a sense of peace and security, unlike our neighbours to the south who live in cities where fear stalks the streets. Of course we will have fair and competitive taxes and Crown corporations which offer among the lowest energy rates in North America.

Mr. Jim Penner: Mr. Speaker, obviously that is not going to go down very well with business. How can the Minister of Finance ensure that Manitoba will stay competitive when even Saskatchewan can offer a long-term tax reduction strategy that includes a 25% reduction in personal income tax in two years?

Mr. Selinger: At the risk of being repetitive, I should almost repeat exactly what I said to the first question. We will bring forward a balanced program of training, health care, personal income tax regimes, safe neighbourhoods and affordable energy costs which will make Manitoba among the most competitive and affordable places to live in the country.

Mr. Jim Penner: Mr. Speaker, for the investment community to understand Manitoba advantage, we have to be competitive with other provinces. Can the Minister of Finance give the business taxpayers any hope of relief so they will continue to invest in our province? Where is the Manitoba advantage?

Mr. Selinger: I am surprised that the member opposite has not noted that we will be reducing small business taxation by 37 percent by the year 2002.

Floodproofing Programs Red River Valley

Mr. Frank Pitura (Morris): Yesterday the International Joint Commission released its report *Living with the Red*, which examines ways to reduce the flood threat in the Red River basin. The report states that flood protection for a major population centre in the Red River basin needs immediate attention, that people in the Red River basin remain at risk until measures are taken.

Mr. Speaker, given that the Throne Speech was silent on the matter of major new infrastructure projects such as floodway improvements and dike construction, could the Minister of Conservation explain what steps his Government is taking to address the very real threat of major flooding in the Red River Valley?

Hon. Oscar Lathlin (Minister of Conservation): Mr. Speaker, I thank the member for the question because the issue of flooding in the Red River Valley is of great concern not just to our Government but to people living in the Red River area. Yes, the soil moisture conditions, as we know, today are high. We have known that all along throughout the fall, but I would like to assure the member that there has been significant work done towards the floodproofing of the homes and businesses in the Red River Valley. For example, as of today we have floodproofed 60 percent of the homes and businesses in the Red River Valley. Our technical capabilities have greatly improved since 1997. We have hydrometric stations now modernized to a significant degree and 28 new ones being added.

So I think, Mr. Speaker, while we cannot with a hundred percent guarantee that there will be no problems in the spring, I would like to assure the member that we have—

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Mr. Pitura: Mr. Speaker, I thank the minister for that information. Given that the Premier (Mr. Doer) has spoken and indicated that more studies are needed, could the Minister of Conservation indicate how many more studies are needed in terms of the floodproofing for the Red River Valley and how long will it take your Government to move from the study stage to the action stage?

Mr. Lathlin: Mr. Speaker, as I indicated to the member, the floodproofing program that we have carried out so far, those are not merely studies, those are programs and services, resources that have been expended. I have actually gone to the area myself to tour the place and find out to what degree the physical damage had been done. Also I was interested in talking to the individuals themselves to mainly encourage them that our Government will continue to work with them to floodproof their homes and businesses.

I would like to assure the member that I do take this issue very seriously, and I will continue to work with whoever wants to work with us to make sure that we do not go through the same experience that we did in 1997.

Mr. Pitura: Mr. Speaker, my final supplementary to the same minister deals with the report *Living with the Red*. I would like to ask him when the Government plans to make a final decision on whether it will be undertaking a major overhaul of the floodway or building a dam at Ste. Agathe?

Mr. Lathlin: I am advised that there will be public hearings carried out in January, after the new year, and after that we will be making a decision.

Floodproofing Programs Winnipeg

Mr. Marcel Laurendeau (St. Norbert): Mr. Speaker, my question is to the Minister of Conservation. The flood of '97, which was the flood of the century, was something that brings back memories within my community, and the IJC report reminds us of that, but there is another fear that we are having within our constituency today.

That is with the City of Winnipeg. The City of Winnipeg has come around to a number of the communities throughout the city and said they are going to have the Berlin Wall built behind their homes, 16-foot walls in some cases, and they have given them no opportunity and no choice. The city has said you build it or we will no longer be your support.

Does this minister support the City of Winnipeg in their stand that the people who do not build these 16-foot walls will not have the support?

Hon. Oscar Lathlin (Minister of Conservation): I know the member approached me at the doorway of the Legislative Building here just the other day and he related the same story to me. I thought we had an agreement that he would write me a note and he and I would be meeting later to see what we can do.

Mr. Laurendeau: Yes, Mr. Speaker, there will be a letter forthcoming, but I was hoping the minister could give me an answer on that. We have also got people within my constituency who are not able to build a dike. The homes outside of the city of Winnipeg, there was a buy-out plan. Will that same buy-out plan be available for the homes within the city of Winnipeg?

Mr. Lathlin: I thank the member for the question. I was looking for the letter that I wrote to the federal representative, Ron Duhamel, where we have in very clear terms told him that we were interested in resolving the issues, but as the member knows, we just went through a federal election and the time that I was talking to him he was headed for an election campaign. I am sure he is going to be responding to me in due course as the topic of my letter to him was the very subject that the member is talking about right now.

Introduction of Guests

Mr. Speaker: Order. Time for Oral Questions has expired. I would like to draw the attention of all honourable members to the loge to my left, where we have with us Mr. Don Orchard, the former Member for Pembina. On behalf of all honourable members, I welcome you here today.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

Mennonite Central Committee

Mr. Jim Penner (Steinbach): I am pleased to rise in the House today to pay further tribute to an organization that has touched the lives of literally thousands of people throughout the world. As members of this House know, on November 16 of this year the Mennonite Central Committee was presented with the prestigious St. Boniface Hospital and Research Foundation 2000 International Award. The award is presented annually to recognize those individuals or organizations that make international contributions to health care and/or humanity. The selection of MCC for this noble award whose past recipients include the likes of Mother Teresa is a recognition of the countless numbers of individuals who have not only given their time but in many cases dedicated their entire lives to the cause of helping others.

* (14:20)

Mr. Speaker, I am proud to note that MCC is an organization that has deep roots in the Steinbach constituency. Many residents have contributed to the financial well-being of the organization and many more have participated in the countless projects throughout the world designed to help countries develop and succeed. Since 1920, the Mennonite Central Committee has provided more than \$700 million in food, money, and supplies to those in need around the world. They have throughout the many difficulties and natural disasters and inhumanities that have plagued our world demonstrated the true spirit of love and caring.

While this award was presented to MCC as an organization, I know that it was given on behalf of the hundreds of thousands of people whose lives have been changed by their kind words and accepted by the hundreds of thousands who have given of themselves these past 80 years to make our world a better place for its citizens.

Glenlawn Collegiate Career Symposium

Ms. Linda Asper (Riel): On November 29, 2000, I had the pleasure of participating in

Glenlawn Collegiate's Looking into Opportunities Now Day. This career symposium was designed to assist students with post-secondary and career exploration. Glenlawn hosted 75 presenters who offered 120 sessions throughout the day. Students chose their areas of interest and were scheduled into three or four sessions each, including such exciting topics as marine biology, film editing, nursing, natural resources and tourism. The symposium began with a meeting of students and their staff advisers to get their passport for the day, then a keynote address on student choice by Dr. Constance Rooke, president of the University of Winnipeg.

Along with some 30 students, I attended the session on the fashion industry where we learned that this industry is not only the glamour of Gucci and Dior but also hard work, creativity and persistence by designers who work in a variety of situations, be it the armed forces, seniors' services or department stores. Students were made aware of the qualifications needed for this delightful career.

At the end of the day, students debriefed in an evaluation process with their staff advocates. It is very encouraging to see that schools such as Glenlawn Collegiate are providing opportunities for Manitoba's youth to explore their interests that lead to career decisions. Congratulations to Donna Bulow, the school principal, and her staff, and in particular Janice Sharpe and Dennis Cape, school counsellors. They have excellent educational initiatives in Glenlawn Collegiate.

Good luck to the students as they move toward graduation. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Winnipeg Christmas Cheer Board

Mrs. Louise Dacquay (Seine River): This morning I and a number of my colleagues in the PC caucus, along with our staff and interns, had the pleasure of helping the many volunteers at the Winnipeg Christmas Cheer Board pack Christmas hampers. It was wonderful to see the amount of community involvement and the sheer energy and excitement that these volunteers displayed. Our MLAs and staff donated stuffed animals and delivered them to the Cheer Board

this morning just in time to replenish the inventory of toys available.

While helping put together Christmas hampers, it was heartwarming to see that the most inspired volunteer members were the children from St. Vital School Division. Their smiles and laughter filled the facility with Christmas spirit so much so that we joined them in singing Christmas carols. I would like to thank the Christmas Cheer Board for inviting our caucus to participate once again this year. I would also like to commend everyone who has donated food, clothing and toys to the Cheer Board. I call on all members to urge Manitobans to help make the holiday season brighter for all by donating food items or toys to the Christmas Cheer Board.

On behalf of all members, I would like to thank all of the men and women who work tirelessly during the holiday season at the Christmas Cheer Board to ensure that those less fortunate also have an enjoyable holiday season. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

St. James Collegiate Student Volunteers

Ms. Bonnie Korzeniowski (St. James): Mr. Speaker, it is with great pleasure that I rise today to acknowledge a service provided by students of St. James Collegiate on voting day. Be it municipal, provincial or federal elections, the student council arranges for several guides to be located at the different doors in the collegiate. The guides and assistants escort the voters from the particular school entrance to the polling room and then escort them back. Because of slippery conditions and because many of the voters who cast ballots during the period from 8:30 to 3:30 tend to be elderly, this service is especially helpful. Depending on the physical condition of the voters, the guides provide a helping arm or perhaps just assistance going up and down stairs or opening a heavy door. Well over 20 students were involved in the service for the latest federal election, all volunteers. Most were members of the student council, but a large proportion were also students who generously donated their spare time to a worthwhile cause.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to take this opportunity to thank the student council and all the other student volunteers for their part in

rendering this helpful service, as well as the principal of St. James Collegiate, Mr. Greg Mutter, and the student council advisers, Ms. Lindsey May and Mr. Tom Dercola. Hopefully this exposure to the voting process will contribute to the students' sense of commitment and responsibility and encourage them to become active citizens and vote, once eligible. Perhaps it will also encourage them to become more interested and involved in the political arena. Efforts like this help the community understand today's students better and make the students more cognizant of the needs of the community, thus benefiting everyone. Thank you.

Initiatives in Northern Manitoba

Mr. Gerard Jennissen (Flin Flon): Mr. Speaker, I rise today to bring attention to one of the many of our Government's significant initiatives in northern Manitoba, the latest being our commitment to having a single electricity rate for all Manitobans regardless of where they live. It is well known that most of the hydro power in this province originates in northern Manitoba and yet northern residents continue to pay higher rates.

The average monthly rate in Winnipeg based on the use of 1000 kilowatt hours of electricity is \$48.93 compared to \$61.62 in communities such as Brandon and Flin Flon and \$69.04 in smaller rural and northern communities. Our Government believes that a farmer near Roblin or a miner in Leaf Rapids should pay the same rate as the people in Winnipeg. It is for this reason that our Government has committed to enhance the affordability of this crucial service for our northern and rural residents. Manitobans have built this resource together, and they should all share in its benefits.

With Manitoba Hydro projecting a surplus of \$200 million, rates everywhere will drop to the same level paid in Winnipeg. Rural and northern Manitobans have been paying higher hydro rates for much too long, and creating a single residential hydro rate across the province is the right thing to do.

However, this initiative is but one of the many initiatives on which our Government has

focussed in northern Manitoba. We are beginning to address the huge infrastructure deficit left to us by the former government. One of our priorities is enhancing roads and highways in northern communities and improving or creating access to northern remote communities. Another very positive initiative implemented by our Government was the elimination of the \$50 Northern Patient Transportation fee. This fee was unfairly targeted at northerners. As well, our Government is addressing the health professional shortages in northern and rural Manitoba.

Upon assuming office, our Government created the Aboriginal Justice Implementation Commission to develop an action plan based on the Aboriginal Justice Inquiry recommendations. These are but a few of the many initiatives our Government has taken to strengthen northern communities. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

* (14:30)

ORDERS OF THE DAY

THRONE SPEECH DEBATE (Second Day of Debate)

Mr. Speaker: Adjourned debate on the proposed motion of the honourable Member for Dauphin-Roblin (Mr. Struthers), standing in the name of the honourable Leader of the Official Opposition (Mr. Murray), who has unlimited time.

Mr. Stuart Murray (Leader of the Official Opposition): Mr. Speaker, it is a great pleasure to again address the Manitoba Legislature for the first time as the Leader of the Official Opposition. I consider it a distinct privilege to stand in this Chamber that served in the fine Canadian tradition of parliamentary government. It is an honour and something that I take very seriously, both as a Manitoban and as a Canadian.

Today, Mr. Speaker, I would like to take a moment to recognize those people that came before me, the countless number of people that have sacrificed their lives in the name of freedom for the principle of democracy, brave men and women who travelled to distant lands to

challenge those who would desire to take basic rights from us.

I would also like to pay tribute to those who left behind mothers and fathers and sons, brothers and sisters, who may have lost their most precious loved ones. We owe a great debt of gratitude to the men and women who built this province and built this country, from the first people who were indigenous to these lands and all of those who came here from every part of the world to seek freedom and a better way of life. My service here on behalf of the people of Manitoba is dedicated to their lasting, living legacy.

Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to stand here together with other men and women who serve in this Chamber as freely elected members and representatives of the people. The principle of democracy is a global phenomenon, but we once and sometimes take it all too much for granted. The tearing down of the Berlin Wall in 1989 was a symbol to the world that people of all backgrounds and of all nationalities have the same basic needs and the same basic desires, that their voice is heard in the hallways of government and that their vote makes a difference. We cannot forget that while much of the world enjoys this right, there are other who still live in fear, in poverty, in famine and live sometimes in war. It is also to them that we dedicate our words and our actions so they may too one day enjoy the taste of freedom and prosperity.

As I look through our history as a nation, I believe there is a common thread that weaves its way through the generations. Whether our ancestors came to this country by foot, by ship or by plane, the vision for a better life, a new life is one that they all shared. Our country was not built by individuals, but as people working together. It was built by families and communities working together for a common purpose, a common goal. It was people who built this country because they came together perhaps through public service. It is because of that vision, that spirit and that tradition that I stand before you in this House today.

Mr. Speaker, I was raised in a small southern central Saskatchewan town called

Punnichy. Punnichy today is just 250 people. Well, they say the little guy from Punnichy. Indeed I am, and I am delighted and proud to be so. You know, my hometown of Punnichy has faced some of the same challenges and the many challenges that are experienced by some of our own rural communities. But it was in that time when I grew up around the family farm that I came to understand what is required of us as citizens of this great land. When fall harvest was upon us and the skies looked threatening, family and community came together to get the last of the crop in. When the local curling club had a bonspiel, everybody participated. Everyone had a job to do. When it came to local government, you answered that calling and served for the betterment of the community.

Mr. Speaker, my father was a farmer. He taught me the value of hard work and the rewards that come from those efforts. My mother was a pharmacist and also served on the town council. Discussions around our dinner table were as likely to be about the price of wheat or land use as it was to be about their young son's less-than-stellar report card. Family, community, public service, those three things very much reflect my upbringing, and they are the principal reasons why I am here today. For me, family, community and public service have all come in that order.

After attending school here in Manitoba, I fell very much in love with this province and more importantly with my future wife, Ashleigh Everett. Before that time came to pass, I had an opportunity of a lifetime, to tour the world with one of Canada's leading rock and roll groups, Blood, Sweat and Tears.

