



Second Session - Thirty-Seventh Legislature

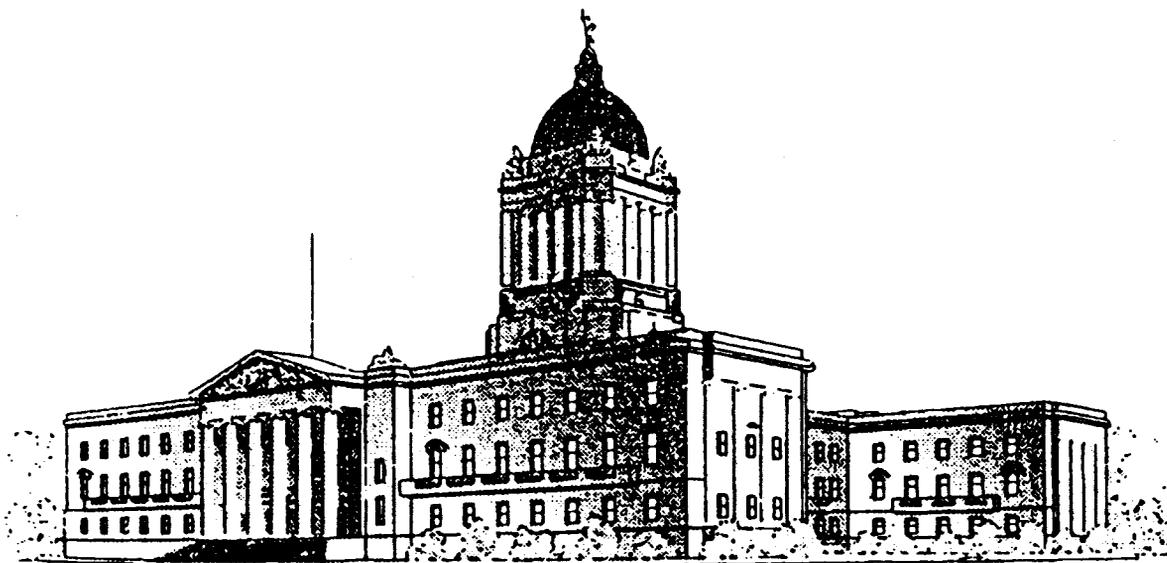
of the

**Legislative Assembly of Manitoba**

**DEBATES  
and  
PROCEEDINGS**

**Official Report  
(Hansard)**

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**MANITOBA LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY**  
**Thirty-Seventh Legislature**

<b>Member</b>	<b>Constituency</b>	<b>Political Affiliation</b>
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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.
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DEWAR, Gregory	Selkirk	N.D.P.
DOER, Gary, Hon.	Concordia	N.D.P.
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FAURSCHOU, David	Portage la Prairie	P.C.
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## LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Tuesday, December 12, 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 Wana Sheridan, Donna Rogerson, Michele Costen 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.

### READING AND RECEIVING PETITIONS

#### Health Centre

**Mr. Speaker:** I have reviewed the petition of the honourable Member for Charleswood (Mrs. Driedger). It complies with the rules and practices of the House. Is it the will of the House to have the petition read? *[Agreed]*

Will the Clerk please read.

**Madam Clerk (Patricia Chaychuk):** The petition of the undersigned citizens of the province of Manitoba, humbly sheweth:

THAT the Health Centre, located in downtown Transcona at 108 Bond Street, is an important government service to the community of Transcona and surrounding areas; and

THAT the said Health Centre is centrally located, close to major bus routes, and therefore convenient to the people, with its community based services of Pre-natal and Post-natal care, Public Nurse consultations, Immunizations, Vaccinations, and Mental Health services; and

THAT the said Health Centre also contains the administrative support for home care in the area, with home care workers reporting in and out of the centre; and

THAT the loss of the Health Centre would be a major economic set back to the commercial well being of downtown Transcona and the entire Transcona community; and

THAT the people of Transcona were not consulted prior to the Provincial Government making the decision to relocate the Health Centre and that the plan for its relocation to a 'strip mall district' runs contrary to all concepts of community development; and

THAT there is plenty of space in downtown Transcona for the construction of a permanent facility or for the leasing of new space or for the expansion and renovation of the existing facility.

WHEREFORE YOUR PETITIONERS HUMBLY PRAY THAT the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba request that the Minister of Health and the First Minister of Manitoba immediately instruct the Winnipeg Regional Health Authority to end its plans to remove the Health Centre at 108 Bond Street from Transcona and instead direct the WRHA to consider finding existing space in downtown Transcona, since much space exists, for both their short term and long term facility needs.

### TABLING OF REPORTS

**Hon. Ron Lemieux (Minister of Consumer and Corporate Affairs):** Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to table the following three copies pursuant to section 13 of The Trade Practices Inquiry Act, being chapter 110 of the Statutes of Manitoba, 1970.

I have the honour to report that no inquiries were commenced subsequent to last year's date, December 8, 1999.

**Hon. Diane McGifford (Minister of Culture, Heritage and Tourism):** Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to table the following reports, copies of which have already been distributed: the Department of Culture, Heritage and Tourism Annual Report 1999-2000; Manitoba Arts Council Annual Report 1999; Seniors Directorate Annual Report 1999-2000; Manitoba Lotteries Corporation Annual Report 1999-2000; Manitoba Liquor Control Commission Six-Month Report for the period April 1 to September 30, 2000; Manitoba Liquor Control Commission Three-Month Report for the period April 1 to June 30, 2000; the Status of Women Annual Report 1999-2000; the Manitoba Women's Advisory Council Annual Report 1999-2000.

I am also pleased to table the following report: Manitoba Lotteries Corporation Second Quarter Report for the period April 1 to September 2000.

\* (13:35)

**Hon. Eric Robinson (Minister of Aboriginal and Northern Affairs):** Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to table the 1999-2000 Annual Report of the Department of Aboriginal and Northern Affairs, copies of which have been previously distributed.

## INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

### Bill 9—The Vital Statistics Amendment and Consequential Amendments Act

**Hon. Ron Lemieux (Minister of Consumer and Corporate Affairs):** Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the Minister of Aboriginal and Northern Affairs (Mr. Robinson), that leave be given to introduce Bill 9, The Vital Statistics Amendment and Consequential Amendments Act; Loi modifiant la Loi sur les statistiques de l'état civil et modifications corrélatives, and that the same be now received and read a first time.

*Motion presented.*

**Mr. Lemieux:** This bill will remove restrictions for a child's surname, which will allow parents to follow their cultural and ethnic naming traditions.

The bill will also remove restrictions on access to older Vital Statistics event records currently only available to family members. Copies of birth registrations over 100 years old, marriage registrations over 80 years old, and death registrations over 70 years old will also be available to the general public.

*Motion agreed to.*

## Introduction of Guests

**Mr. Speaker:** Prior to Oral Questions I would like to draw the attention of all honourable members to the public gallery where we have with us today from Ralph Brown School 26 Grade 6 students under the direction of Mrs. Cora Duffy. This school is located in the constituency of the honourable Attorney General (Mr. Mackintosh).

Also in the public gallery from Maples Collegiate, we have 21 Grade 11 students under the direction of Mr. Howard Kowalchuk. This school is located in the constituency of the honourable Member for The Maples (Mr. Aglugub).

I would like to also draw the members' attention to the Speaker's Gallery where we have with us today Mr. Victor Tootoo who is the Assistant Deputy Minister of Finance for the Government of Nunavut territory. Also, I will let people know Victor is my nephew.

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

## ORAL QUESTION PERIOD

### Budget Tax Competitiveness

**Mr. Stuart Murray (Leader of the Official Opposition):** Mr. Speaker, we know that when the Premier had the opportunity to show Manitobans that Today's NDP was different than yesterday's NDP we found out that they failed. They had the opportunity to pass on the full benefit of the federal tax savings to Manitobans. When he had that chance, he failed. He decided that he wanted to keep the money himself for the Government because he thinks he knows how to spend it better than Manitobans do.

In fact, Mr. Speaker, during the pre-Budget consultations, Manitobans were shocked to hear the Premier (Mr. Doer)—[*interjection*] Well, they were shocked to hear that the Premier was actually thinking about raising taxes by introducing new ones. Obviously our Premier did not fall far from the Howard Pawley apple tree.

My question to the Deputy Premier, Mr. Speaker, is: As you prepare for the upcoming Budget, what plan do you have to increase Manitoba's tax competitiveness, an area in which we have fallen so far behind the other provinces in the last 14 months?

\*(13:40)

**Hon. Jean Friesen (Deputy Premier):** I thank the honourable member for that question and would like him perhaps to begin one of his questions one day with an assumption of some responsibility and an assumption for the number of times, 79 times over and over again, that this previous government raised taxes.

Mr Speaker, they raised them in user fees; they raised them in seniors fishing licences; they raised them particularly in property taxes.

**Some Honourable Members:** Oh, oh.

**Mr. Speaker:** Order.

#### 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."

Just in case this minister is not aware, she does not have the leader's latitude. She should be responding to the questions being put.

**Hon. Gord Mackintosh (Government House Leader):** Mr. Speaker, a point of order really—unfortunate; it is unbelievable. Obviously the members opposite want everyone to hear their questions and want no one to hear the answers and the truth. If the Opposition is arguing that somehow the answer was provocative, it is only

because they feel provoked, they feel sensitive on this issue. They are the ones that raised taxes again and again and again.

**Mr. Speaker:** On the point of order raised by the honourable Opposition House Leader, I would just like to remind all honourable ministers that according to *Beauchesne's* answers to questions should be brief and deal with the matter raised and to not provoke debate. I just throw that out to all the ministers.

\* \* \*

**Mr. Speaker:** The honourable Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs, to conclude her comments.

**Ms. Friesen:** I was merely trying to indicate to the Leader of the Opposition that there was some responsibility on his part to look at the issues that Manitoba is facing in taxation, and many of those are the ones that were introduced by the previous government.

**Mr. Murray:** Mr. Speaker, when you talk about responsibility, in the last Budget this Government for every \$8 they spent they only cut \$1 of tax relief, and that is a shame. I think that is a shame. While the Minister of Finance (Mr. Selinger) is meeting with other provincial ministers of Finance, I wondered if he might have an opportunity to pick up any tips, say, from the ministers of Finance from Saskatchewan or Ontario who are turning Manitoba into an island of high taxes unto itself. What are this Government's plans to bring us into line with the rest of Canada?

**Ms. Friesen:** I think the Leader of the Opposition must be unaware that in the last Budget we delivered millions of dollars in personal income tax cuts to Manitobans. We also began to reverse the decades of neglect of the previous government in property taxes.

When they were in power, in the first years of the Tory government, they brought in a \$150 tax increase to every Manitoban on the property tax. We have begun to reverse that in this last Budget, and we shall, according to our election promises, be continuing with that. In addition, the numerous user fees that this previous

government introduced we have begun to reverse as we, for example, have removed the tax essentially that was on northern patient transfer.

### **Budget Tax Reductions**

**Mr. Stuart Murray (Leader of the Official Opposition):** Will the Deputy Premier give Manitobans and this House a commitment that she will lower taxes in the upcoming Budget?

\* (13:45)

**Hon. Jean Friesen (Deputy Premier):** I think what we have here is either the Alliance Party is speaking or the Tory Party is speaking or the Reform Party is speaking. I am not sure who is asking this question.

I think what we also have is a previous government which is still particularly, what shall I say, smarting over the last election and their 50-50 plan for Manitobans. Manitobans elected a government which is committed to restoring health care and we are doing that. They elected a government which was committed to making opportunity for young people through the expansion of post-secondary education enrolment and we are doing that. There are many ways to make Manitoba competitive. This Opposition has only one perspective, and the member will have to in fact wait for the Budget for those kinds of issues.

### **Public Housing Safety/Security Regulations**

**Mr. Jack Reimer (Southdale):** On December 11, 1997, new rules regarding criminal and violent related activity at Manitoba Housing residences were implemented, and I would like to just table those rules at this time. The rules were adopted after consultation with tenant associations and the Winnipeg police and were established to ensure the health, safety and security of Manitoba Housing tenants and their families.

I would like to ask the Minister of Housing, in light of the recent tragedy involving the stabbing death of a man after an all-night

drinking party which occurred in a Manitoba Housing complex, is the policy of zero tolerance regarding violence still in effect for Manitoba Housing tenants?

**Hon. Tim Sale (Minister of Family Services and Housing):** The answer is yes.

**Mr. Reimer:** If the answer is yes, then why are people still being put in violent positions where we read in the paper where they are put in positions where they do not feel safe in Manitoba Housing? I get phone calls from people saying that they are worried about the conditions in the Manitoba Housing. Can he table any type of correspondence that is in effect saying that these rules are still in effect?

**Mr. Sale:** I think that the former minister and myself both take the issue of violence in family housing in Manitoba Housing extremely seriously. That is why I would reference the rules that were brought in under the previous government as sound. We have certainly, during the time that I have been minister, removed people from our public housing units when they have broken and violated those rules. That often results in protests to members opposite. I think at least on several occasions I am aware of those situations. Nevertheless those people have not been allowed to continue to put at risk the tenants who have a right to the same kind of peaceful living conditions that we all expect in the homes that we live in.