In those five years, I saw some great places, and I met some fascinating people, but after countless miles and fond memories, I returned home to Canada. I spent a few years in the non-profit sector working as a fundraiser for the Canadian Opera Company in Toronto. But soon the road beckoned again, and I was offered my second opportunity of a lifetime, to work in the Prime Minister's office as tour co-ordinator and later as director of tour. It was during that time that I earned a greater understanding and respect for the work of our public officials. I also grew to appreciate the work of those behind the

scenes, the political staff, the people in the civil service and the people who support the process of government in a volunteer capacity. What always shone through was a common purpose, a common vision to serve the country in the best way possible.

As the saying goes, all roads eventually lead to home. When Ashleigh and I decided to settle down with Sarah and Haley, we chose to come back to Manitoba. It was then, when I began working in the family business, I discovered something very new and very different. Manitoba was beginning to transform itself from a have-not mentality of the past to a can-do attitude that I have seen in communities throughout our province. This attitude was in stark contrast to the days of the 1980's, when I seriously felt Manitoba had lost its way.

What impressed me when I returned was the leadership and the guidance and the dedication to the provincial government under Gary Filmon. I observed that they too shared the same belief of family, community and public service. They believed in government that lived within its means, one that balances budgets, pays down debts and keeps taxes competitive, one that cares for the needy in our society and builds hope for our young people. That is, they were a Progressive Conservative government.

* (14:40)

Mr. Speaker, I believe the pinnacle in our transformation as a province happened in 1999 when Manitoba hosted two major world-class events, the Pan American Games and the 1999 World Junior Hockey Championships. I feel very privileged that I was able to serve as chair of the World Juniors, and I know Ashleigh felt the same as chair of volunteers for the Pan American Games. There were many days during those events that Ashleigh and I found ourselves feeling that something very special was unfolding. Thousands upon thousands of people from every walk of life were coming together, working side by side in communities throughout our province for a common goal. It was at that time that I began to marvel at the heights we could achieve as Manitobans when we all worked together, people with a united vision, a purpose and a plan.

Mr. Speaker, when I look back through the history of Manitoba, I have discovered some striking observations; that is, whenever we have faced a challenge, Manitobans have gathered together and worked as a community. But I have also observed that it has been Conservative and Progressive Conservative governments who offered the vision and the leadership to meet those challenges. This party is rooted in the very foundations of Manitoba, and since the election of John Norquay as Premier in 1878, Conservatives and Progressive Conservatives in Manitoba have led the way in so many areas of social and economic development.

Mr. Speaker, I want to take a moment to mention a few of their achievements for you today: the establishment of Manitoba's first agriculture college, Manitoba's first technical college, incorporation of the University of Manitoba, crop insurance, farm credit, the first services for the deaf, the Nelson River hydro development, student loans, low-cost rental housing, social allowance, medical assistance, the Winnipeg Floodway, fiscal responsibility, more effective government, income assistance and, most recently, balanced budgets, debt repayment, a thriving economy, low unemployment and an astounding 72 provincial tax cuts since 1988.

Mr. Speaker, this is our party's record of achievement, and I am proud to compare it to any other party in Canada, but as I mentioned at the very beginning, none of those things could possibly happen by individuals working in isolation. They happened because people from all parts of Manitoba came together in this House united by a common vision and fixed on a common goal.

Through the years we have all benefited from the leadership of premiers and governments who harness the vision of the people and brought it to life, leaders like John Norquay who was truly an explorer at heart, whose inspiration it was to open up Manitoba for new settlers to our province, so they could create a new life in a new land, leaders like Duff Roblin who had a dream. That dream was to improve the lives of Manitoba through better health, better education, better social services. He called it a social investment.

Leaders like Sterling Lyon, a visionary who believed in a strong Canada, more efficient, effective government and leaving more money in the hands of taxpayers, a premier whose history has shown, Mr. Speaker, was really ahead of its time and finally leaders like Gary Filmon, a builder who believed in living within our means and sharing the benefits of a balanced budget and a strong economy through priority investments in health, education and services to family. Each of these four individuals was very different in their approach, but their goal was the same, to make our province a better place for our children and our children's children.

Mr. Speaker, I am very proud of the history of our party and the things we have been able to achieve for the people of Manitoba. In the fall of 1999, Manitobans decided to take a detour, and in a democracy we accept their decision. They wanted us to rethink, retool and perhaps redirect some of our thinking. At the same time, they asked us to be their voice and bring forward their issues and concerns in the Legislative Assembly as the Official Opposition. Like everyone else, I was willing to give this new government the benefit of the doubt and like everyone I eagerly awaited this Government to proclaim their vision and their plan for Manitoba.

Sadly, it has been more than 14 months and the people of Manitoba are still waiting to know what the Government stands for and where it is going. Unfortunately the only thing we have learned in the first 14 months is that Today's NDP looks a lot like yesterday's NDP. I say that because we still see the leftovers of the Howard Pawley regime haunting the halls of government, and the question I have on behalf of Manitobans is why. Why would this Premier's first phone calls be to Eugene Kostyra and Vic Schroeder? How could he have the fortitude to tell Manitobans that the architects of the biggest tax grab in Manitoba history, the architects of the half-billion-dollar deficit were the first ones to give advice on how to run a government? What was he thinking? Bad management is what put Howard Pawley out of business, and I caution this Government to keep a close watch on Manitoba will once again be headed in the same direction. On behalf of taxpayers of Manitoba,

Mr. Speaker, we will hold this Government accountable in spending tax dollars wisely.

This week the Premier and his Government had an opportunity with the Throne Speech to redeem themselves for the missteps that have plagued them since they took office. However, as I listened to the Throne Speech it became very clear very quickly that this Government was passing that opportunity up. Like whistling past the graveyard, I fear this Government is taking the attitude that if they just ignore the problem long enough it might just go away.

I am talking about the Government's silence in the area of health care. While last year's Speech from the Throne had an entire section on health care, there were some specific and very simple promises, this year there was nothing. The Throne Speech barely made a mention of health care, making it painfully clear that the Government is completely backing away from health care promises and its commitment to making health their No. 1 priority.

It concerns all of us on this side of the House. I know that I am not alone when I question the Government on its obvious avoidance of this most important issue particularly when health care was trumpeted as the No. 1 concern during the last election and in the last session in this House.

In fact, we will recall that during the election campaign the Premier, then the Opposition Leader promised Manitobans that by spending \$15 million he was going to end halfway medicine and fix health care in six months. In the world of health care that is not a lot of money but he made it sound so simple. He said it was achievable and realistic. He guaranteed to Manitobans that he had a plan to accomplish it.

Perhaps the Premier has avoided raising these promises in the most recent Throne Speech because he likes to think that he has delivered them. After all, he promised Manitobans he would fix it in six months. But make no mistake, Mr. Speaker, after 14 months in office it is clear that many waiting lists have grown longer, the nursing shortage has almost doubled, and patients are still lying in hospital hallways. After

promising Manitobans that he had a simple, realistic plan that would fix it all, I guess with a record like the one I just described, the Premier does not want to talk about health care any more.

* (14:50)

His attention to this issue has faded nearly to a whisper, apart from thin words about physician recruitment and retention strategy, a plan, might I remind this House, first announced during the 1999 election campaign. At the time, the then-Opposition Leader said he had a physician resource plan that was achievable and credible.

Mr. Speaker, if this plan were so credible and achievable, why then 14 months later have they not shared this plan with Manitobans? They promised it during the 1999 election. They promised it in their first Throne Speech and now they are promising it again. What are they waiting for? If one considers that Manitoba is in need of more family physicians in both rural and urban areas, they are experiencing a severe shortage of specialists, and some community health clinics are closing their doors in Fort Garry and Elmwood, why has this government delayed in implementing a physician recruitment and retention strategy?

What is one to make of the growing nursing shortage? It has nearly doubled under this Government. Again, I remind this House of the then-Opposition Leader's own words in the 1999 election. He said if it takes hiring more nurses, then he would do it. Simple as that, he said.

Well, the nurses are needed but they have not been hired. Why is that? This Government promised Manitobans they would hire more full-time nurses immediately, yet the shortage has grown by hundreds—hundreds, Mr. Speaker. Although they promised to convert part-time nursing to full-time positions, we have seen nothing. As Maureen Hancharyk, the president of the Manitoba Nurses' Union, said: If government does not solve the nursing shortage, it certainly will not solve health care problems.

Mr. Speaker, there it is, laid out just as simple as the Premier said it was, solve the nursing shortage. This is the Premier who said he had a plan, so where is it? What is he waiting

for? Whatever happened to this Government's promise to put Grafton, North Dakota, out of business? The then-Opposition Leader said during the election: If it means opening diagnostic equipment for just a few more hours to keep Manitobans from going to the United States for tests, then he would do it. Well, Manitobans are still going south for treatment. Why did this Government not do what it promised and do it to end this practice?

It was also disappointing to see that the Throne Speech did not make any reference to community care or long-term care. With our aging population, we cannot afford to overlook long-term care and preventative care. Right now the vast majority of dollars are going into acute care. In fact, since the merger of the WCA and the WHA, long-term care has received significantly less focus. That, too, is a concern. Again, this Government has had 14 months to fix the health care problems they promised they would fix in 6 months, but all we have seen is a band-aid applied here and a band-aid applied there.

This Government used to talk the talk when it came to health care, but I ask the question: Were they only words? Nice words. Now even the nice words have stopped, and I fear so has the Premier's commitment to live up to his promise. The truth is there was precious little in this Throne Speech for health care. No plan for our hospitals; no plan for the growing needs of the aging population; no plan for new health infrastructure and equipment.

Well, Mr. Speaker, Manitobans are waiting. It is time we see a full plan on health care, not more of the scattergun approach the Government continues to take.

It has been said so often, but it bears repeating again. The NDP made only five promises in the last election, and two of those promises were to do nothing. Regrettably, those may be the only promises they will be able to keep. However, in the minds of Manitobans, the NDP were really elected on one promise and one promise alone and that promise was really a slogan. The slogan was to end hallway medicine and fix health care in six months. Throughout their time in opposition and again in the last

election, the NDP have politicized the issue of health care.

They enlisted the help of union bosses to run ad campaigns, staged protests, plant anti-government signs on the boulevards, and then they campaigned door-to-door scaring the sick and the elderly that we were out to do away with universal health care. I believe those decisions, especially in health care, should be made for the good of the people, not out of fear, not out of the narrow interest of some, and not for the political gain of the New Democratic Party. Mr. Speaker, I fear this Government is more concerned about slogans than solutions. Six months came and went, and they failed to make good on what they said was a simple, realistic and achievable promise.

We are now in their second year of office, and I have yet to see evidence that this Government has a plan for health care. You know, the money is now flowing from Ottawa. They have run out of excuses. It is time to see some action. On behalf of the people waiting for a bed, waiting for surgery, waiting for diagnostic tests, we will hold this Government accountable.

Mr. Speaker, I could go on and on about this Government's health care failures and broken promises. I would like to turn to another important issue to Manitobans, something that might be a little foreign over there, competitiveness in taxation. I firmly believe that this Premier's (Mr. Doer) lack of commitment to the meaningful tax relief is a tragedy waiting to happen. At first, this Government did what the previous government was planning to do which was delink Manitoba's tax system from the federal system giving our province more autonomy, but they did it a year early so they could keep the federal tax savings for themselves.

So today while provinces all around us are reducing taxes, middle-income Manitobans are now the highest taxed family in Canada, the highest taxed family in Canada. Three years from now, just when the NDP will be running for re-election, that same family earning \$60,000 will be paying 20 percent more in taxes or \$1,250 more than they would in Saskatchewan, NDP Saskatchewan. I shudder to look to the east

where our neighbours in Ontario will be paying 66 percent less in personal income taxes than we will.

Mr. Speaker, I have already spoken about competitive taxes, and clearly this Government continues to enjoy the benefits of a strong economy as a result of good government of the previous administration. But I also have noticed an alarming trend, and it is this Government's spend-at-all-costs mentality. Last year, for example, the NDP tried and tried to generate a deficit, but try as they might, even the NDP could not outspend the growth of the economy. I have to tell you that is the biggest surprise I have seen so far from this Government. They were experts at outspending the revenues in the 1980s, but even with Howard Pawley's advisers hanging around, they could not find a way to do it. People must be tearing up their NDP membership cards at the union centres as we speak.

* (15:00)

This is a serious issue, and I am very disturbed when I see a government spend \$8 for every dollar of tax relief. Is this what the First Minister means when he talks about a balanced plan? Eight to one might be good odds at the racetrack, but they are not very good odds for Manitoba's young people. Sure, the Throne Speech talked about sustainable tax reductions, increased property tax credits and something about the value of family tax credits in Manitoba being the second best in Canada. Does anyone on that side of the House have any idea what that means? Please fill me in, because I am curious to know. The truth is we are falling further and further behind our neighbouring provinces in the area of competitiveness and tax relief every day. I have heard from Manitobans during the recent by-election who have said that tax cuts must be a priority. I know this message was sent loud and clear during the first Finance Minister's (Mr. Selinger) recent pre-budget consultation meetings.

Aside from the members on the other side of this House, I think Manitobans in general are calling for meaningful tax relief because it is a priority. I hope this Government remembers that as it continues preparing for its next budget. This

Government talked about a commitment to fair taxation but so far has failed to deliver. Let us hope that this time around we see action in their Budget and not just nice words. On behalf of the young people of Manitoba, we will hold this Government accountable on competitive taxation so they can pursue their lives and their careers where they want to be, here at home in Manitoba.

The Throne Speech was billed as an education speech. Well, it was certainly an education for me. The teachers' union gave it their endorsement, so a red flag should go up right there. That aside, we will be asking many questions in the months ahead about their failed commitments in the area of education. For instance, although MPI will rue the day they listened to their minister on how to spend \$20 million in surplus, the fact is that a commitment was made and a commitment was broken. This Government has raised the hopes and expectations of Manitobans, and I look forward to hearing their plan to how they plan to fund the University of Winnipeg, Brandon University and St. Boniface College for infrastructure renewal.

There was also no discussion about how this Government plans to address the proposed tuition hikes at Red River College and the University of Manitoba. I understand Red River is looking at a proposal of almost 45 percent in tuition hikes over 4 years. What does this Government plan to do about it? I hope we will hear some answers as the debate unfolds.

The Throne Speech was also strangely silent on some of the Premier's previous education commitments like his Grade 3 guarantee and his Grade 3 diagnostic assessment. In fact, yesterday the Minister of Education (Mr. Caldwell) was asked about this very matter and to no one's surprise the minister had no answers. It is interesting. News stories have been printed and aired highlighting the absolute mess this Government's Grade 3 assessment test is in, yet if no one was to listen to the Minister, one would believe everything was moving along just fine. As he indicated yesterday, the word from the field is very positive on this matter. I would like to remind the minister of the reality of his government's Grade 3 assessment. I referred to a letter from the principal of Rosser School that

was sent to this Government. This letter emphasized the assessments that took an incredible amount of time, resulting in two and half weeks of lost curriculum time. Despite the positive words of the Minister of Education (Mr. Caldwell), who is trying to put a positive spin on the situation, the principal had this message for the minister, and I quote: "Please do not report to the public that this assessment went smoothly and cost nothing and provided teachers with valuable information. It was not a smooth process. It cost more money than can be replaced, because teaching time was lost."

The minister has also sent a bill by the principal to pay for the 40 hours of overtime her teacher put in to complete his Grade 3 assessment. I look forward to hearing if the minister will indeed be reimbursing the school for those costs.

Going back to the Throne Speech, it was also disappointing that there was no mention, none whatsoever, of the special needs review, no mention of computer literacy for Grade 8 students and no mention of their commitment to offer e-mail to all Grade 4 students. Just as in the area of health care, the nice words have stopped on those issues. Does that mean the commitment has stopped as well?

On behalf of the students, parents and educators in Manitoba, we will hold this government accountable.

As I have travelled throughout rural Manitoba, I have heard from producers about the difficulties they are in right now. I know candidates in the recent federal election heard it loud and clear as well. Although I realize this government suffers a severe shortage of rural members in both Cabinet and caucus, I hope that they are taking the initiative to venture past the Perimeter Highway and acquaint themselves with the problems facing our farmers and our agribusiness.