When we receive a complaint, we act on it immediately. There is a process for giving people warning, as the previous minister knows. We have to be cautious that we do not always simply move precipitously unless we have clear evidence, but where there is clear evidence of violence, clear evidence of any kind of immediate threat, under my stewardship just as I believe under the previous government, this was acted upon in a very quick manner.

**Mr. Reimer:** I thank the minister for the explanation in regard to the continuation of the policy because I believe the response I am getting back that it has not necessarily been in effect—

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

### Point of Order

**Hon. Gord Mackintosh (Government House Leader):** I wonder if you could ask the honourable member if he came here with a supplementary question.

**Mr. Speaker:** On the point of order raised by the honourable Government House Leader, he does have a point of order. *Beauchesne's* Citation 409(2) advises that a supplementary question should not require a preamble.

\* \* \*

**Mr. Speaker:** I would ask the honourable member to please put his question.

**Mr. Reimer:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I will start it then with a question. Can the minister also inform this House—there seems to be a continuous increase of gang activity in public housing—whether this problem has been addressed and whether they are working in any type of program with the police on gangs that are now occupying a lot of the tenants' residences within Manitoba Housing complexes, whether there have been further initiatives to try to quell gang activity in public housing?

\*(13:50)

**Mr. Sale:** If I may, just on the previous question, tell the member opposite that there were no complaints from that building in regard to violence during the month of December. The only previous complaint in recent months was another suite in another area, so not involving this person. So this is not a situation where there was any previous complaint about this particular person.

In regard to the violence issue in regard to gangs, I am informed that in fact the opposite is true. We have removed a number of people who allegedly had gang activities or gang linkages in a couple of projects. I will not name them for obvious reasons, but one of the ones that the former member was involved with in terms of a tenant-management initiative, it is one of those.

We have had a substantial reduction in turnover. We have had a substantial reduction in the number of students who have moved from one school to another. We have had a substantial reduction in vacancy and in complaints, and that is a matter of co-operation among Child and Family Services, Housing, the community constable, the community school. I am very pleased with the progress that is being made in that particular building.

### Aboriginal Child and Family Services Transition Plans

**Mr. Glen Cummings (Ste. Rose):** The devolution and transfer of services to Métis and Aboriginal Family Services is proceeding quickly. This is a sensitive and a matter for care of children, which is a very critical area, and a process that we support. I wonder if this minister is prepared to share any of his transition plans with the public.

**Hon. Tim Sale (Minister of Family Services and Housing):** I am delighted with that question, and I am delighted to know that the Opposition shares support for this important initiative. I am pleased to tell the member that over 200 Manitobans from all areas of our province who work in the Child and Family Services system and in allied systems are currently completing, under seven working groups, the initial planning process which will yield the grist for a combined implementation plan that we hope will be laid before the three partners, the Métis Federation, First Nations of Manitoba, north and south, and the Government of Manitoba in the spring. We expect that that will be a very detailed plan. I am very pleased with the amount of grass roots participation that there has been.

I am also very pleased that the current agencies, non-Aboriginal agencies, as well as the labour organizations have supported this initiative, and we will be working together with them to provide the continuity of service that I think is so important in this area.

**Mr. Cummings:** The continuity of care is critical, and this process is supported by the current staff, but many of them are feeling excluded, despite the fact that the minister says

that he has large numbers participating in his transition. Will he provide some assurance to the current staff as to what their future may be?

**Mr. Sale:** I think that there are three very serious components of this initiative. The first is the care of children. First Nations and Métis people have for too long been unable to care for their children and families unless they were in a specific situation on reserve and in the case of the Métis people not at all.

The second concern is the ability of the new agencies and the expanded Aboriginal First Nations agencies to undertake this responsibility which means a process of finding the skilled people or training more people. This will be a job initiative that will ultimately provide well over 500 skilled, permanent, well-paying jobs to communities who badly need those jobs and who will become capable, I am sure, of using the resources associated with those jobs very well. Then, finally, but not least, and we are really thinking in a triangle here, Mr. Speaker, we have the existing staff who have served faithfully and creatively in many cases the children and families of all of the province. They must have a fair treatment in this process as well.

\* (13:55)

**Mr. Cummings:** Mr. Speaker, very briefly, about 70 percent of the caseload may well be transferred. What does this minister have in the future for some 300 of his current employees?

**Mr. Sale:** I think the member has a copy of the memorandum which was signed as well as the protocol. If he does not, I would be glad to supply it to him. In that, there is a commitment on the part of all the parties, all the signatories, to a labour force adjustment program which will be fair to all involved. The decisions and discussions in regard to that adjustment program have been underway for some time. I hope we will reach a conclusion fairly shortly.

#### **Health Care System Service Availability—Rural Manitoba**

**Mr. Larry Maguire (Arthur-Virden):** On November 16, Mr. Bill Russell of Melita suffered a severely cut thumb. The doctor in

Melita tried to contact doctors in Brandon and was told to send him directly to Winnipeg. With no one in Brandon being available to treat him, his neighbours then drove him all the way to Winnipeg to the Health Sciences Centre, but in the end part of the thumb still had to be amputated. Can the Minister of Health explain why a patient in Melita must travel at least four hours to Winnipeg in order to obtain adequate treatment for a severely cut thumb?

**Hon. Dave Chomiak (Minister of Health):** As has been the tradition in the past, I would appreciate if the member would forward to me the particular instances and the particular information regarding that, and I will do a follow-up, as we always do and have always done in this Chamber with respect to particular issues concerning patient care.

**Mr. Maguire:** Mr. Speaker, can the Minister of Health, who promised he would fix health care in six months, explain why he is allowing this kind of highway medicine to be inflicted on rural Manitobans?

**Mr. Chomiak:** Mr. Speaker, as I indicated, I would appreciate if the member would forward the particulars of that to me. I might also add that we put more resources into emergency services in rural Manitoba this year than at any time in the past decade. When members opposite had the ability to make changes, they did not. In our first year of government we put more resources into emergency services in rural Manitoba than at any time over the past decade by members opposite.

**Mr. Maguire:** Then what assurance can the Minister of Health give these rural Manitobans, if he has provided all of these options and dollars to be put available to them, that they can be treated in or near their homes in their home communities when under his watch they have to travel this far to Winnipeg to get something as simple as a severely cut thumb treated?

**Mr. Chomiak:** As I said, I would appreciate if the member would forward the particulars so we can follow up on that with respect. I might add that one of the issues we are looking at that I indicated in Estimates to members opposite was a central bed registry that was recommended I

believe in 1994 to members opposite that would help co-ordinate in terms of activities. In addition, we are also going to be putting in place a call centre in Brandon that will co-ordinate emergency services across the province of Manitoba, something that had not been done before. Mr. Speaker—

**Mr. Speaker:** Order. The honourable Member for Turtle Mountain, on a point of order.

#### Point of Order

**Mr. Mervin Tweed (Turtle Mountain):** Mr. Speaker, the question is very obvious. The patient needed a doctor, not an ambulance service, and the question was why was he bypassed through Brandon to go to Winnipeg for a service, to see a doctor.

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

**Mr. Chomiak:** Mr. Speaker, as I indicated in my first, second and third responses, I would appreciate the members providing particulars, because they have been so wrong on so many issues regarding this matter that I need the particulars in order to determine.

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

\* (14:00)

**Mr. Marcel Laurendeau (Opposition House Leader):** On the same point of order, Mr. Speaker, I do not believe the honourable minister was speaking to the point of order. I do believe he was just completing his answer to the question.

**Mr. Speaker:** On the point of order raised by the honourable Member for Turtle Mountain, he does not have a point of order. It is a dispute over the facts.

\* \* \*

**Mr. Speaker:** The honourable Minister of Health, to conclude his comments.

**Mr. Chomiak:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We have been working with local communities. There have been some major expansions; there will be some expansions in the future. I am very pleased to announce that two years ago on today's date there were 39 people in the hallways, today there are none.

#### Livestock Stewardship Initiative Report Release

**Mr. Jack Penner (Emerson):** A year ago this province had a flourishing construction industry in rural Manitoba. Last spring the Government announced the Livestock Stewardship Initiative which has virtually brought the construction industry to a halt. The panel's final report was supposed to be released this fall. Could the Minister of Conservation explain why the report has not been released, and who is responsible for the delay?

**Hon. Oscar Lathlin (Minister of Conservation):** As far as I know, there is no delay in the report to come forth. The report has been finished. It is under review. As soon as the review is finished, we will announce our policies as to how we are going to implement the recommendations contained therein.

**Mr. Jack Penner:** Could the Minister of Conservation then tell us why the panel told rural Manitobans that they were supposed to have the report delivered to the minister by the end of October, and is this Government trying to influence the outcome of this report?

**Mr. Lathlin:** As far as I understand, the report has been delayed somewhat, but it is not due to anything that the Government has said or done. The Government has not ordered the report to be delayed. In fact the panel has requested more time to work on the report, and then it will be given to Government in due course.

**Mr. Jack Penner:** I would like to then ask the Minister of Labour, in regard to the comments that she made in committee last year about instituting her labour regulations on farm labour and the farm industry, what kinds of discussions has she had with the panel, and is she trying to influence the panel's recommendations.

**Hon. Becky Barrett (Minister of Labour):** The information, as the Minister of Conservation has said, will be forthcoming. It is important that the panel do its work, do its work thoroughly, do its work well, do its work properly and not be held to a particular timeline if the panel itself is not ready.

When the information has come to the Government, all departments, all parts of Government that are involved in this situation and in this issue will review the panel's report and recommendations, and information then will be forthcoming. Does the member want us to do something in a hurry or not do something like they spent 11 years not doing it? We are addressing the issue.

#### **Knapp Dam and Pump Station Information Tabling Request**

**Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights):** My question to the Minister of Conservation is a follow-up to yesterday. The concrete for the Knapp Dam and Pump Station had rigorous specifications, the equivalent of 5000 pounds per square inch I believe, as well as thorough testing, to ensure the concrete's ability to withstand wet conditions. Since there are rumours that some of the concrete tested may have fallen short of expectations and specifications, I would ask the minister today—

**Some Honourable Members:** Oh, oh.

**Mr. Speaker:** Order. It is very, very difficult to hear the question, and I would ask the co-operation of all honourable members.

**Some Honourable Members:** Oh, oh.

**Mr. Speaker:** Order. It is very difficult to hear the honourable member's question. I would ask for the co-operation of all honourable members, please.

**Mr. Gerrard:** I would ask the minister whether he will table in this House the full results of all the testing so that the public will know for sure whether this dam meets the specifications that were laid out and whether it is safe.

**Hon. Oscar Lathlin (Minister of Conservation):** As I have repeatedly told the member in his previous questioning, yes, there was a problem encountered in the project, a very minor problem, a problem that can be easily fixed. I also advised the member, I believe yesterday or the day before, that we are looking at the issue of whether it was as a result of a design deficiency or whatever it was. I have also promised the member in previous questioning, my responses to his previous questions, that if we find that there were some serious oversights on the part of the general contractor and the consultant, we will be taking appropriate action.

**Mr. Gerrard:** All I ask the minister is to table the full results of the testing so that the results can be open and transparent and we can know for sure the extent of this problem that the minister refers to.

**Mr. Lathlin:** Mr. Speaker, I take this issue very seriously, and for that reason I have advised our staff in The Pas that I will be touring the project this weekend when I am in The Pas because I want to get a first-hand look myself, know exactly what the problem is and how it is going to be rectified to ensure that we have a structure that is sound and safe.

**Mr. Gerrard:** The minister's question leads us to wonder about the problem, whether it is minor or severe. Would the minister tell us more about the problem so that the public can better understand what the circumstances are?

**Mr. Lathlin:** Mr. Speaker, I have already advised the member several times now that the problem that was encountered was a very minor one, one that is being fixed, and that the structure of the dam is not compromised. I do not know what else to tell him.

#### **Income Assistance Caseload Levels**

**Mr. Doug Martindale (Burrows):** Mr. Speaker, it is well known that under the previous government and under the watch of the MLA for River East (Mrs. Mitchelson), Manitoba had the highest level ever of social assistance cases, namely 46 652 cases in the fiscal year '93-94. I would like to ask—

**Some Honourable Members:** Oh, oh.

**Mr. Speaker:** Order. The honourable Member for Burrows, please put your question.

**Mr. Martindale:** I would like to ask the Minister of Family Services what has happened to caseload levels since we took office and why.

\* (14:10)

**Hon. Tim Sale (Minister of Family Services and Housing):** Well, Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to advise the member and the House that since we took office 3050 people on general assistance have left caseload. That is a reduction of about 30 percent in a 13-month period, actually a 12-month period.

I think, in regard to the second part of his question, it is a combination of a strong economy where there are job opportunities, and I am pleased that under our Government our economy has actually strengthened its performance. I think that is wonderful. As well, we strengthened the job centre, which was begun under the previous government, but we have strengthened it, added staff. We have also created Building Independence which has allowed people to move into the workforce with some supports. We have created the Career Action Pathing Centre for 150 high-risk people on long-term assistance. We have built training programs for mothers on social assistance so they can become day-care providers. We are helping people to move across the bridges of opportunity into our economy.

#### **Minister of Conservation Meeting Requests**

**Mr. Harry Enns (Lakeside):** Mr. Speaker, we are often told and hear from members opposite about what we did or did not do in the last 11 years. One of the things we did do, ministers of that government, was take advantage of when the municipal officials were gathered in convention, as they were just a little over a week ago, to make ourselves available to the concerns that they might have. Understandably drainage was a No. 1 priority with municipal officials throughout Manitoba.

Seven or eight, if not more, meetings were set up to have a meeting with the Minister of Conservation. Can he give us and this House and more importantly the municipal officials a reasonable explanation of why he cancelled each and every one of them?

**Hon. Oscar Lathlin (Minister of Conservation):** I thank the member for the question. I want to tell him that I take the issue of drainage challenges that we have in Manitoba very seriously. I want to remind him that he was in office for 11 years and if he met with AMM people during those conferences, I am sure from time to time they came to him outlining the problems they were having with regard to drainage in their communities. But what happened was the Budget was cut. There were staff positions that were cut. As a matter of fact, during Estimates last year the Member for Lakeside advised me that I had a very difficult job because his previous government had literally gutted the Department of Natural Resources.

#### **Water Resources Drainage Application Processing**

**Mr. Harry Enns (Lakeside):** Mr. Speaker, specifically the R.M. of Rosser, along with the \$25 that is now required just to send an application in, did so in May. In September they asked about it. The department lost it, were asked to reapply. This is now eight months later.

Is that a reasonable performance on the part of his department, of this Government?

**Hon. Oscar Lathlin (Minister of Conservation):** Mr. Speaker, again, I advise the Member for Lakeside that I take my job seriously and that the meetings that I have with representatives from AMM are taken seriously. In fact, the other day I advised the Assembly that I have indeed gone out to the communities, toured the ditches that the member and his former government had neglected for 11 years.

So I do not know where he gets the idea that I am ignoring the people. Meetings are being scheduled almost on a daily basis with municipalities.

**Mr. Enns:** One final question, Mr. Speaker. Specifically, on behalf of the R.M. of Rosser whose cheque you cashed eight months ago, they have yet to hear from this minister, from this department. When can they expect to hear from him?

**Mr. Lathlin:** Mr. Speaker, I would like to advise the member again that I am doing my job to the best of my ability. I will not sit there forever ignoring the pleas made by the members of the AMM.

When I was in Brokenhead two weeks ago, I asked the people I was meeting with who their member of the Legislative Assembly was, and they told me who he was. I asked them did you ever lobby him, and they said every day.

#### **Water Resources Assiniboine River**

**Mr. Glen Cummings (Ste. Rose):** Mr. Speaker, the Assiniboine River is a major water course across the western side of this province and across the southern part of the province as well. As we speak, the demands for irrigation, the demands for drinking water, the demands for effluent management are all being increased on that river.

I would like to know what plans the Minister of Conservation has for the future usage of the Assiniboine River.

**Hon. Oscar Lathlin (Minister of Conservation):** Mr. Speaker, yes, we have plans for the Assiniboine River. In fact, we have initiated a study that will look at the health of the Assiniboine River, look at what capacity it may have for the future.

I might also add that when I met with the Assiniboine River study board yesterday as a matter of fact, they informed me that the Clean Environment Commission had recommended to the previous government when the diversion discussions were being held that they do an assessment on the Assiniboine River. Apparently this previous government did not listen to that board and so nothing was done. So now we are doing a study.

#### **Assiniboine River Advisory Committee Meeting Request**

**Mr. Glen Cummings (Ste. Rose):** Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Conservation has chosen to ignore the work of the Assiniboine basin advisory board. They have been trying to have meetings with him since he came into office. So if he wants some advice on what he can do with the future of the river, why does he not want to meet with people like Professor Tim Ball and those of the capacity of a Dr. Ian Dickson?

**Hon. Oscar Lathlin (Minister of Conservation):** Mr. Speaker, I should advise the member that yesterday I met with Doctor Dickson in my office, and we discussed the history of that particular board, how he got going and all the valuable work that he had done. I informed Doctor Dickson that I would continue to work with him and am very much interested in receiving the advice that he has to give.

#### **Assiniboine River Advisory Committee Report Recommendations**

**Mr. Glen Cummings (Ste. Rose):** Mr. Speaker, Mr. Dickson is available. The report is completed. When will he receive the report and get on with it?

**Hon. Oscar Lathlin (Minister of Conservation):** Yes, they gave me a copy of the report that was done last year, and we are reviewing it right now. I advised Doctor Dickson yesterday that, because the Assiniboine River study had already been announced, initiated, he could probably serve in some useful capacity advising that particular group studying the Assiniboine River.

\* (14:20)

#### **Assiniboine River Advisory Committee Meeting Request**

**Mr. Leonard Derkach (Russell):** The minister confuses us when he rises to give an answer to a question because I am afraid he does not understand what the real issues are here. The Assiniboine Advisory Board was put into place to advise users and to advise Government with regard to the water levels, with regard to water safety, with regard to water availability on the Assiniboine River. Members of council, along with the board, have asked repeatedly why the minister does not meet with this board.

I want to ask the minister what the status of this board is and whether or not he will acknowledge to meet with them to receive their advice to assure Manitobans that the availability of water on the Assiniboine River is safe and is adequate.

**Hon. Oscar Lathlin (Minister of Conservation):** My plans are to meet again with Doctor Dickson and some of his colleagues in the near future to discuss how they could fit into the study that was announced for the Assiniboine River. So future meetings are being planned.

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

### MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

#### Helen Betty Osborne Foundation

**Mr. Gerard Jennissen (Flin Flon):** Last night I was privileged to attend the committee meeting regarding Bill 5, The Helen Betty Osborne Foundation Act. With this legislation, the current Manitoba government, Mr. Speaker, has formally acknowledged the miscarriage of justice in the Helen Betty Osborne case. Last night Helen Betty's mother, Justine Osborne, and her sister Cecilia spoke eloquently to the committee of the wave of grief, pain and sorrow that swept over the family after Helen Betty's murder. That tragic and senseless murder on November 13, 1971, shocked all of us as Canadians and as Manitobans. Now, nearly three decades later, finally, there is a sense of justice for the family.

Helen Betty Osborne of Norway House had a dream. Her dream was to become a teacher. That dream was shattered by a brutal abduction and murder characterized by sexism and racism. However, the foundation will now make it possible to expand Helen Betty's dream by enabling many young Aboriginal people to become teachers. All of us owe a great debt of thanks to Judges Murray Sinclair and Alvin Hamilton who, through the Aboriginal Justice Inquiry report, spotlighted the flawed investigation and court case after Helen Betty's murder.

Over the past five years, a concentrated campaign for justice has led to the establishment

of the foundation. Some of the people who led that fight include former Grand Chief Phil Fontaine, Norway House Chief Ron Evans, former MKO Grand Chief George Muswaggon and Freda Albert of the Norway House Women's Wellness Circle. As well, I commend the current Minister of Justice (Mr. Mackintosh) for bringing some justice to a landmark case that has so tarnished the reputation of this province. Finally, all of us should commend the Minister of Aboriginal and Northern Affairs (Mr. Robinson) who has never wavered and who has worked incredibly hard for attempting to establish a justice system that really does meet the needs of Aboriginal people. As well, that minister played a pivotal role in the healing journey of the Osborne family, and I thank him on behalf of all of us.

#### Fort Garry Mall Walking Program

**Mrs. Joy Smith (Fort Garry):** I am pleased to rise in the House today to commend the many volunteers who work so diligently in assisting with the Fort Garry mall walking program. This program was started to respond to a concern among seniors about being housebound during the winter months.

The Fort Garry mall walking program arranges for transportation between the participant's own place of residence and the St. Vital mall. By providing seniors with an opportunity to get involved in the community all year round, they are also able to regain their independence and build and maintain valuable friendships.

I would also like to take this opportunity to thank several individuals who have been instrumental to the success of this program. Bill and B. J. Langden from King Transportation, as well as Flo Proulx have secured three buses for the mall walk program. Jo-Ann Jeanson from the St. Vital mall has been very helpful in keeping everything organized once participants arrive. Other volunteers, such as Joan Stainer and Lillian Puhach have also donated much of their time to this worthy cause.

Finally, Mr. Speaker, I would like to congratulate everyone who has volunteered his or her time to the Fort Garry mall walk. I believe that the success of this program should serve as

an example to all Manitoba communities of what a big difference we can make to improve the quality of life for the seniors in our neighbourhoods.

### **St. James Senior Centre**

**Mr. Jim Rondeau (Assiniboia):** I rise today to highlight some initiatives of the St. James Senior Centre. This centre services seniors in the ridings of Assiniboia, St. James and Kirkfield Park. These constituencies have very high concentrations of seniors, which is expected to increase over the next few years.

I understand that the Winnipeg Regional Health Authority is currently undertaking a needs assessment to integrate health promotion and prevention into the senior centre. As the centre is very well utilized in terms of social and recreational activities, including the Tae Kwon Do with Jane, who I previously talked about, and an expanding collection of athletic machines and activities, I think this initiative will integrate well into the senior centre and its activities.

Another example of this initiative is the flu and pneumonia immunization shots offered in 1999. In 1999, actually, 680 people took the shot. This year, well over 1000 people got immunizations. Under the previous government the number was zero. It is using prevention instead of acting after the fact.

Laurie Green, the primary health care nurse on site, saw over 300 clients last month working on issues like blood pressure, diabetes and other health concerns. I would like to commend the regional health authority, St. James Senior Centre, the senior staff, who help do preventive health care and prevention in a good community integrated philosophy for health care. Thank you very much for a job well done.

### **Tuxedo Constituency Seniors Residences**

**Mrs. Heather Stefanson (Tuxedo):** Yesterday and today I had the opportunity to visit several seniors homes in my constituency, and there are a few people that I would like to thank for welcoming me to visit their facilities. I would

like to thank Mike Gagnon and Bob Sharpe of Hendon Apartments. I would like to thank Ken Reimche from West Park Manor, Melba Allen from Eastern Star Chalet, Verdie Peters, the marketing representative for The Wellington. I would like to thank Maichaela Ingleson from Columbus Courts, Larry Todd from Extendicare Tuxedo Villa and Terry MacKay from the Canadian Order of Foresters, Haven No. 2. I would also like to thank Heather Mutcheson, Linda MacIntosh and Krista Ruston from the new Portsmouth Retirement Residence.

I would also like to take this opportunity to thank all of the residents of the homes for coming out and having coffee with me this morning. We had some excellent and very interesting conversations. Thank you very much.

### **Bethesda Foundation**

**Mr. Jim Penner (Steinbach):** Mr. Speaker, it is a pleasure to rise today to inform the House about an organization in my constituency which is dedicated to the health and well-being of the residents of Manitoba.

On September 21 of this year the Bethesda Foundation celebrated the 20th year of its establishment. The goal of the Bethesda Foundation at its inception was to raise a quarter-million dollars over 10 years, which would be the foundation of an account from which 75 percent of the interest would be used to help fund capital purchases at Steinbach's Bethesda Hospital and personal care home.

\* (14:30)

Like many other initiatives in my constituency, Mr. Speaker, the initial goal was greatly surpassed and over the past 20 years the foundation has raised in excess of \$2 million with approximately 90 percent of the interest generated being returned to the community and to the health district.

There have been a great many people who have contributed to the ongoing success and development of the Bethesda Foundation, too many to mention in the time I am permitted, but allow me to make special mention of Mr. P. J. Reimer who was the first chairman of the

foundation and former hospital administrator Peter Pauls. These gentlemen, along with other founders, have directly and indirectly touched the lives of thousands of residents in my area. Their vision has helped to provide comfort to many in their greatest hours of need. Of course, I must thank the many residents who sustained and grew the foundation over the years through their generous contributions. Without the generosity of the residents of the region, the success of the foundation would not have been possible.

Mr. Speaker, I am sure all members of the Assembly join me when I offer congratulations to the Bethesda Foundation on its 20th anniversary year and wish them many years of continued success.

## ORDERS OF THE DAY

### THRONE SPEECH DEBATE (Fifth Day of Debate)

**Mr. Speaker:** Adjourned debate on the proposed motion of the honourable Member for Dauphin-Roblin (Mr. Struthers) and the proposed motion of the Honourable Leader of the Official Opposition (Mr. Murray) in amendment thereto, standing in the name of the honourable Minister of Consumer and Corporate Affairs (Mr. Lemieux), who has 13 minutes remaining.

**Hon. Ron Lemieux (Minister of Consumer and Corporate Affairs):** It is a pleasure to continue my remarks with regard to the Throne Speech. I will attempt to be brief. I know there are many other speakers who wish to have some input into the Throne Speech, and so I will try to summarize my remarks of yesterday and conclude them within the next few minutes.

I would just like to say one important remark that was made by many members in the House is the large numbers of Manitobans, young and old, that left this province over the last number of years. Certainly what we would like to do is welcome them back with open arms. I really think that we are finding many, many companies and many more Manitobans who left the province are seeing the initiatives that are

being put forward as we have in this Throne Speech, to welcome back many, many Manitobans who had to leave to find employment elsewhere.