We did hear some very nice words about some very utopian concepts, but somehow I know they missed the mark. Using more ethanol sounds nice. Ecosystem planning sounds nice too, but ask the farmers in southwest Manitoba

what their No. 1 priority is, and I do not think you will hear words like those.

We have producers across this province just struggling to get by. Where, for instance, is the aid this Government promised for the victims of the 1999 flood? Where is the Government in relation to the Canadian Farm Income Program? Do they share the same concerns as their Saskatchewan counterparts who feel the deal should be re-examined?

I know this Government took great pride in declaring that they would usher in a new era of co-operation with the federal government on these issues, but the evidence would suggest they are not even returning the Premier's (Mr. Doer) phone calls. Time after time, Manitoba farmers are getting short-changed, and it points to a real weakness on behalf of this Government. It is time the First Minister takes a personal interest in the area of agriculture and gets involved in federal-provincial negotiations. It is clear his designate is not up to the job.

The same can be said about rural infrastructure development. I am all for expanding information technology to rural and remote areas. It is an area that is very near and dear to my heart, but you cannot drive a grain truck down the information highway. You cannot abandon rural infrastructure and expect our communities to survive. We need reassurances from this Government that with the plans in the works for a new national infrastructure program, Manitoba will be at the table.

On behalf of farmers and rural Manitobans, we will hold this Government accountable for their lack of support for rural Manitoba.

I would think that after MTX, after ManOil and after the 1980 disasters with Autopac, this Government would have learned not to meddle with the operations of our Crown corporations. I know from being a father sometimes it is hard to keep your young children's hands out of the cookie jar, but honestly, after 11 long years in opposition, even I did not think the NDP were capable of making the same mistakes again. I guess I was wrong. I guess I was wrong because there they were dipping into the Autopac reserve

to give a gift of bricks and mortars on behalf of the motorists of Manitoba. Well, they may have appeared to be Santa Claus to some, but they came across as the Grinch to the Manitobans who bought and paid for auto insurance and were told that they would be paying a \$20-million school tax without being asked or informed about it first. Fortunately, this Government reversed that wrong-headed decision and gave the \$20 million back to those who were entitled to it, the ratepayers of Manitoba.

* (15:10)

Because they seem to have forgotten, I feel compelled to remind the members across the floor that they were reduced to seven seats in the House in 1988, after wasting or losing \$170 million in three Crown corporations alone. Although I might enjoy seeing the same electoral result after the next election, Mr. Speaker, I think the price tag is too high for Manitobans to pay again.

On behalf of Manitoba motorists, we will hold this Government accountable when it comes to the management of MPI and indeed all Crown corporations and from one disaster to another.

If this Government's choice in mismanagement consultants was not frightening enough, one only needs to turn their heads to their legislative agenda starting with their attack on the workers of Manitoba. You know, Mr. Speaker, in the movie business, they say a sequel is never as good as the original, but it looks like the Premier (Mr. Doer) has a pretty good start on a horror sequel to Howard Pawley. One of this Government's first orders of business was to turn back the clock on labour legislation to take away the freedoms and democratic rights granted workers under the previous government. Today, once again, coercion reins in against the workers of Manitobans. They no longer enjoy the same democratic freedoms we enjoy to mark our ballots in private, but the saddest part, workers no longer have peace and security. They are no longer protected from picket-line violence.

On behalf of the workers of Manitoba, we will hold this Government accountable against

the tyranny of those who wish to destroy their democratic rights and freedoms and drive jobs and opportunity out of this province.

Mr. Speaker, many promises were made in Family Services that were either missed, ignored or forgotten in this week's Throne Speech. There was no mention to the transition to Aboriginal and Métis child and family services agencies, no word on whether the full National Child Benefit will flow to children, and nothing on their commitment to child daycare. Once again, the nice words have stopped. Has the commitment stopped as well?

We are also seeing an unprecedented expansion of Aboriginal gaming in Manitoba that will do nothing to deal with poverty and unemployment in the communities that need help because the intention is to locate those jobs somewhere else. Today, for the first time, we hear from the Premier (Mr. Doer) that the Headingley issue is dead because his Government is abiding by the results of the first vote that occurred in April. What is unfortunate is that, if the Government had every intention of abiding by the first result, why did they accept the Headingley proposal as a casino option in May? If the deal was dead in April, it makes no sense that the Province would accept the Headingley option in May.

Even more disturbing is the fact that for months and months this Government allowed the community of Headingley to pit neighbour against neighbour. If the Government was clear in its decision that it was going to respect the results of the first vote, why did the Premier (Mr. Doer) or his minister not pick up the phone and let Headingley and Swan Lake First Nation know? Why did they lead these people on for all these months? Why did they not pick up the phone?

Again it demonstrates this Premier's complete lack of leadership and highlights his Government's continued mismanagement of issues. Thankfully, due to the diligence of an effective opposition, the Government is now forced to respect the wishes of local residents in deciding where the proposed casinos will be. We can only hope that the Province is more open with the remaining four casino proponents and

affected communities. Their careless drive towards pushing this initiative through has already cost them the job of their Gaming minister, the NDP's first casualty but regrettably probably not their last. On behalf of the Aboriginal communities in Manitoba, we will hold this Government accountable to ensure real jobs and real opportunities reach the people who need it most.

Mr. Speaker, these are the reasons why I could sit on the sidelines no longer. I care too much about the future of our province, our community and our children. I had to get involved. That is why I sought the leadership of the Progressive Conservative Party of Manitoba, and that is why I asked the people of Kirkfield Park for their vote in a recent by-election.

I have to say that I have been overwhelmed by the support that I received from the people of Kirkfield Park and indeed from the people throughout the province. I also want to take this opportunity to publicly thank them for their show of confidence. At the same time, I want to note for the record, the NDP placed third in both Kirkfield Park and Tuxedo, and they ranked second in the last provincial election.

I do not believe those results reflect on the calibre of the individual candidates, because I consider them upstanding citizens. I do believe this is a positive sign for all those Manitobans who did not get what they thought they were getting in 1999. My advice to our First Minister (Mr. Doer) is to look to Bob Rae in Ontario. Look to the revolving door in the premier's office in British Columbia. Look to the rudderless ship floundering in Saskatchewan. There lies their destiny if they continue to chart the same narrow, ideological course that we saw dominate the last session of this Legislature.

Mr. Speaker, I have to say this has been an exciting week. It has been a whirlwind week really for both the new Member for Tuxedo (Mrs. Stefanson) and for myself. Both of us have much to learn about the traditions, the process and procedure in this House, and I know both of us embrace this challenge. I have said outside the House and I will say again here I will make a few mistakes along the way. That will not however stand in my way from making my voice

heard and speaking up on behalf of all Manitobans.

There may even be the odd occasion from time to time when we can look beyond our profound differences and support this Government when and if it does something right. One such example, Mr. Speaker, is the extension of maternity benefits to 52 weeks from its present level. This is an issue that all parties should be able to support, and I hope this Government comes back with others that we can unanimously agree on.

We want to see something better than the pandering to narrow interests that was the theme of the last session. I have mentioned Manitobans did not get what they voted for in 1999. They got a lot of promises, but they did not get any action. This Government had a public agenda, a very thin public agenda that they put forward in their platform and yet a whole other agenda, an entire other agenda seems to have taken over. The NDP's hidden agenda has a very different face from the slick sell job that we got more than a year ago.

* (15:20)

Their recent Speech from the Throne raises further questions about what is it that the NDP are not telling us. For example, during that summer session the NDP brought forward their anti-business, anti-democratic labour legislation which was nowhere in the last election platform, nowhere in the first Throne Speech and nowhere in their economic summit. They praised the concept of delinking the tax system from the federal system, but nowhere did they say it was because they wanted to keep federal tax savings for themselves, and they tried to steal MPI's surplus for Government operations without any input from the ratepayers who paid for that surplus.

This Government's first-year track record causes me concern over both what I read and what is noticeably missing from this latest Speech from the Throne. They have clearly pushed health care to the back of the bus to the point of nonexistence. Does this mean they are abandoning their ambitious plans for health care? Or does it mean when it comes to health

care they have no plan? They have pushed out of view all their first-year promises on education. Does it mean that none of the promises were achievable or does it mean when it comes to education they have no plan. They have gone silent on their major promises on family services. Does this mean they have given up on them? Or does it mean when it come to families in need they have no plan?

They have fallen strangely silent on the issue of raiding Crown corporation revenues and how they are going to made good on their \$20 million promise. Does this mean they have learned their lesson, or does it mean when it comes to making good on promises they have no plan? They do not address the question of flood compensation or income assistance for farmers. Does this mean they cannot handle the task, or does it mean when it comes to agriculture they have no plan?

They hinted very strongly about introducing green taxes during the pre-Budget consultations, yet nothing in the Throne Speech. Does this mean they are hiding another tax grab? Or does it mean when it comes to taxation they have no plan? They are talking about improving Manitoba's balanced budget law, something they said they would not touch during the last election. Does this mean they want to water it down and make it meaningless, or does it mean when it comes to provincial finances they have no plan?

Well, Mr. Speaker, I am not sure if the NDP have a plan, but if they do they are certainly hiding it. Their track record is proof enough of that. The harder the problem, I believe, is that the NDP have no vision for this province and that is a shame.

Our party has a very real vision for the province of Manitoba. Our vision builds on the achievements of those who created this, a great province, and the hopes and dreams of the next generation who want their futures in Manitoba. From the early days, Manitoba could have never survived as a province without neighbour helping neighbour. That has been our party's tradition from the very beginning.

People came to Manitoba to find hope, to find compassion, to find economic freedom and to find justice. We must build our policies on the same wave. Our vision for Manitoba is that of competitiveness and taxes, one where our children are not forced to move to Calgary or Toronto so they can keep more of what they earn. Our vision is for a Manitoba that leads the way through education and economic development, to be at the forefront of the digital economy so that our young people have an opportunity to stay close to home. Our vision is for a Manitoba where the politics of fear are kept away from the bedside so that we can attend to the honest health care needs of the sick and our aging population. Our vision is for a Manitoba where our communities are safe and more vibrant places for our children, our elderly and ourselves, so we can all take pride in our communities and our surroundings. I am saddened to say that, after 14 months and their second Throne Speech, this Government still has no vision, no plan, or a secret one. Either way, this does not bode well for the people of Manitoba. I have only been a part of this House for a short while, but it is the people of Manitoba I represent here today, and it is on their behalf that I will be proposing the following motion.

I propose, seconded by the Member from River East (Mrs. Mitchelson),

THAT the motion be amended by adding to it, after the word "Manitoba." the following words:

BUT this House regrets

(a) the Government's inability to fulfill the promises outlined in its Throne Speech of November 25, 1999, including the following failures: not ending hallway medicine; not addressing the province-wide shortage of health professionals; not strengthening the home care system; not making math and reading skill assessments available to parents at the beginning of the Grade 3 year; not creating positive alternatives for youth who may be at risk of committing crimes; not ensuring a viable future for the family farm in Manitoba; and, not forging a new strategy for economic development; and

(b) the Government's failure to address the challenges facing all Manitobans and their health care system; and

(c) the Government's failure to guarantee to Manitobans that it will not raid Crown corporation surpluses, as was attempted with Manitoba Public Insurance; and

(d) the Government's failure to release long-term strategies for economic growth which include meaningful tax reductions for families and business, thereby making Manitoba less able to compete in the national and global economy; and

(e) the Government's failure to provide any meaningful measures to maintain economic growth and stimulate job creation, thereby making Manitoba a less attractive place in which to live, work, invest and raise families; and

(f) the Government's failure to address Manitoba's participation in a national infrastructure program and how these projects will take shape around the province; and

(g) the Government's failure to set forth a plan with clearly defined timelines to address flood protection needs for the Red River Valley and beyond; and

(h) the Government's failure to address the issue of providing adequate and timely compensation to Manitobans affected by the flooding and excess soil moisture conditions in the spring of 1999 in southwestern Manitoba and the fall of 2000 in southeastern Manitoba; and

(i) the Government's failure to arrive at a national farm safety net program that adequately addressed the needs of the province's farmers; and

(j) the Government's failure to address the issues raised by its complete mismanagement of the expansion of gaming through the creation of five First Nations casinos; and

(k) the Government's failure to provide a vision and a plan for the future of this province.

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

* (15:30)

Mr. Speaker: Order. The amendment is in order. It has been moved by the honourable Leader of the Official Opposition (Mr. Murray), seconded by the honourable Member for River East (Mrs. Mitchelson), THAT the motion be amended by adding to it, after the word "Manitoba." the following words:

An Honourable Member: Dispense.

Mr. Speaker: Dispense?

An Honourable Member: No, let us hear it.

Mr. Speaker: Read it?

Motion presented.

Hon. Dave Chomiak (Minister of Health): Mr. Speaker, I would like to take the occasion of this Throne Speech debate to welcome to the Chamber both the newly elected Member for Tuxedo (Mrs. Stefanson) and the newly elected Member for Kirkfield Park (Mr. Murray), the Leader of the Opposition. I wish you well in the Chamber, and I hope that despite differences our discourses will be productive, and that, as I say to students when they visit the Legislature, through the fighting with words we will move forward and improve the situation in the province.

I would also like to welcome the pages and you yourself, Mr. Speaker, back to this session.

I had the occasion of debating with the newly elected Leader of the Opposition during the course of the election campaign. In fact, we had an annual date. It was on Friday afternoons when we would appear on CJOB when we do debates back and forth with respect to the campaigns. I had a lively discussion and discourse with the member, and I look forward to some future discourses. I, at the time, was not aware of the member's work background and training but I see that he is putting it to good use

and put it to good use during the course of his first debate in this Chamber.

Mr. Conrad Santos, Deputy Speaker, in the Chair

Let me return to some of the points of inaccuracy, unfortunately, and some of the facts that are not correct that were put on the record by the Leader of the Opposition and by many members of his caucus during the course of his speech. I was astounded that a political party that voted against the increased enrolment of nurses in Manitoba would have the audacity to criticize this Government for expanding nursing education. I found it astounding that a party that reduced in half the enrolments of nurses in the province of Manitoba down to 602 nurses 4 years ago would have the audacity to accuse us of not having a human resource plan. I cannot believe it. I find it extraordinary.

If the party opposite when they were in power four years ago had not cut the program in half and had only achieved the level of nurse training we have this year, do you know how many more nurses would be trained this year? Five hundred more nurses would be working today in Manitoba but for the ill-conceived policies of members opposite that cut nursing programs, tried to eliminate the LPN program and then had the audacity to speak out against our nursing program and to vote against it in the Budget. Mr. Deputy Speaker, I find that extraordinary. I hope the new Leader of the Opposition checks the record and perhaps talks to members opposite and perhaps they will be able to get their facts straight because they have got it completely wrong.

I find it extraordinary that the Leader of the Opposition would stand up today and criticize us for not having enough doctors in Manitoba. The party, the leader, the movement that cut the number of doctors enrolled in Manitoba eight years ago and drove out more doctors than any other government in the history of the province. Then they had the audacity to stand up and say to us today: What are you going to do about the doctor shortage, the doctor shortage that they created? I find it extraordinary and passing strange to quote.

I note at the back of the Chamber the former Member for Pembina, the former Minister of Health, who I have a good deal of respect for. While I disagreed with some of his initiatives, I had a lot of respect for his intellectual process and his consistency. He will know of some of the issues which I am discussing today, some of which have not changed and some of which that have changed.

Let me talk about the issue that members seem to have some difficulty dealing with. Two years ago there was no one in the hallways in Manitoba according to members opposite. I can remember day after day in the newspaper, patients pleading to the then-Premier, please come and see what is going on in the hallways. I went down, I visited. Were there 10 people in the hallway? No. Were there 20 people in the hallway? Were there 30 people in the hallway? Were there 40 people in the hallway? Were there 50 people? Yes, 50 people more in the hallway. Day after day, week after week, and members opposite said there is no one in the hallway. The only time they found people in the hallway was when we were elected. When we were elected, all of a sudden there were people in the hallway. The day the election took place, there were people in the hallway all of a sudden. I find that extraordinary.