Mr. Speaker, I am pleased and it certainly is a pleasure indeed to be able to say that Manitoba is vibrant and it is well once again and as Manitobans we should be extremely proud to welcome these Manitobans who had to leave the province for various reasons. We are pleased, again I would say, to welcome them back with open arms.

Manitoba has the best soil, the best water anywhere in North America, and yes, I might even say the best government as well in North America. What I would like to say is that with all of these advantages that we have in Manitoba there is no reason why we, as all Manitobans, cannot put our time and energy and all of our initiatives together to truly have one of the best provinces in all of this land.

I know that in days to come, Mr. Speaker, we are going to be seeing a lot of those initiatives that this Government plans on putting forward. I know that the Minister of Industry, Trade and Mines (Ms. Mihychuk) has met with numerous, numerous companies and different organizations that wished to come home and wished to come back to Manitoba and wished to invest in Manitoba, because they realized the workforce that we have here and the climate for very, very successful businesses and companies is welcoming them.

Now, Mr. Speaker, certainly during the last session there were a number of comments made by members opposite with regard to changes that we were making in legislation, but it does not take much to look across the border eastward to Ontario to see that they are looking at a 60-hour workweek and really having a detrimental effect, I believe, not only on the workers of Ontario but certainly on many initiatives with regard to companies wanting to start there.

*Mr. Harry Schellenberg, Acting Speaker, in the Chair*

We have one of the most stable workforces in all of Canada, and we certainly have some of

the most hardworking Canadians anywhere in this country. I believe this is, to a degree, why our economy is booming and thriving.

I just want to comment, as I stated before, just briefly to summarize my comments by saying that the Throne Speech that was brought forward once again shows balance. I think what Manitobans are looking for in their government is certainly not a government that veers one way or another because of the sign of dark clouds on the horizon for whatever reason. They expect the Government to be balanced, and they expect the Government to take a look at all options and be consultative and certainly have that type of approach. I believe that this Government has, and you will soon see through the initiatives that we are going to be putting forward—and many of the initiatives have been announced in the Throne Speech—that this will certainly come to fruition.

Now, I just want to say, in closing, that this Government does have a vision. The vision has been put forward not only with the five commitments we made in the last election, but we have carried that over through the Throne Speech of the first year of our mandate, and now with the number of different items that have been listed within this Throne Speech, Mr. Acting Speaker, there truly is a vision there, a vision to make Manitoba more prosperous, a vision that is inclusive to include all Manitobans, whether they be from Emerson, Manitoba, Russell, Manitoba, Shoal Lake, Grand Rapids, Churchill, The Pas, Thompson. *[interjection]* Including Brandon in that, as well, as the Member for Brandon East suggested.

We are going to be inclusive to make sure that all Manitobans are going to benefit from the wealth of this province. Mr. Acting Speaker, I am going to conclude my remarks on that. Thank you.

**Mr. John Loewen (Fort Whyte):** Mr. Acting Speaker, prior to commencing my comments on the Throne Speech and the amendment, I would like to take this opportunity to offer my condolences.

I know there have been a number of members in this House who have lost loved ones

since we last sat in August, in particular the Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs (Ms. Friesen) and the Minister of Agriculture (Ms. Wowchuk), as well as the Member for Portage la Prairie (Mr. Faurshou), and quite likely there have been others. Our family, too, suffered almost a year ago the loss of a loved one, and I know what difficult times it brings for them. So I just want to let them know that in these difficult times and in their time of grieving that all members of the House are thinking of them and praying for them and wishing them well.

Mr. Acting Speaker, I would also like to take this opportunity to congratulate and welcome our new pages. They serve a very useful role in this Chamber, in particular seeing that we have the odd sip of water at our desk when we are speaking. It is a more important role than that, but that is certainly one of the very valuable services that we call upon the pages for. I would like to congratulate them for being chosen and wish them well in their tenure here. I hope they find it to be an enjoyable and educational experience.

I would also like to take this opportunity to congratulate and welcome new members to this Legislative Assembly, particularly the Member for Tuxedo (Mrs. Stefanson). We have the pleasure of sitting in the same row. I would also like to congratulate the new MLA for Kirkfield Park, the new Leader of the Opposition party. It is encouraging for us in this House to see other citizens willing to stand up and to step forward and put their other lives on hold to serve the people of Manitoba in this capacity. I not only congratulate them for their win, I congratulate the other candidates who had the courage to stand up and be recognized in the last two by-elections.

Having come from a household where both of my parents ran unsuccessfully, I can assure yourself and the House that we were taught to respect the process and not just congratulate the winners. In that respect, I guess I should also offer my congratulations to the New Democratic Party who although they may be saddened by the fact that they ended up in third place in both elections we should note that in at least one of those by-elections they were able to get their deposit back. Given the lack of leadership they

those by-elections at least they were able to get their deposit back.

\* (14:40)

I would now like to turn my attention to the Throne Speech and to the amendment that has been put forward. I must say as I sat here for the second time in my short tenure as an MLA listening to the Throne Speech, it was very difficult to remain silent. Out of respect though, I did. It was very difficult to sit still, so I found myself taking some rather copious notes, even though I knew at the time that I would soon be receiving a copy of the speech. It was very frustrating to sit here and listen to a speech that I believe not only demonstrated to the people of Manitoba that this Government does not have a vision from which to build on but in fact, even worse, they have no plan.

It is one thing not to have a vision for where they want to take the province but it is I think a real disservice to the people of Manitoba to come before this Legislature with a Throne Speech that presents no plan, presents no ideas for the people of Manitoba on what this Government intends to do to improve their lot or to set a direction that in fact will carry this province forward for the next three years, not even to mention the fact that they talked about the year 2020, and just because they did does not mean they have any idea on how they are going to get there.

Just for their edification, a vision can be defined and is defined as intelligent foresight. I must say in reading this Speech from the Throne that it is totally void of intelligent foresight. I think that is a mistreatment of the people of Manitoba. After reading it in more detail, I could not help but be drawn back to the first Throne Speech that this Government delivered a little over a year ago. In retrospect the significant features of the first Throne Speech were not what was in the Throne Speech but what was left out of the Throne Speech. Again that is what we have here in their second go-around.

The original Throne Speech of this Government a year ago fell short on the same issues. There was no vision, there was no plan. There was a bunch of proposals which would be

followed up by ad hoc announcements. There were words to one effect, actions to the other effect. Unfortunately for Manitobans, when they elected this Government they elected a government that is more interested in managing spin, more interested in tomorrow's press release than they are in actually providing good government to the citizens of this wonderful province.

That has been obvious from their very first day of governing, from their very first Throne Speech. When they started to talk about a deficit and they used Deloitte and Touche, and they used them I think in the worst of possible ways by maligning their name by claiming that they had been hired to do an audit. If they look back to their first Throne Speech, I mean I just cannot believe that in that Throne Speech they actually declared that, and I quote: "The preliminary report of the independent audit into the Province's finances," and at that time they knew full well, and in fact Deloitte and Touche stated publicly that they were never hired to conduct an audit. So here we have a government from day one that has been attempting to manage spin, attempting to create stories as opposed to governing for the people of Manitoba.

I would remind the members opposite that that was followed shortly by a minister leaking a document. In fact, it might have been a few days earlier that the minister announced to her horror that there were over a hundred pieces of artwork missing from this building. Of course, when the actual homework was done, when the staff did their job and tracked down the pieces of art, there were fewer than two. Did we receive an apology from that minister? No. What we received from that minister was very hollow in its nature and I think once again speaks of what this Government is all about. I think that is disappointing.

When I read this Throne Speech I am overwhelmed by the fact that it is more notable for what is not there than for what is there. I think that was magnified and has been magnified by the words of the various members opposite who have stood up diligently, as is required by their party, to try and defend this document which contains so little about hope and

opportunity for future generations of this province.

What this Government should have been talking about in terms of their Throne Speech was a commitment to Manitoba to keep this province competitive, competitive on all levels so that our best and our brightest would find reasons to want to stay in this province, to make their homes here, to continue to build their careers here on opportunities. Instead, this Government in this Throne Speech lays out more misinformation for the people of Manitoba. This Government talks about cutting taxes. What this Government does is raise taxes. Again, the two do not meet.

This Government committed during its election campaign to continue through with the promise to reduce the corporate provincial tax rate from 48.5 percent to 47 percent. They committed to that. Instead of following through with that, their Minister of Finance (Mr. Selinger) in his very first Budget chose to delink taxes. The reason he did that, I purport, is to ensure that the revenue to the Province of Manitoba was not affected by cuts in the federal tax regime. He made a conscious decision, based on delinking and based on setting the rates where he set them, not to pass the full benefit of the federal tax reductions through to the people of Manitoba. At the same time, he had the nerve to stand in this House and outside this House and pat himself on the back for cutting taxes when in fact—and we demonstrated this clearly in Estimates—this provincial Finance Minister actually raised taxes.

To further that, in this Throne Speech there is absolutely no indication that this Government is willing to follow in the footsteps of the federal government who once again have announced that as of January 1 personal income tax rates for all levels will decrease and there will be tax relief for all citizens of this country. What do we have instead? Instead, we have from this Government a determination to keep the provincial income tax rates high, higher than they would have been had he chosen not to delink and had he left the provincial tax rate at 47 percent, and what is the result? The result is going to be felt by people all across this province, particularly the young who are making

choices on where they are going to build their careers, where they are going to build their future in this great country. This Finance Minister (Mr. Selinger), single-handedly, has removed any incentive that these people would have to start building their careers in Manitoba.

What this Finance Minister has done is he has ensured that any single individual who earns \$25,000 or more is paying more personal income tax on a provincial level as a result of his Budget than they would have had he done nothing—any individual earning \$25,000 or more. Now \$25,000 is not very much money, in particular when you look at the starting wage of people coming out of university, people coming out of technical school, people who have invested significantly in their own training. They are paying the highest income taxes in the country.

\* (14:50)

The Finance Minister (Mr. Selinger) repeatedly has stated and he tries to defend his Budget by telling us how he has increased the child tax benefit, and to his credit, he has. That in itself is a noble venture and if all else had remained the same and he had left the income tax rates at 47 percent, I would be here today congratulating him instead of denouncing him. Because what he has done by setting his tax rates, what this Government has done, what the Minister of Finance has done is ensured that any individual in any family of four with a single income earner that earns \$60,000 or more is going to pay over \$300 more this year in provincial income tax than if this Finance Minister had done nothing. That is a significant number, so in spite of his claim to have increased child benefits, that typical family of four with two children is paying more tax as a result of his Budget. In fact, not only is a family earning \$60,000 paying more, any family with a single income earner that has two children that earns \$45,000 or more is paying more tax.

Now that should be of significant interest to all the members opposite, the backbenchers as well as the ministers who are affected even more than members who are not in Cabinet in terms of the amount of extra income tax, provincial income tax, that they will be paying this year as

opposed to had the Finance Minister done nothing.

It is not only that he has raised taxes, it is the direction that he is taking us in. So, instead of talking in this Throne Speech about a commitment to Manitobans to keep this province competitive, Mr. Acting Speaker, a commitment to young Manitobans that they can build a career in this great province in Manitoba and not be penalized, he is saying exactly the opposite. He is saying build your career here, and we are going to make sure that you live in the highest tax regime in all of Canada. Well, that just does not work.

I have heard countless members opposite stand up and try and take credit for what is going on in this province. We do have a strong economy. We have a very strong economy. The reason we have a strong economy is because we had 11 years of consistent good government that managed its finances. We have lost that in one fell swoop. So while this economy will not turn overnight, while the strength of the U.S. economy and the discrepancy in the Canadian and the U.S. dollar are the primary drivers of this economy, that will not last forever.

We are starting to see a downturn in the U.S. economy which will be felt by a multiplier effect in Canada, and the result, I am afraid, will be bad news for Manitobans. Because when this economy turns, and it will turn because it always turns, the effect is going to be felt most severely in those jurisdictions which are the least competitive. What this Finance Minister has done in the last Throne Speech and what he has assured in this Throne Speech is that Manitoba will be one of the least competitive jurisdictions in all of North America. I think that is a sad state of affairs for the province and for the people that live in this great province.

It was with interest that I looked at the first quarter results that were published by this Government going through until June 2000 and interested in a disappointed way because I noticed then that in the first quarter of this year this Government has increased operating expenses to the tune of \$153.7 million. That is in three months; compared to the first three months of 1999, operating expenses have gone up \$153

million. I would ask the members opposite: Do the math. What that is going to translate into and what we will see by the end of the year is program expenditures that have risen by over \$600 million, which is roughly 10 percent of our budget.

So in one year they have managed to increase expenditures by 10 percent. I think this Government ought to be ashamed for that. They have built in program spending willy-nilly, without a plan, without any foresight. They simply wanted to dish it out as fast as it came in.

Instead of offering the people of this province a reward for their hard work, instead of following sound economic principles which, as anyone who has taken Economics 100, and I would hope there are some members opposite who have, would understand that in good times, in times of economic growth and times of success, that is the time when Government should be rewarding the hard work of its citizens by reducing their taxes, by reducing the Government's dependence on their money because, when the economy turns and the revenue tap starts to flow, this Government will have no option but to head back to the land of deficits, the land which they are very familiar with, because that is the land, and that is the time from which they come.