* (15:40)

This Government has been recognized across the country as having the best job done in ERs across the country, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I do not know which political party they are anymore. I do not know if they are the Conservatives, the Alliance, the Reform party, Conservative-Alliance-Reform party.

I do not know what they are, but I do know one thing. If they look toward Ontario, and they look at the plan that has been put in place by Ontario to deal with their ER situations, they will note something. The plan adopted by the government of Ontario, the Mike Harris government of Ontario, is the same and follows and duplicates the plan that Manitoba effectively implemented last year that reduced the people in the hallway by 81 percent. In fact, we started putting the bed numbers and the hallway numbers up on the website. The critic for Health

doing a research found two days when there were more people in the hallway this year than last year, and she put out press releases saying it is a failure because 2 days out of 365 there were more people in the hallway. There were one or two more. We put it up on the Web site. I tell members opposite review that Web site regularly and you will see a decrease of 81 percent.

The members opposite talked about in their reply to the Throne Speech about not having expanded home care. I just got back from a conference in Toronto attended by every province in the country. They only invited one province, one provincial government to that conference, the Government of Manitoba. They wanted to use Manitoba's home care, palliative care program as an example for the entire country. They want to use Manitoba's program as a prototype.

Members opposite had the audacity to put in the reply from the Speech from the Throne that we have not expanded home care when we took our home care program and developed the best palliative care program in the country. If that is what they are taking shots at, I am not very worried about that Opposition party, nor that Opposition Leader.

Not only that, but we expanded a variety of supports on home care in the community that had never been done before. We expanded resources, we enriched programs, we provided advanced intravenous home visits. All of that we did in the first year, and the members opposite said: Where is your plan? I say to the members opposite: Read it. Read about it in the papers. Read about it in the national reports that recognize it. Read about what other governments are doing in this country to duplicate the success that we have had in Manitoba.

I am not saying that everything is perfect. There are problems. But I will say one thing. We recognize the problems and we deal with them on a daily basis. The fatal flaw that members opposite exhibited when they were in government was look no problem, see no problem, therefore there were no problems, therefore there were no solutions to the problems offered by members opposite. That is one of the reasons why we formed government a year ago.

We are not perfect. We will make mistakes, we will not get it all right, but we will try. We will try every day to put in place programs and measures to improve the quality of health care provided to Manitobans.

I return to nursing as a prime example. The last time as many nurses were being educated in Manitoba as there are today was around 1988, 1989 and 1990, sort of the ending of the NDP initiatives. Right after that, nursing education went down, down, down. The Opposition critic stands up and says: What are you going to do about nursing? I say to the member opposite you sat as a member of those benches. You were the legislative assistant to the Minister of Health. Why did you allow them to cut the programs? Why did you not put nurses back in training when we warned you three and four years ago? How do you have the gall to stand up in this Chamber and say we are not doing enough for nursing when we have doubled in one year the enrolment of your low period from 1996-97?

You know, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I just find it incredible that members opposite will get up and criticize us for sending patients to the United States for lifesaving cancer care. I find that extraordinary. I never talked about it politically but the fact that members opposite would use it as a critical point has forced me to talk about that issue. They stand up and say, oh, your health care system is a failure because you are sending people to the United States. I can advise you that when we came into office and saw what the waiting lists were like, we said that we would send people to the United States to save lives. Do you want to know something? It is interesting that two of the most popular programs we have instituted, that is, helping people get lifesaving care and the nursing diploma program, are both measures that members opposite speak against and voted against. I think that speaks volumes for the lack of vision on the part of members opposite and for their inability to get over their fixation or their inability to deal with health care for the lowly decade in which the neglect and the cuts occurred in the province of Manitoba.

I find it passing strange that they would stand up and criticize some temporary bed closures that occurred as a result of a shortage of

nurses when members opposite closed—how many beds did members opposite close? Did they close 100? No. Did they close 500? No. Did they close 1000? No. They closed 1400 acute care beds permanently in the province of Manitoba, and then members opposite have the audacity to stand up and say, gee, you are closing beds on a temporary basis because there are not enough nurses, because, by the way when we were in government we did not train the nurses. Extraordinary, 1400 acute care beds shut down permanently by members opposite.

What have we done? Well, we have opened beds. We have done things like open beds, expand programs, trained professionals. Now, I know that does not sound like a plan to members opposite, because they did not do any of that. They cut and cut and cut. So when you come in and you open beds, you expand programs, you train nurses and educate nurses, you train and educate doctors, to them that is not a program.

They say lack of vision. They say no vision. Look at the record. Look at the record for the past year, Mr. Deputy Speaker. There have been more changes and more positive done—I will admit it is not perfect—in the past year than occurred in the desolate decade of the Tory administration, where they did more to turn back health care than any other time in the history of this province.

Do you ever notice how there are some issues the members opposite do not want to talk about? When they were in government they did not want to talk about the hallway situation, they did not want to talk about the nurses, they did not want to talk about the doctors, they did not want to talk about the deterioration in health care. Now that they are Opposition they want to talk about those things. But do you know what they do not want to talk about? They do not want to talk about SmartHealth. No. They do not want to talk about frozen food. No. They do not want to talk about those things. Why do they not want to talk about those things?

Well, you know, Mr. Deputy Speaker, they do not want to talk about those things. They do not want to talk about the Auditor's report on frozen food. They do not want to talk about the millions and millions of dollars that were sunk

into that operation. They do not want to talk about that, but we will talk about it, and we will take it one step further. We will take that mess, and we will turn it around. We will make it as palatable and better than anything that could have been done, and we will make it palatable. We will live up to our election commitments. I will tell you something. At the end of this mandate there will not be any more frozen food bouncing from Toronto to Winnipeg and back and forth as was the plan, as was the plan under members opposite.

You know, Mr. Deputy Speaker, what I love about members opposite is that in every question they like to stand up and say apologize, apologize. They do not have any specifics, but they have this big thing about apologies. I actually think that is a layover from the Brian Mulroney era. Brian Mulroney was fixated on apologizing. He loved apologizing. He had to a lot, I must admit. He loved apologizing, but there was nothing plausible, nothing positive done. The thing I feel most apologetic about is I wish we would have formed government in 1995 and not given them the opportunity to deteriorate and cut the health care system as bad as they did from 1995 until 1999.

*(15:50)

You know, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I find it interesting that a group of individuals who were government for a decade cannot recognize the failure of their plan, and I have the strange sense that because they could not see the problems that occurred when they were government, they are unable to see the solutions that have been offered by members on this side of the House.

Again, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I do not think it is perfect. I do not think that we have all of the answers, but I tell you we have taken more action and more initiatives in one year than they did in a decade of neglect and a in decade of cutting that they undertook.

I still want to hear members opposite talk about the Sinclair report. I want to hear members opposite talk about the Sinclair report and about what happened, and I want to hear members offer us their suggestions about the Sinclair report, Mr. Deputy Speaker, the most seminal

report probably done in the province's health care history. I want to hear what members have to say about that. I want to see what members have to say about some of the comments in there. I want to hear members have to deal with some of those issues, because we have to deal with them collectively, because the effect and the recommendations are wide-ranging and have a dramatic impact upon the future of health care.

I want to hear what members opposite have to say about it. I have not heard a word about the Sinclair report from any member opposite, and I wonder why. I wonder why, Mr. Deputy Speaker, not a word. I look forward to some comments on that.

You know, I find it interesting that a group of individuals who managed health care so badly and who did as little as they did would then come out and have the audacity to suggest that we do not have a plan, when, in fact, they criticized every measure we undertook in the past year. When we said we would improve and train more nurses, they opposed it. When we said we would expand our home care initiatives, they opposed it. When we expanded palliative care, they opposed it. When we reduced the user fee in the North, they opposed it. When we promised and moved on dialysis programs, they opposed it. They voted against every single measure in the Budget and every single initiative they spoke against.

Now, today, they asked us about doctors. Remember the doctors whom they cut, they asked us to solve the problem. You know what, Mr. Deputy Speaker, we will solve it. We cannot do it one year, but we will try to undo in several years what it took a decade for members opposite to implement.

I also find it strange that members opposite would pop up all during last session and talk about emergency measures. Right? Emergency responses, and criticize Government on this side of the House for not doing enough. We did more and put more funding into emergency measures in one year than they did in 11 years of cutting—backward, regressive government. In one year, we put more resources in than they did in 11 years, and then they pop up and stand up, and

say: You are going to do more for emergency measures.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, for a decade they did nothing about ambulances in Winnipeg, for example. As a result of our agreement, there are six more ambulances on the streets in Winnipeg and thirty-two paramedics. Not only that, there is a program where nurses are not transporting patients from hospitals to other hospitals; they are using paramedics.

In rural Manitoba, we are going to have a call centre that locates all 911 calls through one centre and we will allocate it. We have put in place—*[interjection]* No, you did 911. We are going to tie in the ambulance and the fire, the whole kit and caboodle.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, we are also providing the resources to increase the number of ambulances available, if memory serves me correctly, by 40, and where did this come out of? This came out of a report that was commissioned by members opposite, one of three reports, at the very end of their government, that we are now moving on to implement. Let it not be said that there has not been activity. There has been more activity in that area than probably, as I said, certainly, any other time in the past 10 or 11 years.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, for the first time in a decade we put additional funding into personal care homes. Not a lot, not as much as I would like, but we put additional for supplies and services and for some staffing. In fact, long-term care facilities and voluntary agencies that did a lot of the work out there in the health care field not only did not receive increases, actually got net decreases over the past decade from members opposite.

We put more resources in this year. I find it passing strange that members opposite say: Geez, you are not doing enough, when in fact we have done more in one year than they have done in a decade; and then they say: And by the way, we want a lot more money in tax cuts back to our friends. They cannot have it both ways. We are trying to balance it, but they cannot stand up on one question and say: Give us all the money back in tax breaks, and then on the next question

stand up and say: Spend more here and spend more here and spend more here. You cannot have it both ways. The public knows. The public knows what their record was like. The public will judge them on their record, and I daresay the public is judging them on their record as an opposition which is inconsistent and totally contradictory.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, one year ago, December 4, the day before the session commenced, there were 12 people in the hallways. This year there were none. In 1998, when members opposite were in government there were 27, and they never acknowledged them. We acknowledged them. We put them up on the Web site. We said we would launch the biggest assault on that issue ever undertaken and we did. We have been recognized across the country as having done the best job. Is it perfect? I have said it over and over again. No, but the change has been recognized across the country. It has been duplicated by other jurisdictions, and we will not only build on that success, we will do more. There are additional resources and additional programs and initiatives that are being put in place to continue to deal with that situation.

I said, when we came into office, human resources was the biggest difficulty facing us. After a decade of cuts and a decade of disrespect towards people in the health care professions, it is going to take us a while to turn it around. You cannot cut your nursing program in half as they did, lay off a thousand nurses and then stand up in the Legislature and say where are the nurses? You cannot do it in one year. I mean I do not know how they have the audacity to stand up and criticize us for not doing enough about nursing when we have put in place more nurse education training than in any time in the past decade, and it was they who cut the programs, and the same applies to doctors, and the same applies to X-ray technicians, and the same applies to radiation therapists, and the same applies to virtually every other professional in the health care field.

You know, Mr. Deputy Speaker, members opposite stood up and criticized us for not matching or not dealing with radiation therapists. Well we settled with radiation therapists. They

are amongst the highest paid now in the country, and we are managing to retain it. We cannot turn it around because the program was changed when members opposite were in government and we are in a massive shortage, but we are doing what we can. We are doing every initiative possible to try to improve the situation, and I think, and I daresay, I suggest that Manitobans recognize that. They recognize that there are initiatives, that there are programs that are being put in place that have not been there before.

* (16:00)

There was a time, I remember, when Seven Oaks Hospital had a CAT scan and Concordia Hospital had a CAT scan and members opposite would not let them operate it. Can you believe that? They would not let them operate it. This summer when we found out the CAT scan at Victoria was breaking down and the CAT scan at Seven Oaks, we authorized the purchase of new CAT scans, following a purchase at Health Sciences Centre, Children's Hospital, Dauphin and Boundary Trails.

So that brings me to another point. It was something that came up during the federal-provincial issues and that was how the previous administration had allowed the infrastructure to deteriorate, how badly they had allowed the infrastructure in our province to deteriorate. It was hospital after hospital, institution after institution came to us and talked about the terrible state of the capital and equipment in our system. That is what happens in a decade, a decade of neglect, a decade of cutting, a decade of disregard to the system. Now members stand up and say, oh, no equipment; we want this, this, this, this and this, when, Mr. Deputy Speaker, for a decade, not only did they do nothing but they allowed it to deteriorate, and all of a sudden they stand up and say, boy, where is that new equipment? Well, I say we put in more resources this year for the upgrades of capital equipment and we will continue to do so.

I want to turn to capital. You know I love the former Tory government's approach to capital. In 1995 before the general election the largest capital program in the history of the province, and you know what? Right after the

election, no more capital program. Switch to 1999, coincidence? Was it a coincidence in 1999 that just before the provincial election all of a sudden there was a massive capital announcement? Was that a coincidence? You know we came into office and we said we will examine that capital program, and we looked at it project by project, and we did not go ahead with all the projects. The vast majority we did, but I found it passing strange that members opposite would accuse us of being political, of being political when in fact we put in place an administrative system and a system that did not take into account politics but need. I find it passing strange that our efforts to build Bethesda Home in Steinbach would be political, and I could go on and on and on, but we went by priorities and needs. In terms of capital, as I said, they allowed capital to deteriorate so badly that in fact it probably will take a decade to reinvigorate the capital process.

But, Mr. Deputy Speaker, we took steps this year, and we have put in place a capital process that is nonpolitical, that deals with issues, and if members opposite want to talk about that, I would be quite happy to put on the record some of the comments that I have heard about the capital development program by members opposite. The Member for Charleswood (Mrs. Driedger) who was assistant to the Health Minister I think might have been involved in those meetings. So she knows of what I speak in terms of how former administrations dealt with capital issues in a very, very political fashion. Then, to have the audacity to write to us and say, oh, you are political because a couple of projects were cancelled that happen to be in particular ridings, I thought was an absolute insult, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I think below what should actually happen from members. I hope that members opposite will reconsider that position because I frankly thought it was an insult to do that. You know, I thought it was an insult for them to do that. *[interjection]*

You know, I could go down that road because the Member for Charleswood (Mrs. Driedger) talks about political and political boundaries, which she knows very, very well when it comes to capital, but we try to do it in the most efficient administrative fashion, the fashion that looked at need. While we cannot

meet all the capital needs and requirements for the people of Manitoba because there has been such a deficit for the past few years, we did try to balance it off and try to prioritize based on a list of priorities.

I want to turn briefly to the recent developments in terms of the federal-provincial front vis-à-vis the agreement with the federal government.

As I indicated, Mr. Deputy Speaker, clearly we did not achieve the financial targets that we had hoped to achieve. The funding arrangements are back to 1994-95 levels without an escalator. I think we could have and should have done a lot better, but in a compromise. In a national system, you have to accept compromise, and we were forced to do that. While we welcome some of the funding that is coming in terms of a more planned basis and gives us some basis to understand on a planned sense what money is coming forward, it is not nearly enough to fill the gap that is required and necessary.

There are three pools of money that are available: one an IT money that is actually not available for specific projects. It is part of a national program that is being set up. The second pool is some primary-care pilot money that is a small amount available for several years on a pilot basis. The third pool of money is some capital money, which is additional new money, which is available this year and next year, but which goes into the base of the total money that is coming to us. Therefore, it suggests that more money is coming to us than in actual fact is coming to us, but we will try to manage and try to deal with the priorities and try to deal with the necessities of Manitobans as best that we can.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, there are several issues I want to touch on. Members opposite talked yesterday about the issues of ER. It is interesting that I do not know if members opposite know, but there is a 1994 report on ER that suggests a central bed registry for the city of Winnipeg. We are going to try to move forward. We are going to move forward on that, but it is interesting it was targeted, as I said yesterday in Question Period, I think as early as '92, '93, '94, '95, right through the '90s. The members opposite were going to do it. Again it comes up as an issue in

terms of ER problems and ER difficulties and would be a useful tool that we have to put in place to assist in the ER issue. To that end, when problems occur, we move as quickly as possible. We moved to put in place as many resources as possible to try to deal with the issue. We are awaiting the recommendations of the Chief Medical Examiner with respect to whether or not an inquest will be held.

Having said that, I still challenge members opposite. I want to hear one member opposite stand up and reflect upon the recommendations of the Sinclair commission. I want to hear one member opposite talk about the recommendations that were made in that report. I would welcome comments from members opposite on those recommendations because I want to see where members opposite stand with respect to those particular recommendations.

In 1994, the Tory government promised a prostate centre, a prostate centre in the Throne Speech. I guess that was their idea of vision. That was their vision in 1994. There is money in this year's Budget and we are building a prostate centre this year in 2000. I heard the Leader of the Opposition say there is no vision on this side. I guess the vision from 1994 that we are fulfilling now does not count. I guess it does not count.

The Member for Charleswood (Mrs. Driedger) I see has found that there is another part of the city. It is called Transcona. It is a part of the city of Winnipeg. One of the members asked where that is. I think the member for Charleswood had a map of how to get there. You can get that map from her. She will show you how to drive over to Transcona. In Transcona, we are hoping to put in place a primary health access centre that will provide a wide range of resources to the community. We hope to be able to do that. We have to go through a series of processes, but it certainly is in the plan.

In terms of some of the future plans, we are going to be actively pursuing a number of primary health care initiatives. It was mentioned in the Throne Speech, and I think it bears repeating, that the whole issue of mental health reform, and again the former member for Pembina, the former Health Minister, I think did

an excellent job of launching an undertaking. We want to move that forward. I know that in this House that has always been a non-partisan, non-political issue. I know that we will have the support of everyone, members of this House, with respect to moving forward on that initiative. We hope to do that within the next year, and we look forward to the advice of all members of this Chamber in terms of, as I put it, sort of finishing or dealing with the issue of health reform that started in the '90s and I think in some cases stalled in some areas in the mid-'90s. I think we have got to get it back on the road for the benefit of all Manitobans.

* (16:10)

Primary health care reform, you will see initiatives. Mental health reform, you will see initiatives. We will continue our initiatives in palliative care reform. We will continue our initiatives with respect to dealing with the emergency situation. We will attempt to put additional resources where we can. We will be announcing a physician recruitment retention plan that will be significant. It will have an emphasis on retention of Manitoba physicians here.

An Honourable Member: Big bucks.

Mr. Chomiak: The Member for Charleswood says "big bucks." I think we owe it to Manitobans to provide the medical services that are necessary, and we will do that.

We will continue our initiatives with respect to nurses. I anticipate that we will be hearing back recommendations of our nursing task force that was launched. We will be looking forward to the recommendations of the Paul Thomas group that was put in place to help monitor and assist us in achieving the recommendations of the Sinclair commission. We will continue to listen to Manitobans. We will continue to try to improve the situation in health care. We will continue to work every single day to try to improve the health care of Manitobans.

I hope we will be joined by all members of the House, including members on the opposite side of the House in our initiatives, and that they will not be so single minded, as they are on

occasion, to oppose some of the very initiatives that they failed to do in their government, to recognize that these are the initiatives that we must undertake in Manitoba, Mr. Deputy Speaker, for the benefit of all Manitobans. Thank you very much.

Mrs. Bonnie Mitchelson (River East): I am pleased to have the opportunity today to stand in my place and put a few words on the record in response to this Government's second Throne Speech, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

I would first and foremost like to take a moment to recognize and to welcome our new leader, Stuart Murray, who is the newly elected MLA for Kirkfield Park, and Heather Stefanson, the newly elected MLA for Tuxedo. I welcome them to this Chamber and hope that they enjoy the opportunity to understand what the political process is all about in this House.

Mr. Speaker in the Chair

I have to say, having worked alongside both of them during the two provincial by-elections that were just held, I know that they are both very capable, will represent their constituents and indeed all Manitobans very well. I know they are very committed to seeing Manitoba grow and Manitoba prosper. I also know that they will make significant contributions to our team, our team which is again 24 strong, and I know in the months and the years to come we will see them make the kinds of contributions that I know their constituents would like to see. So, Mr. Speaker, I want to welcome them.

I would also like to welcome some other new faces around this building and in this Chamber, the six new interns who are part of this Legislative Assembly and also the new group of pages who have just been appointed. I know that these young people will have the opportunity to grow and to learn and to serve Manitobans in their capacity as interns or pages, and I hope they enjoy their time here. I know that all members of this Legislative Assembly do appreciate the support and the contributions and the efforts that they make on a day-to-day basis to provide support to us.

Before I get into comments on the Throne Speech and support of the amendment that we have proposed, I would also like to talk a bit about River East constituency and how proud I am to serve that part of our city and our province. The people in River East constituency have elected me now since 1986 to serve them, and I want to thank them, as I do every year, for their faith and their belief in me to represent the issues that they bring forward and to represent their point of view when it comes to speaking and making decisions in this Legislature.

I want to indicate that I just earlier today had the opportunity, along with a couple of colleagues from the opposite side of the House, to attend the Christmas tea at the Good Neighbours retirement centre that encompasses several different communities and constituencies out in the northeast part of the city of Winnipeg. *[interjection]* Well, there may be a few from Transcona, too, who participate in the activities at the Good Neighbours retirement centre. They are growing to some 900 strong in their membership. They are extremely involved in a volunteer capacity and certainly in a way that strengthens our community.

They are very physically, actively involved in all kinds of different activities in our community. I just want to indicate that I am very proud of the organization and the contribution that they make to the life of our community.

I also do want to indicate that I have, especially in between sessions, had opportunities to meet with many within our community who express their point of view and their concerns about the direction that this Government is taking; and I will spend some time throughout my comments to indicate what my constituents are telling me and what Manitobans throughout our Manitoba community are indicating about the direction that this Government is taking and how there is extreme concern.

I think it was highlighted by the fact that both of the by-elections, the one in Kirkfield Park and the one in Tuxedo, sent a very strong message that they supported our candidates and our party's policies, and they returned significant

majorities to both of the candidates from the Progressive Conservative Party.

We did see that the New Democratic Party, who traditionally until the last election in 1999 came third in both of those constituencies, in 1999 that changed and they came second in both of those constituencies. But they are back down to third place. I think that just indicates that Manitobans are coming to understand that they were fooled into believing that Today's NDP was something different from the NDP of the past, and, rightly so, a message was sent to this Government by the residents of Kirkfield Park and the residents of Tuxedo that they are not terribly pleased with the direction that this Government is taking.

* (16:20)

Mr. Speaker, it is interesting to note, and we have just had the opportunity to listen to the Minister of Health (Mr. Chomiak) rant and rave for the last 40 minutes here in this House like he was still in opposition. You would think that he would have been able to stand up and take some credit and some pride in some of the things that he may have accomplished or that he may think that he has accomplished over the last 14 months, but instead of that he chose to act like he was still in opposition and we were still in government. He spent most of his time being critical of the decisions that we made, but I did not hear in any of his comments any vision or any plan for where he was going to take health care in the province of Manitoba over the next period and the rest of this mandate. We see that he has no ability to stand in this House and take credit for accomplishing anything that his party promised during the last election campaign.

There was one issue that this New Democratic Party ran on during the last election campaign and that was fixing health care and that was saving health care. They had a very simplistic approach. I think if we look back and we count the number of times health care was mentioned and the number of times they promised to fix health care during the last election campaign, you would find that they mentioned health care absolutely every day of the election campaign. You know, the now-Premier (Mr. Doer) stood day after day during

the 1999 election and said: Just elect us, and we will fix it. Everything will be well and good and Manitobans will receive the health care that they deserve if you elect us as the Government. Well, we have seen how they have failed in absolutely every one of their health care promises and commitments that they made during the election campaign, and the biggest one, of course, was the commitment and the promise to end hallway medicine within six months after being elected.

They not only said that during the election campaign, but after they formed Government, the Health Minister indicated publicly that that was their commitment and that was what they were going to do. It would happen. Well, Mr. Speaker, six months came and went, 12 months came and went, and now we are 14 months into their mandate, and we have not seen hallway medicine disappear in the province of Manitoba, but they have changed their story now. They tell us now and I just heard the Minister of Health not more than 10 or 15 minutes ago say and admit right here in this House on the record, well, it cannot be done in one year, but we will do it.

During the election campaign, they did not say it was the big mess that we had put in place that was going to—I mean they could fix it. As a matter of fact, during the election campaign, the Minister of Health now said that 85 percent of what was happening in health care was right, that 85 percent of our health care system was working well under our government, and now we hear him stand up day after day in this House and indicate that the health care system was in a shambles.

Mr. Speaker, he has broken his promises, and he needs to be held accountable by Manitobans for the lack of a vision and the lack of a plan.

Hallway medicine, we know, has not ended. He promised to hire 100 full-time nurses immediately after they were elected. Well, we have seen the nursing shortage grow from 600 to 1100 under his watch. He talked about, well, just elect us, and we will convert part-time nurses into full-time nurses immediately. Well, that has not happened. He has failed to convert those positions to full time. He said and promised to

hire more doctors and specialists across Manitoba. Well, that has not happened, and we see clinics now closing down because there are not enough physicians. But it was simple when they were in Opposition. They would fix it immediately. They immediately promised to open 100 new beds. Where are those 100 beds today? They are nonexistent. I do not know what "immediately" means to the Minister of Health, but I think it meant at the time something less than 14 months.

They promised to slash wait lists. They promised to cut prostate cancer waiting lists in half within the first year, and they failed to do that. They promised to put Grafton, North Dakota, out of business, and we saw the Premier standing on the highway during the election campaign with a big sign saying Grafton will be closed for business. Well, we know that that has not been achieved.

One of the biggest issues that they ran and won the election campaign on was the whole issue of frozen food, and they talked about getting rid of frozen food in Deer Lodge Centre and ensuring that it would not be expanded to other facilities within the city of Winnipeg. We saw a complete turnaround after they were elected, and we still have rethermalized frozen food in the facilities that they said that they were going to remove it from.

Another health care promise that they made and have failed to live up to is allowing RHA board members to be elected. We do not hear of them even talking about it any more. They failed to establish a prostate cancer screening program in the first year of their mandate. So every election commitment or promise they made they have failed to accomplish in the area of health. Manitobans will and have already sent a message to this Government through the by-elections.

I would venture to guess, because of the lack of plan or lack of vision, that we are not going to see the kinds of improvements that they have talked about. We are going to find that at the end of their four-year mandate the health care system is going to be in the same situation or worse than it is today.

An Honourable Member: Which is better than it was under you.

Mrs. Mitchelson: Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Labour (Ms. Barrett) from her seat indicates that the system is better than it was under us. I would like to ask the question: Is a nursing shortage of 1100 today, an increase from 700 when we left government, a better health care system than it was under us? I would like to ask her whether the waiting lists that are growing today for diagnostic tests and surgeries are better than the situation was under us. I think those are questions that she does not have to answer to me but those are questions she is going to have to answer for Manitobans, for Manitobans who were fooled into believing that this Government had a plan and a vision and were going to fix health care so that they would never have to worry again about having the kind of care or treatment that they needed or deserved. The facts are clear, the facts are out there for Manitobans to see, and Manitobans know that this Government talked the talk while they were in opposition, talked the talk through the election campaign but have not been able to walk the walk since they have been in government.

We heard the Minister of Health (Mr. Chomiak) talk about the Sinclair report and indicated that he had not heard anyone on this side of the House talk about the recommendations from the Sinclair report. I want to indicate that it was leadership under our government that called for the public process to be undertaken to look at the issues surrounding the baby deaths and that was our decision. The member from Rossmere says that we had no choice. Mr. Speaker, we did have choices to make and we decided that we wanted full and factual information in order to improve the system and ensure that that kind of thing never happened again. That was a report that was commissioned under us, and it was a report that would have been acted on by us.

* (16:30)

I am glad to see that the Government is taking some action, but they certainly are not taking any action on dealing with the issue that was raised by my colleague the Member for Charleswood (Mrs. Driedger) just yesterday in

Question Period where a man—the first death in the emergency department since 1983 happened under this Minister of Health's watch. He is fudging around the issue of trying to get to the bottom of what the problems were in the emergency department at the Health Sciences Centre when that happened last October.

We took leadership when there was an issue that needed to be dealt with and we felt that there were some problems within the system that needed to be resolved. We took that action. We called for a public process. We now have the results of that in order to try to ensure that that never happens again.

But what is this Minister of Health doing and this Government about the death that occurred back in October where a man was found dead after sitting in the emergency department for four or five hours? It tells me that there is something wrong within the system. I would like to see this Premier (Mr. Doer) and this Minister of Health (Mr. Chomiak) show some leadership and have a public inquiry, so that the public has some input into what they see are the problems. There should be nothing for this Government or this minister to be afraid of.

It is important that the nurses who work in that facility have an opportunity to tell their story. It is important for the families who have patients that need the services of the emergency department at the Health Sciences Centre to have some input into the circumstances that are presented when they walk in those doors. It is important for all of that information to come forward and important for us to know what is wrong within the system in order to fix it. Mr. Speaker, it just goes to show that there is absolutely no plan. This Government has not been able to fix the issues in health care like they promised they would do, and when it comes to a situation of a patient dying in an emergency room they are not prepared to take the action to get to the bottom of what the problem is in order to try to fix it.

The Minister of Health and the Premier have insinuated that the baby deaths at Children's Hospital—I mean the Minister of Health seems to be saying in many of his comments and laying the blame at the feet of the Government that was

in power at the time. We are not saying to the Minister of Health that it is your fault, but we are saying that it is your responsibility as the Minister of Health to find out what went wrong, to learn from that experience, and to move forward so that our system can be fixed putting the proper processes in place to ensure that it does not happen again.

So, Mr. Speaker, I guess I would hope that with the Sinclair report the Minister of Health would take the high road. Take the high road, look at the recommendations and say we have learned from a bad circumstance and a bad situation. We will act on the recommendations, and we will try to ensure that this never happens again. I would like him to take the high road when it comes to looking at the death that occurred in the emergency room last October under his watch, find out what went wrong, learn from that experience and try to fix the system so it will never happen again.

I would like to also speak a bit about this Throne Speech and the interesting opening of the Throne Speech that talked about this being a Throne Speech of hope for Manitobans, hope for our young people and an education agenda. I think the words were great. I listened very intently, and it all sounded wonderful and good, but certainly underneath those words was a lot missing. We go back only to the election campaign and the commitments that were made again by the New Democratic Party during that election campaign that talked about, for instance, the Grade 3 guarantee, and the now-Premier (Mr. Doer) stood up and said: I will guarantee that every student in Grade 3 will be able to read and write by the end of Grade 3. That is a lofty goal.

It was interesting to find that as soon as the election was over he backpedalled on that commitment and it was: Well, you know, that was not really quite what we said. We saw him talk about the standards tests for Grade 3 and say that they were not the right way to go, that they were going to cancel the standards tests, but they were going to put an assessment in place at the beginning of Grade 3 so they could put a plan of action into place for each individual student that might not be up to speed at the beginning of Grade 3.

Mr. Speaker, we have seen the mess that this Minister of Education (Mr. Caldwell) has made of that Grade 3 assessment. I have just had the opportunity to meet with the board and administration of River East School Division a couple of weeks ago. They have indicated that there is no standard across the board, there is no true measurement of assessment that is consistent across the province, that Grade 3 teachers have not been prepared by the Department of Education to undertake the assessments, that the teachers in the Francophone school systems were given the opportunity for training and were paid to learn how to administer the Grade 3 assessment, but there was nothing available for the teachers in River East School Division or many other school divisions throughout the province. There was no consistency. There was no standard.