I would encourage members opposite to, at their next caucus meeting or at their next Cabinet meeting, and judging by the questions we see from the House from their backbenchers—they may not have caucus meetings. I do not know. They do not seem to be able to get their questions answered there, so they have to bring them here and misuse the time of the House for that. But perhaps, during one of those caucus meetings or one of those Cabinet meetings, they could talk to their colleagues and figure out if their Minister of Finance (Mr. Selinger), if their Premier (Mr. Doer), and if their Cabinet colleagues actually understand the economics of this province and actually have a plan to keep this province competitive. If they do, maybe they can encourage them to share it with the citizens of this province and to be willing to take feedback from the citizens of this province in the hope, over the course of the next two or three years, they can get it right.

I would like to remind this Government that they were not put in office, nowhere do they have a mandate from the people of Manitoba, to spend all the money they can get their hands on. They found that out very, very clearly in their dealing with the province's Crown corporations. They did it well. Quite frankly, the Member for Assiniboia (Mr. Rondeau), the Member for Dauphin-Roblin (Mr. Struthers) want to talk to me about Crown corporations.

Well, here are some facts that they should be aware of. Maybe they should work this in because, if they looked at the facts, if they did the numbers, they would understand what sound management of a Crown corporation is, in particular the Member for Dauphin-Roblin, when his address to move the Throne Speech went on rather at length about Crown corporations and the difference in vision that the old New Democrats across the way have from the Progressive Conservative Party in terms of dealing with Crown corporations.

There are very, very significant differences. The biggest difference, and the biggest difference that has been shown to the people of Manitoba, is that the Conservative government has the will, has the strength of character to see that Crown corporations are run on a sound basis, on a sound footing. One only has to look at the financial results of Manitoba Hydro. Manitoba Hydro, in the years 1981 to 1989, when you combine all those years under the governance of the NDP, the total income for all of those 10 years was just over \$50 million. In that time, they included years when they lost \$26 million, they lost \$18 million, they lost \$24 million, they lost \$16 million.

This is money that the people of Manitoba have invested. This Government, through its mismanagement of Crown corporations takes no responsibility and just throws it away. When you compare it to the sound management that the Conservative government brought to Crown corporations, when you look at the profits of Manitoba Hydro for the same period of time in the 1990s, the profit for Manitoba was \$573 million. That is what the people of Manitoba benefited from. They benefited from a government that oversaw the sound fiscal management of its Crown corporations.

\* (15:00)

What happens when one examines the figures of the Manitoba Public Insurance Corporation, the very corporation that this Government just got its hands slapped for trying to dip into? When you look at the record there between 1981 and 1988, that corporation cost the people of Manitoba close to \$70 million in losses thanks to the financial mismanagement of the New Democratic Party. When you look at it under the governance of the Conservative Party what do you see? You see a corporation that was turned around. You see a corporation whose net earnings over that period were \$87 million. Once again, you have a difference of over \$150 million.

That is the way Conservative governments manage the assets the people of Manitoba trust them with. They are not like this New Democratic Party who thinks that any Crown corporation is there simply for the convenience of their Government, to dip into and to strip a Crown corporation of half of its equity, half of its equity, at their will, just because they have instilled a chairwoman who has ties to one of the universities and that is where they want to instruct her to make a donation.

Even when they are caught, do they come forward and say, well, gee, we made a mistake. Maybe we should not have done that, maybe we should have consulted with the ratepayers before we just reached into the assets of the Crown corporation and decided to give them away. They try and spin the issue. They say, oh, no, no, it was not us. That is just something that the board decided to do and they did not tell us. Then all of a sudden, lo and behold, what do you know, the senior officer of the organization has to stand up and say hold it, government came to us, asked us if we could do it. We looked at it under the instruction of our board and told them if that is what they wanted us to do that in fact we could do it and we could survive.

We could not provide Manitobans with our mandate, which is to provide the lowest cost insurance, but we could provide this government with \$30 million to dump into their general revenue and use in that.

So, yes, there is a difference in philosophy between this side of the House and that side of the House when it comes to managing Crown corporations and managing government spending. If you ask the people of Manitoba, they will tell you clearly that their preference is for sound fiscal management of all of their assets, not only the tax dollars that they contribute to help this Government do the jobs that are necessary, but also in the management of their Crown corporations.

No mention in the Throne Speech of tax competitiveness, no mention of sound fiscal management. This Government has continued to carry on its old tradition of spending every penny that they can get their hands on.

I will concede to the members opposite, to the Government, that there are some worthwhile proposals in this Throne Speech. There are some things that are worth doing. There is no doubt about that. But again the difference in philosophy is how we approach those things. As we have seen from this Government in their Budget and what I am fearful of and what the people of Manitoba should be very cautious about is the fact that the members opposite, the members in Cabinet and the members in the back bench, actually believe that the way to help people is to create more bureaucracy, to create more agencies which duplicate services, to create more bureaucratic jobs in an effort to try and help the people.

Well, I would suggest to this Government and to the ministers that what they should be doing is focussing their efforts on getting things done, focussing their efforts on setting their priorities, on developing plans that will help them move those priorities along, and by actually getting out there and doing something. That is a far cry from what I see in this Throne Speech.

I think again there are so many ways that that is demonstrated, where the inaction of this Government does not live up to the words that we see in this Throne Speech or the words that we have seen in the last Throne Speech. This Throne Speech contradicts itself in many, many ways. The Throne Speech talks about sustainable

growth. It does not talk about competitiveness. You cannot have one without the other.

This Throne Speech talks about sustainable development. On the same hand, the Minister of Conservation (Mr. Lathlin), instead of living up to the laws of sustainable development, breaks the laws, breaks the laws regularly. We saw that in the last sitting of this House. He did not live up to The Sustainable Development Act, and he single-handedly eliminated the Manitoba Environment Council. So how do we talk about sustainable development, about sustainable economic growth when this Government is playing fast and loose with the laws, and just because it is inconvenient to them, they will decide to dismiss any watchdog agency that has been set up to hold them accountable and any other agency that decides not to terminate, they just say, well, hey, we are not going to bother meeting with them? We do not have to listen to them.

Mr. Acting Speaker, the lack of attention to following up the words in the Throne Speech with action I believe is absolutely deplorable.

Another contradiction in this Throne Speech is this Government's attempt to take credit for everything good that has happened in this province in the last 10 or 11 years. You know, I mean the Minister of Health (Mr. Chomiak), the Minister of Consumer and Corporate Affairs (Mr. Lemieux), I was a little afraid they were going to hurt their arms as they desperately tried to pat themselves on the back for initiatives that had started well before their time in office, initiatives that were undertaken when they were in Opposition and when they were taking on their role of complainers, for which they are so well-suited.

I think nothing demonstrates this more than two particular areas in this Throne Speech, one, which was not identified, which is health care. The Minister of Health admitted, and he has admitted over the course of the last year, that when he inherited the portfolio, 85 percent of what was happening was right and things were moving in the right direction, but in this House, will this minister admit that? No. He will stand up and try and preserve the myth that programs had been underfunded and not been tackled

when in fact he knows full well that this Government's decision to expand the long-term care homes in the province of Manitoba has had more to do with relieving some of the stress on the hospitals in this province than anything this Government has done or not done in the last 14 months.

Again, this Throne Speech talks about access to capital and how important that is. It is important, but what does this Government trot out to the public in terms of access to capital? They trot out programs that had been in place for three or four years. They trot out Keystone Technologies, which is a wonderful program. I would only remind this Government that a year before I became an MLA, I was looking at investing in Keystone Technologies. Now the last I heard this Government was not in place to start Keystone Technologies, but boy, do they want to take the credit now. The same thing with Kraus Industries.

**An Honourable Member:** Who put the money in?

**Mr. Loewen:** Well, the Minister of Industry and Mines wants to tell us who put the money in. Well, the minister signed a paper on a program that was so far down the road that she had no choice anyway, and you know what? She could have cancelled it. She could have cancelled it, I guess, but the money was budgeted. The money was already in the program. She just followed through with an initiative. So if she wants to stand up in this House and take credit for following through with an initiative that was started by the previous government, that is all fair.

That is all fair and well, but for this Government to try and stand up and take credit for program after program after program which was initiated under the previous government, I think the people of Manitoba will see through that and will come to understand quite clearly in the next election that, in fact, the programs that have been successful are the programs that were initiated by the Conservative government, followed through by the NDP government, and the programs that are unsuccessful are going to prove to be the ones that this Government has

tried to introduce on their own. I do not think there is any doubt about that.

\* (15:10)

This Throne Speech talks about e-commerce, talks about a bill that this House passed, that this government presented, and that, Mr. Acting Speaker, is a fallacy in members' opposite thinking. They think that by introducing a bill, a bill that really does not do much at the end of the day in this Legislature, that they have made some giant leaps forward, some giant strides in terms of helping the economic situation in Manitoba. Well, this Government is way behind the ball when it comes to that.

You do not drive e-commerce by passing a bill in this Legislature. You drive e-commerce by setting an environment, by creating a tax structure, by setting up incentives that make people want to start and build their businesses here. *[interjection]* The Member for Dauphin-Roblin (Mr. Struthers) says and, and, and. If the Member for Dauphin-Roblin had any solutions to this, I hope he would have identified them in his speech in moving the Throne Speech. He does not, so I will give him a clue, and maybe he can take this—well, he cannot take it to the Cabinet table, but if the caucus ever meets, maybe he will be able to take it there. Maybe one day he will be able to take it to the Cabinet table, I do not know. Hopefully, for his sake he will. I do not know if I would hope for the people of Manitoba that he will, but, anyway, hopefully one day he will, for his sake.

What business needs in Manitoba is hope, opportunity and a contract. So if this Government wants to look at ways of promoting e-commerce in Manitoba, they should look to their own departments. They should look to their own staff. They should look around this province and find businesses, find business people who have the strength and the vision to set up their own shop, and look for opportunities when they can give a contract to a Manitoba business, because if we are going to build Manitoba, if we are going to continue to build on this strong economy, we are going to need more businesses. We are going to need more home-grown businesses that are given an opportunity to succeed.

It is risky. It is not always the safe way. It is not always the easy way. Sometimes it requires a leap of faith to give a contract to a new start-up company, but that is what business thrives on. Business does not thrive on legislation being passed. Legislation in this House virtually 99 percent of the time only hurts business. It does not help business. We saw that in spades in Bill 44. Does this Government, do these members actually think they helped the economy of the province of Manitoba with their introduction through the back door of Bill 44? Well, the answer is no.

**An Honourable Member:** You do not want any government?

**Mr. Loewen:** Well, quite frankly, no government would be a lot better than the Government we are getting. But I would encourage this Government and the members opposite to do what they can do around their caucus, around their Cabinet table, to ensure that those entrepreneurs in this province that have the strength and have the brains and have the determination to start business in this province are rewarded as much as possible by the Government of Manitoba. *[interjection]* You know what? The member for Flin Flon (Mr. Jennissen) wants to tell me that I should be more concerned about the working people than about business people.

Well, I can assure the members opposite that by being concerned about the economy, by being concerned about the success and the ability for business to grow and thrive in this province, that that is doing more for the working people in this province than any bill, and, in particular, what that very damaging Bill 44 has done for the working people of Manitoba.

That bill that took away their right to vote, that took away their right to settle and that took away the atmosphere that had been created over the last 11 years that Manitoba was open for business, one piece of legislation. That took that away from all of those groups, and this Government should be embarrassed about it, they should be ashamed about it and they should repeal it as quickly as possible, before they do irreparable harm.

We sit here in this House and we talk amongst each other and we debate issues. What sometimes we miss is the feedback from the outside world. I can assure that members opposite, the Cabinet members and the backbenchers—*[interjection]* The businesses in Toronto, businesses in Alberta, businesses across this country were looking at opportunities in Manitoba. When Bill 44 was passed they stopped looking. They said why would we go to Manitoba with regressive labour laws. There may be the odd one that would come because of our electrical advantage, but by and large the vast majority of businesses will fly over. They will not look at Manitoba whatsoever, and that is what their Government has done.

I am coming close to the end of my comments on this bill because quite frankly there is not much in it to comment on. There is no hope. There is no vision. This is a government that for years and years complained about inactivity in the inner-city, about the fact that the inner-city was crumbling. They were not far wrong in terms of what was actually going on there, but where they are way off is their solution. It is obvious from this Throne Speech that they have no solutions for the inner city. This is a Throne Speech that talks about fair treatment on the one hand and then goes on to expand that by simply talking about the North. No talk about the fair treatment of the people in southeast Manitoba, no talk about the treatment of the farmers in southwest Manitoba, both struck by natural disasters, completely ignored.

Quite frankly there is no substance in this speech, but there is one area that I have hope for, and this is again a matter that affects me personally. I am looking forward. I hope that this Government on one hand advances with its promised white paper on mental health. It is something that is badly needed in this province. There are services that are out of line. There are people who need assistance and this Government needs to step up to the plate and act. I would hope that they do. I would hope they would act a lot quicker on that than they would on trying to erect five new casinos in this province. I would hope they would go there.

In closing, I am very disappointed in this Throne Speech. I am very disappointed in what

is not said and I would urge all members of this Government to do what they can do to actually try and get things moving, to try and create something that is going to help people in the inner-city, to actually create some hope and opportunity, but most of all to ensure that the economic situation in Manitoba is competitive so that this province can continue to move ahead. Thank you.

**Hon. Drew Caldwell (Minister of Education and Training):** I would like to thank my colleagues for the enthusiastic applause as I rise to speak. It is a pleasure to be in the House today to share some of my thoughts as the Member for Brandon East and as the Minister of Education for the Doer government on the Speech from the Throne which was read in this Chamber last week.

I think my reflections on the Throne Speech should begin with a sincere thanks to the educators of the province of Manitoba for the extraordinarily good work that they do, day in and day out, in providing for the education of young Manitobans. I think all too often the role of teachers and the hard work that teachers undertake on behalf of young Manitobans has been overlooked in the recent historical past in this province. We on this side of the House recognize teachers as the dedicated hardworking professionals that they are.

I should also give thanks at the outset to the trustees throughout the province of Manitoba who guide and direct the public education system as elected representatives of their local jurisdictions. They certainly have risen to the challenge facing them as trustees in this province. Manitobans well know the public education system over the last decade has seen tremendous cuts, has seen tremendous fiscal challenges, has seen for the local ratepayers, of course, year after year after year of cutbacks implemented by the previous government resulting in extraordinarily high levels of property taxation, indeed an explosion in local property taxation over the last decade.

\* (15:20)

Trustees have often been left to carry that bag on behalf of the previous administration.

They were left to deal with the fiscal shortfalls that were forthcoming from ill-considered decisions made by the members opposite during their decade in power. I think the trustees have to be acknowledged here for the work, for the very hard work that they have done to maintain a public education system in the face of what amounted to a decade of historic cuts into the public education system.

Also, Mr. Acting Speaker, I wanted to thank the parents who have children in the public school system for the tremendous insight and tremendous commitment that they make to having a system of public education in this province that is worthy of their children. Teachers, trustees, parents and students together make up what is the public school system in the province of Manitoba. Together they deserve the gratitude of this Chamber for ensuring that the system is the best it can be.

The Throne Speech that we are speaking here to today had a number of important considerations and important comments to make about the public and post-secondary education system in the province of Manitoba. The past decade, as I mentioned earlier, saw tremendous cuts made to the public school system. They also saw tremendous cuts, tremendous offloading made in the post-secondary system to the extent that as we sit here to debate the second Throne Speech there is a quarter-of-a-billion-dollar capital deficit existing in the public school system. It is windows, rooves, heating systems, mechanical systems, deferred maintenance, a quarter of a billion dollars that was left to lie unattended by the members opposite.

In the post-secondary system we are also confronted with a quarter-of-a-million-dollar capital deficit from unattended-to capital needs, whether it is the Engineering building at the University of Manitoba or the architectural building at the University of Manitoba, Wesley Hall at the University of Winnipeg, a downtown campus for Red River that was much mooted by the members opposite which had no dollars attached to it when I assumed the office of the Minister of Education.

Mr. Acting Speaker, my own home community, the Keystone Centre is an economic

engine for this province, an economic engine for agriculture in this province. I know something that members opposite like to talk about, their connection with rural Manitoba and their connection to agriculture in this province and their success, their commitment to agriculture in this province, but like the huge capital hole that exists in the post-secondary system and in the public school system from a lack of caring, frankly, for the infrastructure needs of the school system, just so it has occurred in the public school system and the post-secondary system in terms of deferred maintenance, maintenance that was neglected for so many years, not funded, not supported by members opposite when they were in government.

The Keystone Centre in Brandon, the jewel of agriculture in this province, is confronting a multimillion-dollar issue around capital infrastructure, an ice plant that is 25 years of age, many years past its replacement date, a roof that has problems of leakage, Mr. Acting Speaker, major problems with the quality of air flow and mechanical system in the Keystone Centre, so right across the spectrum, whether it is public schools, whether it is universities, community college, agricultural centres, hospitals, health centres, the members opposite left the people of Manitoba an enormous capital deficit, an enormous capital deficit in the infrastructure in this province. I think that is a shameful thing, something that this Government is very dedicated and determined to overcome during our mandate in office.

Mr. Acting Speaker, the Throne Speech speaks, as I mentioned, very broadly on educational issues. I think I will take some time to review the commitments to education that this Government is pledged to uphold. We are proud, and I am personally proud as Minister of Education and proud of my department, which is much more streamlined, incidentally. We have brought business principles into the Department of Education. We went from a very bloated senior bureaucracy with multiple deputies and assistant deputies. I know that the members opposite like talking about the business a lot and like talking about efficient use of resources. Well, in my office, we were bumping into deputy ministers and assistant deputy ministers everywhere you turned the first week that I was

in that particular portfolio, all incidentally at tremendous cost to the taxpayers of the province of Manitoba.

We believe on this side of the House in putting the resources in education into the classrooms of the province of Manitoba and not into salaries for senior administration. Of course, there is a place for administration. The department and the staff of the department work very, very hard and very diligently and very professionally to provide for education in the province of Manitoba. That is something that I am very proud of, but I am also very proud of the determination and the professionalism of the department in reorganizing to become a stronger, leaner, more efficient, more businesslike unit, which is certainly something that it was not under the members opposite.

Mr. Acting Speaker, the Speech from the Throne speaks broadly about our commitment to education, our commitment to renewing hope in young people in the Province of Manitoba, our commitment to focussing resources on youth in the Province of Manitoba. I know that, again, members opposite like talking about cost and expenditures and what the cost of specific areas are. On this side of the House, we see education as an investment. We do not see the cost of educating young people in Manitoba in the same sense that members opposite see a cost. We see it as an opportunity for that young person to grow, to succeed in his or her future endeavours, and it is an investment in the young people of our province, not a cost to somehow be tabulated against a balance sheet.

Mr. Acting Speaker, in the public school side, I am very, very pleased that this Government, right from the beginning of our mandate, have begun to address a number of serious issues in the public school system. In the first two weeks of office, we made announcements on the commercialization of our classrooms with the implementation of the Youth News Network that was allowed to proceed under the former administration, the dedication of curriculum time to the watching of television and the watching of commercial messages by the captive, passive audience of school children in our province during curriculum time, an appalling reality which was

allowed to proceed and in fact encouraged, if we take to heart some of the members opposite's remarks during previous discussions in this Chamber, the encouragement of the commercialization of the classrooms of the province of Manitoba, the selling of young Manitobans' minds to the highest bidder, something that we on this side of the House felt to be quite deplorable and quite shameful, frankly, an abrogation of the responsibility of the legislators of this province to the young people in our province, to the youth of our province, an absolute abrogation of responsibility to the integrity of the public school system in our province.

We made an announcement on YNN within the first two weeks of being in office that we would halt the further incursion of this commercial enterprise into our classrooms. I am pleased that that commitment has been maintained. It was a promise that was made and it is a promise kept, something that this Government feels is very important in terms of the expectations of Manitobans for this Government. This Government is committed, has made commitments to the people of Manitoba and intends on fulfilling those commitments throughout our mandate.

\* (15:30)

We also made an announcement quite quickly with regard to the tying of funding support to the public education system in our province to economic growth in our province. Last year we made the single largest announcement, increasing funds to the public school system in the province of Manitoba in over a decade. I am very, very proud of the fact that this Government is investing in the public school system at historic levels. The Throne Speech talks of that investment, speaks to that investment, and that investment will continue throughout the mandate of this Government. We on this side of the House see education as an investment in justice, social justice, an investment in healthy communities, an investment in economic development, but most importantly this is an investment in Manitobans and in the future of Manitoba, and it is an investment that this Government continues to maintain and enhance in future years.

The tying of the public school funding support levels to the rate of economic growth in the province of Manitoba I think is a very innovative, a very progressive step that was made by this Government. It is unique in Canada. It provides school administrators with a sense of stability and security as they develop their business plans for the existing academic year and academic years to come.

It was a very frustrating endeavour over the past 10 years for any school business official in any region of the province of Manitoba to try to plan year in and year out, because there was no consistency in funding announcements, if we are to speak of a business plan in any long-term sense, which is quite astounding to me, given that the members opposite often like to talk about their business acumen and their considerable skills in terms of business planning and so forth. Certainly there was no business plan in the Department of Education and Training for long-term stability in the system. In fact, what we had was a reality of year after year of cuts, real cuts, in support to the public school system, peppered sporadically with moderate increases in support, usually coinciding with upcoming elections or the political caprices of the moment.

The trend throughout the last 10 years was a constant decline in the level of provincial support to the public education system and a constant increase in the level of local property taxation borne by Manitobans at the local level, due entirely to the provincial cuts that came repeatedly year after year from members opposite. *[interjection]* Tory downloading, my colleague from Brandon-West adds, Mr. Acting Speaker. That is exactly what it was.

We hear a lot of rhetoric from members opposite, and we just heard a lot of rhetoric from the member from Whyte Ridge on the issue of taxation. Well, the member should be aware, no doubt is aware, no doubt wishes to obfuscate and obscure the fact that the members opposite presided over the single largest era of property taxation in the province of Manitoba's history. The explosion of local property taxation that took place under the watch of members opposite

is really quite astonishing and frankly quite appalling.

The investment this Government is making in the public education system is most laudable. It speaks to the desire of this Government to have education, Mr. Acting Speaker at the forefront of our policies around social justice, around healthy communities, around economic development. It speaks to the idealism on this side of the House in terms of giving young Manitobans hope for their future in terms of providing enhanced accessibility to the public school system and adds resources to the public school system, investing in capital resources in the public system and, in essence, turning around a system which had been open to ridicule by members opposite and had been open to denigration. The teaching profession underwent a considerable amount of denigration by members opposite during their term in office.

Mr. Acting Speaker, we on this side of the House support and are proud to support teachers, trustees, parents and students, all of whom together with us are seeking to restore a sense of idealism and a sense of educational excellence to the public school system in our province.

On the post-secondary side of the equation, I mentioned to members that we were left with a quarter-of-a-billion-dollar capital deficit in the post-secondary system, whether we are talking about the Engineering building at the University of Manitoba, Wesley Hall at the University of Winnipeg, the Student Union centre at the College Universitaire de Saint Boniface, the downtown campus at the Red River Community College, which I mentioned earlier was much mooted by members opposite without a dollar attached to it, which is quite a convenient thing to be announcing during election campaigns, not having to have any commitment to actually resourcing or having monies allocated for a project such as the Red River campus project downtown.

Mr. Acting Speaker, this Government, a month and a half ago, six weeks ago, made the largest series of capital announcements for post-secondary education in the province of Manitoba's history: \$50 million to the University of Manitoba; 31.5 to Red River Community

College, a \$20-million commitment to the other three universities that are in our province, the largest single capital announcement in the province of Manitoba's history. Even at that, it does not address the entire capital deficit the members opposite left this Government when they left office 14 months ago.

On the post-secondary side, our investment extends to enhancing, in fact, reintroducing a bursary program for the province of Manitoba after more than half a decade of no bursaries being made available to students. Mr. Acting Speaker, this Government on this side of the House implemented a 10% tuition reduction this year for all post-secondary institutions in the province of Manitoba, something that no other jurisdiction in Canada has ever undertaken.

**An Honourable Member:** It is an historic vision.

**Mr. Caldwell:** It is an historic vision, Mr. Acting Speaker, again, my colleague from Brandon West states and adds with me that it is an historic vision, and indeed it is. This Government believes in supporting the hopes of young Manitobans, in supporting the hopes of young people in this province in having a quality education system and providing an affordable post-secondary education system, enhancing access to the post-secondary system in the province of Manitoba for all Manitobans, not only those wealthy enough to be able to afford the \$50,000 debt load that students typically have been undertaking to complete a university degree in this province over the last number of years. We are very proud of putting substantive resources into tuition policy and bursary policy in the province of Manitoba over the last 14 months.

In fact, Mr. Acting Speaker, indeed the investment that this Government has made in young Manitobans through its bursary and tuition policy has resulted in increased enrolment figures, dramatically increased enrolment figures across the province. Coupled with the growing economy and low joblessness rates, this increased enrollment is unprecedented, and it is a testament to the commitment of my colleagues in caucus and Cabinet to investing in education, and I thank them very much for that. I

thank Manitobans for the opportunity, in fact, to implement policies that provide for quality post-secondary education in the province. Levels of operating support, as well, have been enhanced across the post-secondary system.

So on every indicator at every level, this Government is investing in young people; it is investing in teachers; it is investing in schools; it is investing in universities; it is investing in community colleges. This Government is a government that believes in strongly supporting and investing significantly in enhanced education and educational excellence in the province of Manitoba, and I am very, very proud to sit on this side of the House with members who share a vision for Manitoba that extends beyond one's pocketbook, I suppose, if I could say that, although the pocketbook that members opposite speak of generally speaks to the top 5 percent of society and leaves the rest to fend for themselves. We on this side of the House believe in equality of opportunity. We believe in investing in education. We believe in providing for social justice, for economic development, for healthy communities and for a balanced approach to taxation, a balanced approach to economic development.

\* (15:40)

You know, Mr. Acting Speaker, it sticks in my craw whenever I hear members opposite talk about taxation and their concern for taxation, because on a daily basis I look at the correlation between the tremendous and dramatic offloading of responsibility for the funding of our public school system and the explosion in local property taxation that took place throughout this province over the last decade, directly correlated to taxation decisions made by the members opposite.