With the Grade 3 standards tests that we put in place, the province paid for that process to be undertaken. School divisions now are having to take money out of their budgets, money for books and money for other programming in order to deliver the Grade 3 assessment, and they are having to take precious time away from their students at the beginning of the year in order to deliver that Grade 3 assessment.

We have a system that is in shambles. We have a minister that did not put any thought into what was to be undertaken within the school system. We have many teachers and many parents that are extremely upset, and we have many students that are losers as a result of this bad policy that has been put in place by this Government.

* (16:40)

Mr. Speaker, we just have to look at the way this Government has dealt with the economy and the tax structure and the tax situation in our province. We saw last year in the Budget and with decisions that were made by this government that they delinked the tax system from the federal government a year earlier, and we saw families within the province of Manitoba pay more taxes the day after the Budget than they did the day before as a result of this Government's financial policies.

I listened to the Minister of Health (Mr. Chomiak) just a little bit earlier, and he was talking about us supporting tax cuts to our friends at the expense of programming. He was chuckling sort of, saying: Well, it is your friends that you are trying to support with your tax policies. I would imagine there are many families out there that have a total family income of \$40,000 or \$60,000 that would be somewhat disgusted to hear the Minister of Health chuckling and calling them our fat-cat friends, Mr. Speaker.

Well, I guess, quite frankly, there are many families out there within our communities that are hardworking individuals that may have a combined family income of \$40,000 or \$60,000. We may have two-parent families that are struggling to make ends meet at \$60,000. We may have one parent that chooses to stay at home and raise their children, so they make do on one income or one salary. I would not call them the elite within our community. I would call them hardworking families and individuals that deserve to have as much money as possible left in their pockets at the end of the day to choose how they want to spend those dollars and not have Government tell them what is best for them and how they can best spend their money because this Government and this party does not have a great track record when it comes to spending taxpayers' dollars wisely.

We saw the NDP of the past, which I fear to say is the NDP that we see across in the Government benches today, that believes that they know best what is best for families and how families should spend their money rather than having families make those choices and those decisions on their own. You just have to look to the kinds of people that are giving advice to this Government. They had not even taken their seats on the Government side of the House or been sworn in when we saw shades of the past lurking around the hallways in the Legislature, people like Eugene Kostyra and Vic Schroeder, two Finance ministers under Howard Pawley, that ratcheted up the debt and just drove our province down. They are the people that are sitting around the Cabinet table in the background giving advice to this Government. It is rather scary to think that we are going back to the days of the past, where they have nothing new and creative.

They are not looking forward to the future for Manitobans, but they are looking to the past and trying to reinvent the '80s rather than looking at what is most appropriate for the new century.

Mr. Speaker, when I look to the Department of Family Services, I wonder why there was no mention of the whole issue of Métis and Aboriginal child and family services agencies and the Memorandums of Understanding that have been signed by this minister, and what is going to happen to our Child and Family Services system as a result. I am not sure that any of the details have been worked out or there is information that would indicate that we are going to have people that have worked in the system and contributed in a significant way to the lives of families and children that have needed support and protection, whether they will still be working within the system and contributing. I question whether there has been a lot of thought. I would have thought that maybe there would have been some mention in the Throne Speech about how that whole process was going to work and what guarantees there might be by this Government that children will be protected when they need that protection. So I will be waiting and wanting to know what plans or what vision the Minister of Family Services (Mr. Sale) might have in that area.

We have not seen across the board any cohesive plan that would or could assure Manitobans that this Government has any long-term vision for where Manitoba should be going.

I watched intently as members opposite listened to our new leader and I sensed very much an attitude of arrogance. I sensed, as our new leader was talking about some of the real issues that Manitoba would have to face over the next short period of time and into the longer term, that there were many chuckles from the Premier (Mr. Doer) and the Minister of Health (Mr. Chomiak). I was a little disappointed that the leader of our province, the Premier and the Minister of Health, who has the biggest budgetary expenditure in the province of Manitoba, would not take and listen very seriously to the issues that were being raised. I guess it just shows to me and to Manitobans that there is a sense of arrogance that is setting in on the Government side of the House, and that is a

dangerous thing to happen in such a very short period of time since they have been elected. I think they have forgotten.

I know that there has been some criticism out in the community that the Minister of Conservation (Mr. Lathlin) has not necessarily had an open mind and an open ear to many Manitobans. He has been very indecisive in any action that could be taken within his department. He has cancelled public consultations. He has refused to meet with Manitobans around some serious issues that involve his department. I think that that again just shows the attitude of arrogance that seems to permeate the Government benches of this House. It is not a good sign for Manitobans. It is not a good sign at all. Very much unlike the fresh approach I think that we will be undertaking as our new leader moves forward and puts in place a public consultation process that will listen to Manitobans.

We have committed to a process called Connect Manitoba that will, over the next short period of time, be travelling throughout the province listening, holding round table discussions on many different issues that Manitobans would like us to hear, and we will be developing our policy and our platform for the next election campaign as a result of listening to Manitobans.

* (16:50)

We certainly saw that this Government did not listen to Manitobans at all, did not consult with Manitobans at all when it came to the Aboriginal casino issue. It was not anything that they highlighted during the election campaign, but it was certainly something that they moved on very quickly without any consideration for the wishes or the desires of hearing what Manitobans had to say. As a result, we have a community of Headingley and First Nation of Swan Lake that have been mistreated by this government. *[interjection]*

Well, I do want to indicate that certainly I think this Government will have to answer to the community of Swan Lake and to the community of Headingley for the mismanagement of the whole Aboriginal casino issue. It was something

that need not have occurred had they undertaken the proper process and the proper consultation with Manitobans. So we will be watching very carefully to see whether they change their attitude or whether they continue in the arrogant fashion that they have so far showed to Manitobans. I just want to indicate that I, along with my caucus colleagues, cannot support a Throne Speech that was devoid of any plan or any vision for the future of Manitobans.

Mr. Conrad Santos, Deputy Speaker, in the Chair

Mr. Doug Martindale (Burrows): I would like to begin by welcoming the new pages. I hope that you enjoy your time here and that you feel appreciated by all members, because we do appreciate your services.

I would like to welcome the new MLA for Kirkfield Park (Mr. Murray), the Leader of the Official Opposition. I have been trying to think of what we might have in common, and I actually thought of something and that is that I was elected to—actually I was acclaimed as chair of my caucus. I became chair of caucus without one vote, and the new leader of his party was acclaimed to his position without one person voting for him. So we actually have that in common. Maybe in future I will find something else that we have in common, but for now the only thing that I can think of is that we are both acclaimed to our position, although I have heard the word "coronation" used to describe how the new leader of the Conservative Party acquired his title. In a more generous spirit I welcome him here, and I hope he enjoys his stay in the Manitoba Legislature and gets used to all our various traditions here and makes the best out of every situation.

I would also like to welcome the new MLA for Tuxedo (Mrs. Stefanson) and look forward to hearing her initial speech. Usually we listen to initial speeches without any comment or heckling. It is always wise to ignore the comments that you hear, especially in your first speech, because if you respond to them, they get printed in Hansard, so a little bit of advice for a new member. We hope the new Member for Tuxedo enjoys her stay here as well.

I am happy to support the Speech from the Throne by our Government, our second. I have not seen the amendment. I am sure it will be printed on the Order Paper tomorrow, and I will get a chance to read it, but I doubt very much that I will be supporting the amendment. My remarks will be directed towards the Throne Speech, not the amendment, which I have not read yet. Well, I am addressing the amendment but not the content of the amendment. It is a little hard to address something I have not in front of me and I have not seen.

I know that the constituents in Burrows are pleased with many initiatives of our NDP government. The first one I would like to talk about is a very good program called Neighbourhoods Alive, which illustrates that our Government is committed to urban renewal and that this is a priority for us. We intend to invest in the inner city in the case of Neighbourhoods Alive with support for recreation programs, opportunities for housing, improvements in community safety, unlike the previous government, who was known for their lack of commitment to the inner city and in fact contributed considerably to urban sprawl.

In the north end we have three neighbourhoods identified for money from Neighbourhoods Alive, which is not targeted towards schools. We have other programs that are targeted towards schools. The neighbourhoods were chosen on the basis of socioeconomic need, and of course the high-needs neighbourhoods were identified first. It is always good and many times preferable to have a universal program. If the Government had a lot of money of course you could have a universal program that applied to every neighbourhood in the city, but given limited resources it only makes sense to target the money that is available.

Another initiative that will directly affect and benefit, I hope, sometime in the future my constituents in Burrows is the \$1 million that we have committed to either renovating or building a new YM-YWCA facility, probably not owned by the Y but by groups in the community, but nonetheless we have a million dollars on the table. We are hoping the City of Winnipeg and the federal government will also commit money

for a new facility to replace or renovate the facility that was closed in 1995. I remember asking former Premier Filmon if his government would commit to reopening the north Y. Of course, his answer in Question Period sounded very good, but ultimately there was no money from the previous government, unlike our commitment of a million dollars.

We are committed to strengthening the democratic process through election and finance reform by banning union and corporate donations to political parties and limiting amounts spent during elections by partisan groups. This is quite a contrast to the previous government who were involved in a vote-splitting scandal about which Justice Monnin reported that he had never in his life seen so many liars and considered the scheme an infringement on democratic rights. He also said, and I quote from the Monnin inquiry report: "Jobs have been lost and the reputations of capable people have been tarnished or shattered as a result of their attempt to hide their involvement in this dumb plot. One lie led to another with tragic results," Judge Monnin.

I think we have gone in quite the opposite direction by strengthening The Elections Finances Act. I believe it will be proclaimed January 1, 2001, perhaps. I do not know. I think it is going to be proclaimed sometime in the next year, because the bill has already been passed. In fact, I think it was passed with no opposition from the Official Opposition.

I am also very proud of this Government's appointments, not only to Crown corporations but our Premier's appointments to Cabinet where a third of all the Cabinet are women which I understand is a record in Manitoba. I think our women in Cabinet are all doing an excellent job. We also have women appointed not just to minor boards but to some very important boards, the Manitoba Liquor Commission and the Manitoba Public Insurance Corporation. They are also doing a fine job.

Moving on now to our record in Health. Our Minister of Health (Mr. Chomiak) announced some time ago a five-point plan to increase the number of hospital beds, to improve admission and discharge policies, to strengthen prevention

programs, to increase community-based services and expand provincial home care, unlike the previous government who—*[interjection]* I am. Unlike the previous government under whom health care deteriorated who broke their promise to add beds in 1995 and who announced before the election in 1995 a health capital program which after the election of 1995 was frozen and created a shortage of acute care beds and increased the number of long-term care patients in hospitals.

Of course, this was revived before the 1999 election, the funding was approved and those capital projects did start to go ahead. Now they are actually opening after the '99 election. I think that was one of the major mistakes of the previous government was cancelling that capital program for long-term care beds and then trying to restart it but not in time to save their bacon for the '99 election. They tried to privatize home care but backed down after community opposition and also learning that the public system was indeed more efficient. They could have found that out from studying the record of private home care firms in the United States.

* (17:00)

We have also implemented a plan to train and hire more nurses featuring a two-year diploma program, a nurses retention fund, an advisory council, recruitment strategies, with the result that enrolment in all nursing programs is up 40 percent over last year, unlike the previous regime who fired more than a thousand nurses and opposed our solutions to rehire and retrain. They also spent \$4 million on the Connie Curran report. Remember Connie Curran. I think we remember her. We remember how much her contract cost. We remember that it was an American consultant who basically gave the government advice on how to close hospital beds and lay off nurses and restructure the health care system which was a disaster.

We ended the expansion of frozen food and brought back the contract for a \$1.5-million savings and created the shared food and services group, unlike the previous government who created the frozen food fiasco and opposed the plan to eliminate it and built personal care homes without kitchens. We received a report,

and we are moving forward on the made-in-Manitoba solution with locally produced food.

We have reduced the number of patients waiting for diagnostic tests and decreased overall waiting time. New CT scanners are being purchased for hospitals. We have reduced waiting lists for cancer patients by adding staff and allocating funds, including \$2 million short-term hardship for urgent treatment out of province. We have introduced a comprehensive heart program with a \$20-million commitment. We have streamlined costs in health care by merging Winnipeg health authorities, thereby saving \$800,000, and we have expanded the Pharmacare program, unlike the previous government, who—[interjection] Well, there was a children's cardiac unit at the Health Sciences Centre which was dangerous and dangerously deteriorated under the previous government, and we know that from the Sinclair report, which is very interesting and very disturbing reading. I am reading a chapter about a child of somebody that I know whose child died, and then I am going to give the report to one of my constituents who is very interested in reading it.

The Conservative government's regional health authority initiative added a whole new level of bureaucracy but did not improve patient care, and there was a \$20-million reduction in Pharmacare in 1995, resulting in many Manitobans being ineligible for Pharmacare reductions. We eliminated SmartHealth. I wish I had the figures on how many millions of dollars the previous government invested in SmartHealth. My colleague from Dauphin thinks maybe it was \$33 million, and it was a lot of money that went down the drain.

I know that the previous government is critical of our initiatives in health care which they are reminding me of from their seats. Also in Question Period we have been hearing about their concerns about health care, but they should be aware that a recent poll on health care shows that 76 percent of Manitobans are satisfied with the health care system and rate health care good or excellent, 76 percent of Manitobans, and 58 percent say that health care is the same or getting better. In July 1999 the *Winnipeg Free Press* reported that 62 percent of Manitobans thought

that health care was getting worse in Manitoba, and now only half as many people think so.

I would like to move on now to talk about our record and the Opposition's record on children and youth. We have committed \$13 million to our Healthy Child Initiative for parent-child centres, for pre-natal and early childhood nutrition, for nurses in schools, for teen pregnancy reduction and fetal alcohol syndrome prevention. We have allocated in our last budget \$9 million more for daycare. By contrast, we know what has happened to children under the previous government. During the Tory tenure, Winnipeg became the child poverty capitol of Canada. They were No. 1 or had the worst record several years in a row, and there were several years when we were No. 3 in Canada, but still a disgraceful record.

The previous government cut parent-child centres. I think there were five parent-child centres that were closed by the previous government, and this cut was cited as one of the contributing factors to the growth in child welfare cases in the Mason report. I mentioned that we put \$9 million more into child care. Well, the previous government cut \$10 million to the child care budget between 1990 and 1996 and only returned part of it in 1998-99 with the National Child Benefit money.

Where did that money come from? Well, we know that the previous Minister of Family Services took that money from the recipients of social assistance. I was just reading today about this in a very interesting report called the Manitoba 1999 child poverty report card, an Agenda for Action, produced by the Social Planning Council of Winnipeg. We know the history of the National Child Benefit. We know that, when the federal government brought it in, they negotiated with the provincial government, probably the worst policy decision imaginable, and that was that the governments were free to deduct the money from social assistance recipients. Two provinces, to their credit, did not do that, even though they could have, Newfoundland and New Brunswick, but Manitoba deducted all of the money, dollar for dollar.

* (17:10)

This is what this report says about that. They say, if the goal of the National Child Benefit is to reduce the depths of child poverty, does it really make sense to deduct this amount from welfare recipients who already represent the lowest income earners? Well, of course it did not, and our Government is reversing this decision so that starting July 1 this year people are being allowed to keep all of the new money and of the clawback portion families with children under six are allowed to keep \$20 a month per child, which is where it should be going. It should be going to children. That is what the money is for. Our Government is going to continue the pilot programs that the previous government started. In fact, I remember calling the Minister of Family Services the minister of pilot programs and after that in their news releases they stopped calling them pilot programs.

An Honourable Member: We also called her Beaujolais Bonnie one time.

Mr. Martindale: We also called her Beaujolais Bonnie. This is a good example of how the previous government contributed to child poverty in Manitoba, a disgraceful record. We are trying to turn that around, but it is going to take time, and it is going to take money.

I can tell you that the child care community is very appreciative of our putting \$9 million back into the child care budget. In fact, I am planning to go to the Manitoba Child Care Association's open house today at their office on McGregor, and I know that they will be happy to see me and my colleagues. They have already come to our caucus with thank-yous from day care centres in Manitoba, and they very much appreciate the \$9 million that was put back into the system in order to provide decent wages. We know that wages are directly related to the quality of care. If you remunerate people adequately, then we will have better-quality staff who provide better-quality care.

An Honourable Member: The Conservative-Alliance party—

Mr. Martindale: I do not think the Conservative-Alliance party really supports child care. They give lip service to it, but I am

not sure that they really support it. I remember at the time when cuts were going on in the past, did they ever give them an increase? We know that wages decreased and the result was that people left to get better-paying jobs doing other things and child care centres were forced to apply for provisional licences because they did not have the correct ratio of early childhood educator 2s and early childhood educator 3s, they were experiencing very high turnovers, were being staffed with people that were not qualified, requiring a provisional licence, and that is changing. In fact, the enrolment at Red River College went down. They even had vacancies. Instead of having waiting lists, they had vacancies at Red River College. Now that we have done something to partially address the wage issue, the classes are full, and they have a waiting list again. This is good news for the child care community in Manitoba and they appreciate it.

Similarly we have provided a 2% increase to foster parents and the re-establishment of the Foster Family Association. By contrast, what did the previous government do? There was an 11% cut in daily rates and a 50% reduction in rates for foster parents who were relatives, and this caused a great distress. Of course, it makes it harder to find foster parents when you do not adequately compensate them for raising children.

We have reinstated by half the funding for friendship centres, with a promise to fully reinstate all funding over the term of our mandate. What did the Tories do? Why was this policy required? Because the previous government eliminated all the provincial grants to friendship centres across Manitoba, and we are gradually reinstating these grants.

The National Child Benefit—I already mentioned this. The clawback of further increases to the National Child Benefit has been partially withdrawn and the increased money from this year people are allowed to keep and also we increased the school supply allowance for families on social assistance. As I said before, the previous government deducted the National Child Benefit from children in families on social assistance including working families who received top-up from income assistance.

I remember using an example of an individual that I met who was working full time but, because he was getting partial assistance from Employment and Income Assistance, all of the National Child Benefit money was deducted, and I think that it does not make sense to penalize people who are working full time to deduct all of this extra income.

We have introduced a family tax credit providing more support for families with children and increased the Child Tax Reduction from \$250 to \$300.

Our Healthy Child Initiative of \$13 million is to address prenatal and childhood nutrition, place nurses in schools, mitigate and reduce teen pregnancy and fetal alcohol syndrome and support parent-child centres.

I am looking forward to the announcement about parent-child centres because we know that they are effective. There has been research done, in fact research by the Faculty of Social Work at the University of Manitoba, that shows that parent-child centres are effective. I know that the Minister of Finance would be interested in this, because he used to be a faculty member of the Faculty of Social Work.

What they discovered in the research is that when people bring their children and come to spend time with their children at parent-child centres, they develop networks, they meet other people in the community. Then they have natural support systems, which of course are much better than hiring social workers at great expense to provide artificial supports. I know that social workers do not like to hear this, but there is a lot of work for them to do without having to create more problems. Whenever you can reduce problems, that is a good thing.

The research shows that fewer children are taken into care when the parents are involved in a natural support network like a parent-child centre. So this is one of the reasons why we need to commend this government for this initiative of parent-child centres, because it is prevention, and it is going to save money in the long run because fewer children are going to come into care. The research shows this. I have not read all of the studies because some of them are actually

quite thick, but the research is there and it supports this initiative of our Government. I look forward to those announcements. I hope that some of those parent-child centres are in areas of high need such as the north end, and I think they probably will be.

We have eliminated income tax for low-income families. We remove 15 000 people from the tax rolls. What did the Conservative government do that contributed to poverty? Well, they eliminated the food budget and school supply allowance for kids on social assistance, and they cut back funding to recreation programs and friendship centres. As I said before, they deducted the National Child Benefit.

I would like to move on to our record on justice and point out that we passed legislation and developed or strengthened programs to ensure that Manitoba is a safe place for everyone to live. It is not as safe as it could be, but we are working on it. We have had some very good initiatives, such as victims rights legislation. For too long victims have been ignored, and there has been a perception that rights have mainly been there to protect criminals and there needs to be some balance. I think our Government has gone a long way to restoring this balance so that victims have rights as well.

There are stiffer penalties for drunk drivers and additional penalties for repeat offenders and new penalties for drivers fleeing police. We have a new 21-member criminal organization and high-risk offender unit. I guess that would be in the police department. During the Tory years, Winnipeg became the murder capital of Canada, with the highest per capita rate of murder in the country. Funding to recreation programs was cut back. In 1993 benefits for victims were cut. In 1999 benefits for survivors and victims of violent crimes were cut. Close to \$11 million in the surcharge for victims was added to fines, and uncollected dues went by the wayside. Gang membership rose from 400 in 1993 to close to 1600 in 1999. Manitoba had the highest violent youth crime rate and the highest robbery rate in the country during the Filmon years.

We have hired more Crown attorneys to ensure swift justice. We have child-friendly

courtrooms and waiting rooms, specialized prosecution and increased support. I commend the Minister of Justice for this initiative which just took place a couple of weeks ago whereby we publicly unveiled our child-friendly courtrooms and received praise for doing that, and I think justifiably so. We have increased provincial resources to combat arson and car theft. As a victim of car theft on four occasions, I appreciate hearing about that initiative, and certainly my constituents will be happy to hear about that. We have implemented many recommendations found in the Aboriginal Justice Inquiry, and we will continue to do so.

Under the Conservatives, in 1999 Manitoba had the highest youth court backlog in the country, 28 percent of youth court cases backlogged six months or more, according to Statistics Canada. The Conservative record on victims can be symbolized by the \$500 Autopac deductible imposed on auto theft victims. Under them we also had the highest rate of car theft in Canada. Certainly there was a lot of hue and cry about the \$500 deductible for a car theft which also affected me, I think, on more than one occasion until MPI finally removed it. It was not really fair to victimize people who were already victimized by having their car stolen to make them pay a \$500 deductible.

The Aboriginal Justice Inquiry report I believe came in about 1991. I am just going by memory, but I think it was that long ago, and it sat gathering dust until the Government changed and we started to implement it. So from 1991 to 1999 almost nothing happened regarding progress on the Aboriginal Justice Inquiry report.

I remember the previous government promised a confidential hot line which turned out to be less than confidential with numbers being traced back to callers. That was something that our former Justice critic, I believe, raised in question period to some embarrassment on part of the government.

I would like to go on to talk about education and how we are renewing hope for young people, one of the commitments that we made during the last election. We have cut tuition fees by 10 percent, which resulted in increased

enrolment: 500 more students at Red River College, 716 at the University of Manitoba, and 200 at the University of Winnipeg. We provided an additional \$10.8 million in funding to universities and colleges, a 3.8% increase; \$50 million towards renewal of infrastructure at the University of Manitoba; a \$29.7 million increase to public school funding; the largest ever building program for public schools, \$51.2 million; a 7.6% increase for capital projects.

I am happy to report that Sisler High School will probably be one of the schools that will benefit from major renovations and certainly they need it. There has been a real underfunding of schools in Manitoba, for not only new school construction, but for renovation of existing buildings. I know that the students were amongst those who were most concerned at Sisler High School, especially students on sports teams. One of them considered a human rights complaint to the Human Rights Commission of Manitoba because the girls' gym was taken over by the boys' football team. The smell was so bad that the girls absolutely refused to use it, and so they had to use a change room. When visiting teams came to play against Sisler teams they had to use washrooms as change rooms because there was no change room for girls. Truly a deplorable situation, and we hope, with the funding from the Public Schools Finance Board for Sisler High School, that not only will they have an addition to the gymnasium and more office space, but also there will be new change facilities for not only visiting teams but especially for the women teams at Sisler.

I heard about this because my daughter was on some of those teams, in fact winning teams at Sisler High School, so this was a topic of conversation at the dinner table in the Martindale household. We look forward to seeing some renovations take place at Sisler High School.

Our Government brought in \$6 million for bursaries, the first provincial program since 1993. What happened under the previous government? For over a decade the previous administration did nothing to decrease rising tuition costs or provide adequate funding to our schools which led to increases in property taxes. There was a 60% average increase in local school taxes in Manitoba in the 1990s. Between

1997-1998 to 1999-2000, the total of tuition and other fees in the Science Faculty at the University of Manitoba rose from \$1,303 to \$3,634, an increase of 179 percent. Community college tuition rose from \$450 to \$1,413, an increase of 214 percent. Cuts to university and public school funding were common in the 1990s. University and college buildings and equipment were allowed to fall apart.

* (17:20)

The previous government implemented a costly system of standards testing including the much opposed and controversial Grade 3 standards testing. They continue to support the commercialization of classrooms and characterize our reluctance to embrace it as fear of technology which I think is quite silly. All of us use computers. We have no fear of technology.

Our Government has contributed \$5.1 million for college expansion. We scrapped the Grade 3 standard test and we have said no to television advertising in the schools. It ended as the YNN contract was re-evaluated and cancelled with the support of educators across Canada.

I would like to talk briefly about the environment. I believe the environment has been a top priority of the NDP, and the round table is now dominated by environmentally knowledgeable people as well as those with northern connections and First Nations people. In fact, the Canada Parks and Wilderness Society in their newsletter of the summer of 2000 said the old groups were ineffective because of the way they were structured. I believe they wrote an editorial that was very complimentary towards our Minister of Conservation (Mr. Lathlin) and our Government on some of the positive changes that we have made. That is a group that is often very critical of the Government, and it was really quite good to see a positive editorial coming from the Canada Parks and Wilderness Society.

We have moved from an environmental licensing system that looked only at the front end of a barn to one which reviews the back end or sewage. We developed a livestock initiative that ensures environmental protection and rural

development are congruent and compatible. What did the Conservative government do? Well, the Tories slashed the former Environment and Natural Resources departments including a 43% cut to Water Resources. According to the MLA for Emerson, cuts to the department resulted in a lack of resources "to keep up with the clean-outs and maintenance of drains." The Member for Emerson agrees with me. He remembers all those cuts from the 1990s. The result is that we have a huge problem in rural Manitoba of drains that are plugged with silt and not enough money. *[interjection]* The Member for Emerson says he said it, but he did not do it.

We, in our Government, have a sustainable development strategy featuring long-term environmental planning, broader impact assessments and better public participation. We have an approval process for enhanced livestock operations and the end of penned hunting. We have protection for our most precious commodity, namely water, by prohibiting the bulk sale and export of water. We have worked tirelessly to develop and maintain an international working group on a water strategy for the Red River basin. What did the previous government do? Well, the Opposition, today's Opposition, was silent on Devils Lake and the protection of our water in September 1999 when the bill was before the U.S. senate. They could have made an issue of this during the election of September 1999, and as far as I know, they said nothing about the bill in the U.S. senate.

I would be happy to be corrected on anything that I say. If you want to give me newspaper clippings showing that you did protest this bill in the U.S. Senate, I would be happy to read them.

I would like to briefly talk about the Liberal environmental record. We have a federal Liberal government that has made some pretty serious changes to Environment Canada. For example, they cut \$229 million and 1400 staff from Environment Canada between 1995 and 1997. By their own admission, they will fail to achieve the goals of the National Action Plan and climate change by reducing greenhouse gas emissions by the year 2000. In fact Canada's emissions have risen by 25 percent over the Kyoto target due to federal inaction.

I would like to conclude in a few minutes by talking about—[interjection] No, I am going to talk about Aboriginal and Northern Affairs. I have a great many Aboriginal constituents in the Burrows constituency, and I believe, as does my caucus, that Manitoba's Aboriginal people seek the same opportunities that we all desire, namely healthy and secure children, a chance for meaningful participation in the economy and more control over their own lives.

Our government is dedicated to ushering in a new era of trust and partnership with Aboriginal people. I think that is true in Winnipeg as well as with implementing the recommendations of the Aboriginal Justice Inquiry which, of course, does not pertain just to northern Manitobans but to Winnipeg residents as well.

We have restored core funding in the amount of \$700,000 for the 11 friendship centres to assist in delivering services to women and children who need to make the transition to urban living. I have actually been lobbied on this issue by a non-Aboriginal person who wants to see government initiatives in this area. We are doing that. It is going to take time, but certainly this idea of helping people make a transition to urban living is a good idea.

We have signed a memorandum of understanding with the Manitoba Métis Federation and the Assembly of Chiefs to work toward the creation of a Child and Family Services system that will see First Nation communities administer their own Child and Family Services program. This is something that has been on a back burner for a long time, but basically it is just restoring control of Aboriginal children to Aboriginal people to let them make their own decisions and to look after their own children.

We are committed to working on a government-to-government basis with Aboriginal people to improve economic and social opportunities for the quality of life for Aboriginal people throughout the province. It is through this partnership that we will be able to bring a new focus to the future development of northern Manitoba. As I said before, I think

these policies will be beneficial to Aboriginal people living in Winnipeg as well.

With those few comments, I am happy to say that I am happy to support this Throne Speech and to commend our Government on all our positive initiatives and look forward to many, many announcements of things that are in the Throne Speech over the next 12 months. Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Mr. Jack Penner (Emerson): Mr. Deputy Speaker, it gives me a great deal of pleasure to rise on the non-event that we have just experienced in this House, in other words, the so-called presentation of a new plan by the new NDP that looked rather aged by the time the so-called Throne Speech was presented in this House. It is the first time during the almost 13 years that I have sat in this Legislature, and I believe it is 13 throne speeches that we have heard in this Legislature, and a Throne Speech that was as empty as this one was of any substance.

Before I get into that, I would like to welcome our new pages to this House.

It was also gratifying to see our former Member of the Legislature for Pembina, Mr. Orchard, sit in the loge here for most of the afternoon. It is nice to see some of our previous colleagues come back and listen in on some of the absolute lack of substance in many of the debates and especially on issues such as the Throne Speech.

I also want to congratulate our new leader, Mr. Stuart Murray, to the position of leadership. I think he has demonstrated already in this House his ability and his absolutely gentlemanly manner in which he presents himself to people. I think it will stand us in good stead to put that kind of pace on politics and this House. I think he will play a big role in adding stature to the level in this House.

I want to also say that we all truly appreciated the tremendous amount of service our former Premier and leader, Mr. Gary Filmon, brought to this House and the service he rendered to our party. I think it will never be forgotten. I think history will show him as going down as one of the best premiers that this province has had, and many of the initiatives and

directives that he rendered will be shown as some of the most forward-thinking policies that this Legislature has seen.

* (17:30)

I think maybe that is why some of us are so disappointed when we look at what was previously brought to this House in the form of throne speeches, the forward-thinking planning that was identified in throne speeches. Then, when you look at the current Throne Speech, you really have to cringe a bit and say is this really what a government should be all about. I think we also need to look at many of the issues that are identified.

I want to start with health care. When I listened last year to the Throne Speech and when I listened to the initiatives that they indicated that they would take to resolve some of the difficulties that we had faced as a government for a number of years, and it was a building of the problems in health care right throughout this nation—from province to province and from sea to sea every province indicated its difficulty in trying to deliver the kind of health care system that the people of Manitoba wanted and indeed needed.

We also saw a significant amount of change being driven by the previous government, the regionalization of our health care system, and we knew how difficult it would be to implement changes by centralist-driven policies that previously had existence to a broader-based thinking and the delivery of the system and the involvement of boards that were made up of local people that could give direction. We saw that and we made those changes, knowing full well that it would lead towards questioning and some disruption in the delivery of services. We knew that.