Our record on this matter, Mr. Acting Speaker, is very clear to the public today and will be very clear to the public as we move forward throughout our mandate, and I will never have a hesitation in comparing the record on education, on property taxation, on balance, on hope of this Government with the record of the members opposite when it comes to taxation, investment in education, in fact maintaining the integrity of the public school system and the

post-secondary system in this province generally.

So, Mr. Acting Speaker, the Throne Speech talks of restoring hope for young people through opportunities in education. Our record also speaks to that. In fact, our record confirms that this Government is interested in providing hope through new opportunities for Manitoba's young people. I have outlined some of the solid commitments and solid progress that has been made in this past year, and there will be more to come in future throne speeches and future budgets. We have been working very, very assiduously in government to ensure that we address the grave needs of Manitobans when it comes to education, post-secondary and public. That record will continue.

The Throne Speech talks about thinking ahead to the year 2020, Mr. Acting Speaker. In 2020, the Manitoba child born today will be preparing to enter a workforce and to assume full responsibilities of citizenship. What are the legacies that we wish to establish for the children who will come of age in 2020? In last year's Budget and in this Throne Speech, this Government has spoken to and acted on the legacy that we hope to provide for children born today in the year 2020. That involves significant investment in education, significant investment in health care, a balanced approach to the fiscal realities that confront our province and other provinces, a balanced approach to taxation.

We are committed on this side of the House to the goal of lifelong learning. We see lifelong learning as one of the most important legacies that we can create for our children. Successive learning is an indispensable ingredient for success in the future for the new economy, as my colleague the Minister of Industry, Trade and Mines (Ms. Mihychuk) reminds me on an almost daily level as we sit beside each other in the House. She does not miss an opportunity to remind me of the new economy and the importance of education in taking advantage of the opportunities presented by the new economy.

This first year for this Government was a crucial one for this new government, a crucial one in setting the spirit that will guide this Government throughout its mandate. With the

steps taken in this first year, with the indications for the future provided for in this Throne Speech, Manitobans can be assured that the Doer government is the education government of this province. We will be known as the education government of this province. *[interjection]* I thank my colleagues for again applauding those remarks because I think the legacy of the Doer government will be renewed hope for youth in this province and it will be a focus on educational investment, and that indeed is a legacy that speaks to years and decades to come and for the future prosperity of this province as a whole.

I mentioned earlier that when this Government came into office it faced a massive infrastructure deficit in our colleges and universities, a quarter of a billion dollars. I made reference to the fact that in my home constituency of Brandon East, the Keystone Centre, the jewel of agriculture in this province in terms of exhibitions, in terms of a home for the community, of farmers and agriculture producers that live in this province, the Keystone Centre, is confronting the same sort of neglect now that was brought upon our colleges and post-secondary institutions, universities and colleges in the province, the same sort of neglect that was borne and brought upon our public school system, the same sort of neglect that was borne upon our public health system. We will talk about another piece of infrastructure in my home constituency that was completely neglected. *[interjection]*

My colleague the Minister of Industry, Trade (Ms. Mihychuk) talks about the open-air concept in classrooms. Believe me, in some of our classrooms in the province of Manitoba indeed it is an open-air concept where you have roofs leaking and windows gone without maintenance. So, the maintenance, the public school system, the post-secondary system, the Keystone Centre in Brandon, the Brandon Regional Health Centre which was first announced almost 10 years ago and in successive election campaigns, pledged by the members opposite to build a health centre in western Manitoba worthy of the region, this Government will be investing in that. We will do it. We will fulfil that commitment and we will fulfil the commitment to invest across the

province of Manitoba in the infrastructure that was so sadly neglected over the past decade.

This year a crucial first step was taken in terms of beginning to address the massive infrastructure deficit at our university system. As I said six weeks ago, the largest series of announcements for capital infrastructure investment was made at the University of Manitoba: \$50 million to the University of Manitoba, \$31.5 million made for Red River College, \$20 million for the other universities in our post-secondary system, Mr. Acting Speaker, the largest such investment in the province of Manitoba's history, and this Government is very, very proud of that fact.

We promised in the election school and university funding increases this year reflected with growth in the economy, and we have fulfilled that commitment. We promised a new college expansion fund to increase post-secondary options throughout the province and have begun that endeavour this year with the highest rate of enrolment increases in the better part of a decade. As promised, students in Manitoba colleges and universities saw their tuition costs reduced by 10 percent this year. In addition, over 5700 young Manitobans will receive financial support through new federal and provincial bursary programs. This is a record of accomplishment in education, something that we on this side of the House are very, very proud of.

The most dramatic increases, I think, will be made in the areas of education and health care. Enrollment in the health care professions this past year saw 446 more nursing students enrolled in Manitoba, a Bachelor of Education program that has been expanded and the re-establishment of the Nursing Diploma program.

*Mr. Conrad Santos, Deputy Speaker, in the Chair*

\* (15:50)

Computer science programs, Mr. Deputy Speaker, at the University of Manitoba are projected to graduate 35 percent more students following a special investment in program expansion made by this Government.

**An Honourable Member:** Wise investment.

**Mr. Caldwell:** I know the Minister of Industry, Trade and Mines (Ms. Mihychuk) is applauding that as a wise investment, and I agree with her on that.

The conditions for successful learning are in place, of course, long before a child enters kindergarten. This Government made a commitment through the Healthy Child Initiative, Healthy Child Manitoba, to enhance Manitobans' ability to have their children be given opportunities before they enter the public school system. We are investing in parent-child centres, Mr. Deputy Speaker, investing in FAS programs across the province to address the very tragic and very serious issue of fetal alcohol syndrome in youth and children in this province.

Public schools are increasingly becoming community schools, centres of activities for seniors, for parents, for adult learners, community sports, and other community events. Our Government will continue to extend the benefits and hours of operation of local schools, keeping more gyms and computer rooms open at night and making schools a resource base for parents and for pre-school children in our communities throughout the province of Manitoba.

Classroom learning will be linked with education experiences available outside the school. High school students should have the option of taking university or college courses for credits in high school. Students should get credit on their transcripts for community volunteer work. Every graduating student should be able to assemble a portfolio that reflects the breadth of their learning experience, and this Government is committed to providing for those lifelong opportunities for youth throughout the course of our mandate.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I think I could go on at more length in regard to the education commitments met and the education commitments made during the recent Throne Speech. Members opposite are urging me not to say more. I understand that, because I have been making many references to the record of members opposite over the last decade. I

appreciate that they do not want to hear too much more on that record, nor probably do they wish to hear more on the record of this Government, the record of investment of those of us on this side of the House.

I will wrap up my remarks with something that moved me last night. I was in committee last night for The Helen Betty Osborne Memorial Foundation Act, the committee hearings for that act. I was a child when Helen Betty Osborne was murdered in The Pas. I recall that event throughout the years making an impact upon me as a Manitoban and an impact upon my understanding of racism, of justice in this province, of a tragedy that befell a family in a community. I was very moved last night when the family made presentations to the committee about the tremendous loss that they had experienced with the murder of Helen Betty Osborne and the tremendous strength and dignity of that family through some 29 years of spiritual turmoil and sadness that have been experienced by that family.

I was very, very moved as the Minister of Education, as a teacher myself, by the commitment of all parties at that committee last night to put aside petty politics, to put aside what oftentimes in this Chamber borders on shameful behaviour, personal issues coming to the floor of this Chamber, and for a common good make redress in the best way we can 29 years later as members of this Legislature to honour the memory of Helen Betty Osborne, to commemorate her life and to commemorate it in a very fitting fashion for someone who wished to become a teacher and whose dreams were cut short by a brutal murder, to inaugurate a foundation dedicated to providing support to Aboriginal Manitobans who share the same dream that Helen Betty Osborne had, to become a teacher, to inaugurate a foundation, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that will support those dreams for those young Manitobans and perhaps not so young Manitobans who dream of becoming a teacher in the province of Manitoba.

I began my remarks today in giving thanks, in giving praise to the teachers and educators of our province, who do such extraordinarily good work day in and day out for the future of the youth of this province. Certainly the dreams of

Helen Betty Osborne will correspond to that vision of providing the best possible education for young Manitobans and for living that dream of being a teacher.

As I conclude my remarks, I want to just say that I am very thankful and grateful as the Minister of Education that the Helen Betty Osborne Foundation will be dedicated to assisting young Aboriginal Manitobans in pursuing their dreams of becoming teachers in this province. I am very, very proud of all members who participated in that debate. Unanimously we will be passing that act into law this week.

Finally, I am very proud to be a part of the Doer government, the education government of the 21st century in Manitoba.

**Mrs. Heather Stefanson (Tuxedo):** Mr. Deputy Speaker, this is the first time I have had the opportunity to speak in response to a Throne Speech. I am honoured to rise in the House today in the Second Session of the Thirty-Seventh Legislature of the Province of Manitoba.

I would first like to thank the constituents of Tuxedo for giving me the privilege of representing them in the Legislative Assembly.

It goes without saying that I would not be standing before you today if it were not for the support of so many outstanding citizens in our community. I thank them whole-heartedly for their commitment and guidance throughout this process.

I also want to take this opportunity to welcome our new leader of the PC Party of Manitoba to his official post in the Manitoba Legislature as the Leader of the Official Opposition and the MLA for Kirkfield Park.

**Some Honourable Members:** The next Premier.

**Mrs. Stefanson:** The next Premier, absolutely. I want to thank our leader for all his guidance and support over the last several weeks in my bid to represent the people of Tuxedo.

I also want to thank all of my colleagues on this side of the House today for their tireless support and advice and for their kind words of welcome and encouragement.

As the newly elected rookie member, I am very much looking forward to working with the members on both sides of the Chamber to ensure the flow of debate continues on issues that are of concern to all Manitobans.

There are a few other people who are new to this process around the Legislature, and I would like to recognize and welcome these individuals to the Chamber: the six interns and new pages who have recently been appointed. I wish you well in your endeavours and welcome you to your new posts. It is sometimes comforting to know that you are not the only new person in the room learning a new set of rules that governs this Chamber. I trust that if any of you pages see me walking in the wrong direction or perhaps nodding where I should not be nodding or perhaps heckling in inappropriate areas, you will be the first ones to tell me, although I am sure that my colleagues on this bench here will be the first ones to let me know if I am completely out of line here.

\* (16:00)

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I would like to thank the former member for Tuxedo, Gary Filmon, for his outstanding commitment to the people of Tuxedo. For nearly 20 years as their MLA, Mr. Filmon represented the people of Tuxedo with honour and distinction. He is an outstanding community leader, husband, father, grandfather, citizen of Manitoba and friend. Today I want to sincerely thank him for everything that he has done, not only for the constituency of Tuxedo but for the province of Manitoba.

I also want to mention the commitment to the Tuxedo community and the province of Manitoba that has been demonstrated by another outstanding person in our community, Janice Filmon. Mrs. Filmon is someone who has tirelessly and consistently made her mark in Manitoba as one of the most exceptional and committed volunteers in our community. I am proud and honoured, Mr. Deputy Speaker, to call her my friend, and I want to thank her for her

contributions to the betterment of our community and our province.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, there are a couple of people that I would like to single out today and thank for their support and guidance throughout my life. Firstly, I want to thank my husband, Jason, who is not only a terrific husband but an unbelievable support and friend. Just when I am feeling it is time to take a break or relax for just a few minutes, there he is encouraging me to take that extra step because it might just make that extra bit of difference.

Well, I can tell you first-hand that each extra step that he has encouraged me to take in life has placed me one step closer to reaching my goals, and on November 21, we made one of those goals happen. November 21 marks a turning point for our party and for the Manitoba Legislature. It represents a new era of vision and leadership with the election of our new Leader of the Official Opposition (Mr. Murray). I look forward to working with him and my other colleagues in the Legislature to ensure that all of our goals are met in the months and years ahead.

If there is one thing I have learned from Jason, it is perseverance and to never give up on any goals I am trying to achieve. He never lets me lose sight of my goals in life and always ensures that I maintain my focus. His support and guidance throughout many stages I have undergone throughout my career have helped to shape me into the person that I am today, and I want to thank him for his continued love and support.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, there are two other special people that I want to thank on this very special day, my first response to the Speech from the Throne. I want to thank my parents, Diane and Hugh MacDonald, for their encouragement and endless support throughout my life. I can recall several political discussions that have taken place with both of them over the years, some perhaps more heated than others, but always a refreshing discussion nonetheless. I can say today that my love of this province and this country comes from the strong commitments to the community that have been made by my mother and father, and I want to sincerely thank them for the community-minded spirit that they

have instilled in me and the importance of contributing to the betterment of society as a whole.

Unfortunately, my mother was sadly taken from us earlier this year, and as I understand from some statements made by some other honourable members in the House, there have been some other members who have lost members of their family. I extend my sincerest condolences for them.

But I know that my mother is here in spirit today cheering me on. I know that her spirit lives on in our community.