I think what the members have criticized so often is that when a change in the city of Winnipeg was made to deliver services differently in the city of Winnipeg, and they constantly referred to a firing of a thousand nurses—well, there was no firing of a thousand nurses in this city of Winnipeg or in the province of Manitoba. There was a clear indication that the level of service would be provided and that

the jobs would be open. They would be open in different facilities than they had served before. Those that would want to transfer could very easily transfer and there would be jobs for each and every one of them. There was no indication that anybody was or would be fired.

I think it was a fallacy. I think the public will, next election, remind the NDP government in how dishonest they were. I am sorry, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I did not want to use the word "dishonest," but there is a time when one is almost forced to use the word "dishonest" because of the continuous rhetoric that one questions time and time again. So the word "dishonest" comes to mind quickly, but we do not want to use it, Sir, and I apologize for using it and I retract it.

But I want to say that the misinformation that has been put forward time and time and time again on the health care issues and initiative has clearly demonstrated their ineptness in governing, and therefore I think they should seriously consider, before the next budget is brought down, stepping aside and letting those govern who have the ability to govern.

When I talk about health care, I have to wonder what sort of direction this Government has given to the regions because we have seen time and time again in the past the delivery of an ambulance service in rural Manitoba that was delivered by volunteers. No cost or very little cost to government. Altona, my own home town, has had hundreds of volunteers driving the ambulances, providing the services on the ambulances, providing care. Never have they lost a patient in an ambulance, and yet this Government comes along and says we want to and we will do away with the volunteers in the ambulance service because we need to change the way we serve people.

The people in rural Manitoba and those rural communities expected and deserve ambulance services. I say to you that what we are seeing now is a closing down of ambulance services in a number of our rural small communities. What you are doing is putting paid staff in place that you are going to have to budget for at some point in time. I think the deficits now being incurred by many of the regional health

authorities are an indication of how expensive some of the changes you are making are. They are not serving any better. I think the caucus on the NDP side needs to seriously question their Minister of Health (Mr. Chomiak) on some of the program changes that he is making.

Another one that really confuses many people in rural communities, and I talk about the community of Emerson, in 1998 we put in place into the health care budget an amount of money that would build a new health care facility in the town of Emerson. The first initiative this new NDP Government takes is to say, no, we are not building a new facility. They are going to spend anywhere between \$1 million and \$2 million upgrading fire safety in that hospital and making many of the other changes in the hospital and you are going to still have an old building that is falling around your ears. You are going to have an old building that is sitting right beside a river bank and the river bank keeps sliding. Another slide and the hospital is going to be in the river.

And yet do they pay any attention to the direction that they receive from the community? No. We allocated an amount of money in the 1998 Budget that would have seen the building of that hospital, and it was done after the 1997 flood because the department of resources, the minister who is sitting right there, his department says that we might need the space to rebuild the dike in the town of Emerson, and the hospital is going to be in the way. None of you are paying attention to it. Your Minister of Finance (Mr. Selinger) should be absolutely upset with his Minister of Health for not listening to the minister of resources because his departmental people are telling the people in Emerson that most likely that hospital will have to be removed when we build a new dike.

We heard yesterday the International Joint Commission tell this Province what needed to be done immediately to ensure the safety of our communities in the Red River Valley. I guarantee you one of the initiatives will have to be the raising of the current dikes. You cannot raise the Emerson dike without moving the hospital. It cannot be done.

Those are some of the reasons and the need for the facility changes to make it operationally more economical. It needs to be done. Yet it

cannot happen in an old customs building. The hospital that is there now and the personal care home are a conversion of an old customs building. It was never meant to be a hospital, should not be a hospital, and this Government is going to spend a couple of million dollars renovating something that might not be there five years from now. So why are we not building a new facility? Why did you pull the budget, Mr. Finance Minister? Why did you pull the amount of money out of the Budget and tell the community of Emerson: You are not getting a new hospital.

I think it is deplorable, but I think it is a clear indication of where this Government is going over their health care. It is not only nurses. It is not doctors. It is clearly their desire to do what Saskatchewan did. I say to my colleagues on this side of the House do not be too surprised that over the next four or five years you are going to see the closure of many a hospital in rural Manitoba. I say to rural Manitobans: Take care, be careful that they do not withdraw the health care services out of your communities because that is what this new NDP Government is all about. They do not care about rural Manitoba. They do not care about health care in rural Manitoba. They do not care about the people in rural Manitoba. I say to you that this cannot be allowed to happen.

* (17:40)

I think it is clearly an indication of what is to come, and I think therefore we see in this Throne Speech virtually no mention of health care at all. We still have long line-ups in hallways in the city of Winnipeg. We still have the required nurses whose numbers are building and building. Yet this Government said to people in Manitoba before the last election: Trust us, we will fix it within six months. Well, what have they fixed? The only thing that they have fixed is, in the minds of people in Manitoba, an assurance that they are now casting doubt on the ability of this Government. I think that has been very clear.

I want to also touch briefly on another matter that is very prevalent in the hearts and minds of people in southern Manitoba, especially those in the Red River Valley. When the International Joint Commission first took on

the task of reviewing what was done and what needed to be done in Manitoba, many of us thought it would take many years for the International Joint Commission to come back with a report and some clear recommendations. They came back with an interim report exactly as they had indicated on time last fall. They came back with a final report this spring as they had indicated that they would do at the beginning of 2000, that they would deliver a final report. That final report is very specific. That final report really clearly states that there should be immediate action taken to initiate actions to protect those that are in the valley simply for one reason.

Mr. Speaker in the Chair

One only need to look at what happened this past fall in much of the Red River Valley and east of the Red River Valley and virtually all the total watershed area that dumps into the Red River. The huge amount of rain that fell, the high level of the rivers now and the high levels of water on the land and in the municipal drainage systems that is freezing the culverts, virtually rendering them incapable of moving any water in spring, is a concern. But, above all, the concern is that if we keep on having the kind of snow that we have experienced over the last month and that continues throughout the winter, we will probably, in all likelihood, have a larger flood of much greater proportion than we had in 1997, and yet I hear nothing from this Government that would lead me to believe that they are even suggesting to the municipalities a level of preparedness. I think that is unfortunate.

All we have heard so far is a communiqué from this Premier (Mr. Doer) that he has signed an agreement that they will continue talking with Minnesota and North Dakota. Let me say this: Without an agreement, our province and the previous government continually talked to Minnesota and North Dakota about mechanisms and initiatives that should be taken to alleviate or help alleviate and communicate what flood levels might be or what snow levels there are and what the snowpack is in the valley and what the possibility for flooding is. That has been an ongoing thing. You did not need a formal agreement to do that. Everybody was willing to do that.

The other thing that I found very interesting—the Premier put out a news release saying that they had stemmed the discussion on the Garrison. I do not know whether the members of this House know that there was some \$30-odd million—I believe it was \$38 million—added to the U.S. budget for Garrison to continue the work to bring water into the Red River out of Garrison, and this Premier stands in this House and said we have put a stop to it, put out a news release telling all Manitobans we put a stop to it. It is not true. You have not.

I am sorry, Mr. Speaker, I should not have used the words "it is not true." It is inaccurate for the Premier to say that because it is inaccurate information that he is providing. There is a large amount of money that has been initiated to further the work and the channelization of the Garrison.

The second one is the Devils Lake project. Many people in this Chamber confuse the two projects. Garrison and Devils Lake are not the same project. They are vastly different. Devils Lake is a local drainage project that has caused Devils Lake a huge problem. They built a series of canals and drained a bunch of swamps. To do what? To raise the level of Devils Lake. Were they successful? You bet they were successful, immensely successful. They have raised it far beyond expectations.

When I visited Devils Lake—it is almost 30 years ago when I first visited it—it was nothing but a salt pond and not a very large one at that. It was a sulphur pond really, because it smelled to high heaven. When you drove into the town and you asked the people what was the smell in this town, they said it was sulphur from the lake. So what they wanted to do was raise the level of the lake in order that it could be a fishery and a tourist attraction. Well, it has become that. It has become a tourist attraction and not the kind they wanted.

Has it become a fishery? Some of the best pickerel fishing in North Dakota is in that lake today. Is it a viable lake? Has it got fairly good water quality? It does. It is a bit more saline than many of the other lakes are, but fish survive and do well in Devils Lake.

Are they going to drain it? Are they going to put a drainage system in place that will stabilize the levels? You bet they are. North Dakota told us that. We met with some of the legislators in North Dakota this fall, and they told us very clearly that they were going to build a drainage system and dump that water into the Cheyenne River and it would, hence, hit the Red River. Yet, our Premier (Mr. Doer) leads Manitobans to believe that he has put a stop to it. That is false. It is not correct, and the Premier should apologize to Manitobans for misleading them into thinking that the Devils Lake project has been stopped, that Garrison has been stopped, because it is not so. I think that the people of Manitoba need to know what in fact is true.

Education. I listened very carefully. I read the Throne Speech on the education initiatives. You know, where is the money going to come from? Is it going to come from our Crown corps? Is MPI going to contribute some other way? Is it going to come from Manitoba Hydro? Is it going to come out of the Workers Compensation Board?

All of these utilities were in severe financial difficulty when we took office. It took some gut-wrenching decision making in order to stabilize the accounts within those utilities and bring them into a black financial position. We were very proud. Those of us who sat on those boards were very proud of the action that we took to, in fact, bring our public insurance company into a position where you can now lower the rates. Yet, instead of wanting to lower the rates, you wanted to give the money within Public Insurance Corp away. What a drastic mistake.

I congratulate all Manitobans for taking the stand they did on public insurance that they did, because that money belongs to the people who buy insurance because they are forced to buy insurance from the Public Insurance Corporation, and that is why it should remain there and should be used to reduce the rates as we fully intended for them to be used.

We also changed the investment policy in MPIC, as the Minister of Finance (Mr. Selinger) I am sure will have already told his Cabinet. That investment policy changed, initiated last year, some \$50-odd million of extra revenue for

MPIC because it was invested wisely, and it was invested well. Therefore, those surplus monies that are there generate that kind of additional revenue that allows you to decrease your premium rates by \$50 million without doing anything else. It was clear that the investment strategy, an investment policy that was brought into place at MPIC, was the right thing.

Mr. Speaker, I want to reflect a wee bit on some of the comments that were made by Mr. Struthers, the MLA for Dauphin, in regard to agriculture and some of the great things that he says are contained in the Throne Speech regarding agriculture.

* (17:50)

I do not know where the honourable Member for Dauphin comes from. I do not know what his background is, quite frankly, but it is obviously not Agriculture, because if it were, he would not have made these kinds of statements.

He says Project 2000 is a great project. Then he says to the Member for Emerson, he says, are you with us or against us with this progressive measure of Project 2000. Are members opposite with us or against us when it comes to mentoring young farmers and putting those young farmers with farmers who have some experience and funding programs that help young farmers?

Let me say this to the honourable Member for Dauphin. The best mentors that young farmers can have are their family. Family members are, without question, the best mentors. The best financing that members can have are a government that is sympathetic, that puts programs in place that will allow them to borrow money at reasonable rates.

Yet, what they are talking about is taking retired people's money, putting it in a fund, and saying to the aging farmers, the ones who want to retire, we will let you use that money, and we will see to it that these older farmers, these retiring farmers, get a retirement package, a pension fund, I guess it would be. Would it not? Maybe it would be a pension fund. We are not sure where they are heading with this one, but let me tell you this. The best program that could be devised for young farmers would be an

assurance of parity with our American farmers under the current trade arrangements that we have. I use corn as an example. There is now a tariff on corn coming into Manitoba. If you look at the \$1.50-a-bushel tariff that is being applied and you convert that to Canadian dollars, you will find that that adds \$2.48 to the price of corn coming into Manitoba now.

Do you know why that was done? Because it indicates how much money the U.S. government pays farmers directly on top of the market, pays farmers directly in the U.S. on their corn. They get \$2.48 Canadian more for their corn than farmers in Manitoba do. That is not fair. That is why our young farmers are leaving in droves, because they cannot compete with our American counterparts.

This countervail will force the price of corn up in this province to the hog producer, to the chicken producer, to the cattle producer. What will it do to the product that these farmers sell into the marketplace? It will render the livestock, the meat, into the marketplace uncompetitive. The American farmer will still be allowed to sell their corn for \$1.50 a bushel to their hog producers while our corn will be \$5 a bushel because of the countervail. It is wrong.

Is it wrong for the corn farmer? No. It just indicates now much less Manitoba farmers get for their corn than the Americans. What should be done is this Minister of Agriculture should have already been in Ottawa saying you in Ottawa, the federal government in Ottawa, because they did not do away with the free trade agreement, because they agreed it was a good thing for Canada—and so do I. Your Government must say to the federal government, now, give our farmers parity with the Americans. You must pay our farmers the same on top of the market that the Americans get, no more, no less, just the same. You must put in place an LDP program, a loans deficiency program, the same as the Americans do. You must put in place a program of land set aside the same as the Americans do. Then, only then, will you have an equal playing field for our farm community to compete. Then you will have a program that will keep your young farmers on the land. Then they will have an incentive to want to stay there

because they know that they are going to be able to compete.

Most of our young farmers today come out of school, go to university, get a university education, come back to the farm. They look at the returns they can make with their university degrees in the marketplace. They know they can make a dollar working for a chemical company, the Department of Agriculture or anybody else, and they can turn an immediate dollar to feed their young families. Yet, when they go into agriculture, and I heard a Manitoba councillor at the AMM meeting had asked our Minister of Agriculture (Ms. Wowchuk), "What do you deem a viable operation?" Our Minister of Agriculture had said to that councillor, "I deem a viable operation to be a section farm"—in other words, 640 acres—"and a full-time job on the side to support it." That is the model that our Minister of Agriculture has for agriculture for our young farmers. So this young farmer says, "Well, if I have got a university education, I can go to work for somebody else and get immediate net profit instead of having to invest a million dollars or two."

See, what people do not realize is that young farmers, no matter who they are or how you finance them, at the end of the day when they start, have a huge financial liability because 620 acres of land or 640 acres of land today in most areas of our part of the country where I live would cost \$1,000 an acre. That is \$640,000 up front before you do anything else, while a new combine to service that farm costs another quarter of a million dollars. A new tractor to work that land is another quarter of a million dollars. Before you buy all the other equipment to work that land, you are \$2 million into a liability situation.

Now tell me what kind of a return you have to make to finance that debt, whether it is interest free or not. How do you pay back that money? Is Grandpa going to finance that? Is Grandpa going to do it? Is Father going to do it? Is Uncle going to do it? I think not. Uncle is going to go to the European farmer that, by the way, our Minister of Agriculture talked about: the immigrants that we need to bring into this country to fill in the holes that have been created by our young people leaving our farms, and she

says bring them in. Well, they are going to come in. They bring money. They sell their European farms for a huge amount of money and move into Manitoba and buy the farms. They will farm here, but only if they can make a dollar. If you keep on allowing the disparity that exists now between American farmers and Manitoba farmers, you will not have an industry. You will not have a grain and oilseed industry. It will disappear, and it is disappearing quickly. The young people that used to work on the land are disappearing with it.

Mr. Speaker, in conclusion, I want to say this: We have two scenarios that are in front of us that we need to address immediately. We had this year an 8% reduction in farm labour in the farm labour pool and last year a 6.8%, a 14.8% reduction of farm labour. Do you know why? Because the farmers cannot afford to pay them the price that the industries and/or businesses in

town can afford to pay them, so you lose them. Do you know who we are losing? The seniors that stayed on the farm, the mothers and fathers and the grandfathers that stayed on the farm and worked the land with the young guy and the young people that are educated and leaving the farm. Those people we have to keep on the farm if we want our grain and oilseed industry to exist in this province. This Government, this Minister of Agriculture (Ms. Wowchuk) does not recognize that. This Minister of Finance (Mr. Selinger) has done nothing to put into place—

Mr. Speaker: Order. When this matter is again before the House, the honourable Member for Emerson will have eight minutes remaining.

The hour being 6 p.m., this House is adjourned and stands adjourned until 10 a.m. tomorrow (Friday).

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Thursday, December 7, 2000

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