Over the past several months, I have engaged in a process that is familiar to members from both sides of this House: first, a nomination campaign where an outstanding citizen in our community put his name forward to seek public office. I want to take this opportunity to thank Steven Fletcher for his dedication to our community and his commitment to the students of the University of Manitoba as the current president of UMSU. Mr. Deputy Speaker, I look forward to working with Steven in the months and years ahead to ensure that our community in Tuxedo remains a vibrant one.

Over the past few months I have had the opportunity to work with hundreds of outstanding volunteers in our community under the leadership of my campaign managers, David Filmon and Jim Moore. Most of these volunteers were new to the political process. Many of these people shared their own concerns with me about the current direction of the province and felt it was time to get involved to do something about it.

During the by-election campaign I heard a number of comments made about issues causing residents some concern. Unfortunately, what Manitobans heard from this Government in the recent Throne Speech lacked in ingenuity and vision and failed to make any real commitments to Manitobans on some of the more important issues facing our province today. More importantly for me, it failed to address some of the issues of real concern to my constituents, namely health care and lower taxes.

I very recently spent 35 days going door to door in Tuxedo listening to the concerns of people in my constituency. The No. 1 issue, aside from there being confusion because the federal election was at the same time, was unequivocally health care. People were disappointed in the promises that were made in the last election campaign by the NDP government but were not honoured.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, this Government was elected on the promise to Manitobans that they would end hallway medicine and fix our health care system with a mere \$15 million. To date the Government has failed to keep its promise. No matter how unrealistic this promise was, it was a promise that was made to the people of Manitoba. Where I come from, a promise that is made is a promise kept.

This has been and remains the No. 1 issue in Manitoba. Therefore it is disappointing to note that the Throne Speech did little to further the Government's commitment to health care. This morning and yesterday morning and during the course of the recent by-election campaign in Tuxedo, I visited several seniors homes in our area and talked to these people about what their thoughts were on the direction of the current government.

I can tell you first hand, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that these people were not happy with the current government, which has neglected in the last two throne speeches to address the members of the senior population. Seniors are an important part of our community and deserve to be treated with better respect than the way they have been treated by this current government.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, as the youngest member of this Legislative Assembly, I must touch on the lack of vision that this Government has for young people in our province. Ensuring that we have affordable education to prepare our young people for the world economy is imperative, but if we do not provide incentives and opportunities to work and raise their families here in our province, then there is little point in offering an affordable education system if the essence of such a system is to prepare people to move elsewhere.

Our citizens of all ages deserve to have the same opportunities that they have in other provinces in our country. We owe it to these people to at least try and create an environment of economic prosperity. This Government has let the people of Manitoba down with their broken promises, hidden agenda and mismanaged approach to governing. A long-term vision for our province takes more than just mentioning the year 2020 in the Throne Speech. We need to create an environment that is conducive to keeping young people here in Manitoba.

After visiting more than 7500 households in my constituency and listening to what people have to say, I can tell you that the only way to keep people here in Manitoba is by significantly lowering personal income taxes. If Manitoba is not at least competitive with other jurisdictions of our country, we can say goodbye to affordable health care and education systems, and we can say goodbye to all of our social programs, because there will not be anyone here left to pay for these programs.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I met my husband outside this province, and seven years ago we decided to move home to Manitoba. We decided to move home because there were opportunities for us in Manitoba. At that time, the government, under the leadership of Gary Filmon, was on its way to fixing up the atrocious debt and deficits and the high tax burdens left to them by the former NDP government. Manitoba was once again becoming a have province, full of job opportunities and responsible government. I love living in Manitoba, and I want to remain living here at home with my friends and family, but already I can see that some people are seeking opportunities elsewhere in our country.

**An Honourable Member:** Why?

\* (16:10)

**Mrs. Stefanson:** If we continue to tax our citizens—and let me tell you why—at the rates that we do, we will lose more and more people to other prosperous areas of our country every day. One of my own friends recently relocated to Alberta for the same salary. He saves \$3,500 per year in personal income taxes alone, and that

does not even take into consideration the other tax incentives of that province.

The Government talked about a welcome-home campaign in the Throne Speech. Well, if we continue to tax our citizens to the extent we have, the only people I see rushing our borders are those people trying to leave to seek opportunities elsewhere in our country.

This Government also promised to keep Manitoba competitive in order to attract businesses to our province. Again, the Throne Speech lacked any real commitment in the form of new tax cuts or long-term goals for Manitoba businesses. This is just yet another indication that this Government lacks the long-term vision that is needed to keep Manitoba competitive and to ensure our economic successes in the years to come.

As a newly elected member of this Assembly, I am concerned about this Government's lack of vision and commitment to the issues that are of concern to all of Manitobans and to most Manitobans. Our vision for Manitoba is a competitive environment, where young people are not forced to move to Calgary or Toronto or indeed to the United States so that they can keep more of what they earn. Our vision is for a Manitoba that provides for safer communities so the elderly and indeed all Manitobans feel safe walking down our streets and feel safe in our own homes. Our vision is for a Manitoba that provides young people with the kind of education they need to prepare them for the new economy and the workforce right here in Manitoba. Our vision is for a province that offers a competitive labour environment, that encourages co-operation between employers and employees, not one that drives wedges between them.

I am very disappointed in this Throne Speech. I cannot support something that lacks in vision and is void of any plan for the future of our province.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, after 14 months and their second Throne Speech this Government continues to fail in their mandate to appropriately carry out a plan and a vision for the future of this province. Our mandate as the

Opposition is to make sure that this Government remains accountable for its actions and accountable to the people of Manitoba. My colleagues and I will ensure to the best of our ability that that happens.

In closing, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I want to once again thank the people of Tuxedo for their confidence in me by electing me to represent them in the Manitoba Legislature. It is indeed an honour and a privilege to do so. Thank you.

**Hon. Oscar Lathlin (Minister of Conservation):** I am also proud to rise today to speak about our Government's Speech from the Throne. Before I do that though I would like to also offer my congratulations to those members who have been recently elected to the Manitoba Legislature, the Member for Kirkfield Park (Mr. Murray) and also the Member for Tuxedo (Mrs. Stefanson). I offer them my congratulations and I wish them well in their career in politics.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I also want to acknowledge the young people who have been appointed to the positions of page in this Legislature. I would also congratulate them on their appointment, because I think it is an appointment that they will benefit from greatly. I think it is one aspect of their growth and development that they will remember for a long time. I know that it will contribute to their future development tremendously.

So, Mr. Deputy Speaker, indeed I am honoured to rise today to speak on the Throne Speech because this Throne Speech, contrary to what members opposite say, contains a vision for a healthy future for our children and our children's children. The Speech from the Throne recognizes that the most important part of a secure future for our children is for a healthy environment.

Of course this concept is not a new one. First Nations for many generations have practised what is now referred to as sustainable development. Throughout history we have always considered the consequences of our actions for the seven generations that come after us. It is again why I am proud that we have put so much emphasis on environmental issues in our vision for the future. Before talking about

what is to come, however, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I would like to spend a few moments talking about what we have already been able to achieve in just one year of being in office.

Throughout last year, I had the opportunity to tour many parts of the province to see first-hand how we are managing our forests, our water, our fisheries and how we are dealing with environmental hazards that have been existing in many places in Manitoba. For example, I refer to the orphan mine sites. There are five of them in northern Manitoba. I have visited two of those sites, Mr. Deputy Speaker, and I must say that given the fact that the members opposite had been sitting on the government side for 10 to 12 years, I was really saddened to see the state of the mines, the way that they were left when mining was no longer possible.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, if that situation were to exist in the south or in Winnipeg, it would truly be a scandal, and the people from the city here, from the south, would not put up with it. However, this situation has existed in northern Manitoba for many years, and it is truly shameful that the former government did not do anything to remedy the problem.

Besides doing that, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I have met with 64 municipalities and First Nations and have visited with Manitoba citizens from across the province. We have also been involved at the national stage in five federal-provincial meetings, talking about energy, parks, forestry, water and wildlife, and on the international stage dealing with trans-boundary water issues.

As a result of our meetings with the people of Manitoba and with our federal and international counterparts, we have taken many actions over the past year to work towards a sustainable future for the seventh generation.

I would like to refer to just some of those actions. We have, for example, begun wide-area planning for the east side of Lake Winnipeg. This process will ensure that there is a long-term sustainable plan for the boreal forest, as well as economic development opportunities for local communities. I am pleased to have received a letter from my federal counterpart, David

Anderson, praising our initiatives on the east side of Lake Winnipeg.

\* (16:20)

Early on in my term, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I met with those people who suffered in 1997 from the effects of the flood, and every meeting that I went to, I was moved by the way they told me their stories. They still were feeling pretty hurt by being blamed by the previous government for living on a flood plain.

So within our first few months in office, Mr. Deputy Speaker, we developed a flood action plan and have now acted on the majority of those recommendations that came out of Ernst & Young and also the International Joint Commission reports following the 1997 flood. We know we will be able to work in a co-operative way with all members as we prepare for any future floods, particularly with our high moisture levels that we have experienced this fall.

Another issue left by the former government was the threat of a Devils Lake outlet and proposals for the Garrison Diversion on the south side of the border. The Premier (Mr. Doer) and I have worked together to stop Devils Lake and any trans-boundary water projects that would cause undue harm to Manitoba's waterways.

We also know that we must take care of our water, the quality of water here in Manitoba. So in that light we have started the Assiniboine River study to assess water quality in one of our most important rivers. This was a recommendation of the Clean Environment Commission, by the way, that dates back to 1994, so we are happy to have acted on that very important recommendation.

The importance we placed on water quality, Mr. Deputy Speaker, particularly for drinking water quality, again, led us to create the Drinking Water Advisory Committee headed by the chief medical officer. The committee developed recommendations on reporting and follow-up to drinking water tests. I am pleased to say that we are acting on those recommendations, including reversing the

previous government's privatization of drinking water tests for private wells.

It also became very clear that the relationship between Aboriginal people and governments was not the best, especially with regard to Natural Resources, Environment and so on. For example, last spring, Mr. Deputy Speaker, you will recall that there was a controversy that arose in Lake Dauphin regarding the fishery. Well, we worked on that issue. I met with the sports fishermen. I met with the West Region Tribal Council and the chiefs that formed the tribal council. Everybody I know worked hard to try to resolve the situation that was deteriorating every year in Dauphin and Lake Dauphin Fishery.

So, as a result of all the hard work, we have managed to come to an agreement with the West Region Tribal Council. In fact, we signed an MOU not that long ago, and that MOU will result in a development of an arrangement, co-management arrangements with the West Region Tribal Council. Those agreements will work towards resolving this conflict based on sustainability of the resource.

Another initiative that I am very proud that we initiated, Mr. Deputy Speaker, and that is recently I announced the establishment of the Aboriginal Resource Council. This council will be comprised of Aboriginal people, First Nations and Métis people, and they will be providing recommendations just as those other groups do that provide or give advice to ministers and governments.

So this group will also be added to that long list of groups who from time to time advise ministers and government. This particular council will be giving advice to government on issues such as co-management programs, the protection of the environment and also initiatives that would see Aboriginal people playing a more active role in the development of government policy and regulations.

I think this council is the first of its kind in Canada, and it will concern itself in activities that will see Aboriginal people and First Nations communities being dealt with in a fair and in a respectful way by government.

On coming into office, I knew from first-hand experience of the many communities that are in my area. I was in Opposition for almost 10 years. The previous government was in power for at least 12 years, and I knew that during those 12 years the North was neglected. I remember looking at the Highways budget one year and seeing that the total amount of money that was allocated to northern Manitoba was not even 6 percent. It was just five point something percent. That was the way that the previous government dealt with northern Manitoba.

That is why as I said earlier, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I am proud of the initiatives that are outlined in the Throne Speech, because it will mean that northern Manitoba will finally become part of the province of Manitoba again. Northern Manitobans will finally be heard again. I am very proud of the Throne Speech.

For example, I toured the orphaned mine sites as I said earlier. These mine sites had been neglected for years, and I found that there are indeed water quality concerns for those communities living near those mine sites. I felt that that area should no longer be neglected. We have therefore initiated a remediation program to protect northern communities whose water is now at risk from those orphaned mine sites.

\* (16:30)

Of course there are many issues that are extremely important to the well-being of northern communities. In that vein, I, along with my northern colleagues, are developing a northern economic strategy that will address health, education, training, housing, the cost of living and many other issues that reflect the reality of living in northern Manitoba. The legislation we have introduced over the past year has also reflected in our Government's commitment to environmental protection.

For example, we have passed legislation that will see banning the export of bulk water from Manitoba.

We have also changed The Planning Act to ensure that livestock operations are assessed in their entirety, the barn and the manure storage,

and we have added the cumulative impacts to those assessments.

We have also enabled the banning of penned hunts in this province which, by the way, had been supported during the past election by all the parties in Manitoba. The Bison Association has also expressed their support for our approach on penned hunting.

We have also revamped the Clean Environment Commission and the Manitoba round table. We have received support for our choices from environmental groups such as the Canadian Parks and Wilderness Society. In fact their newsletter that I read the other day stated, and I quote: "the good news does not stop there, that is, with the CEC. Mr. Lathlin announced the membership of a revamped Manitoba round table. The round table is now dominated by environmentally knowledgeable people as well as those with northern connections and First Nations people." Then it goes on to say the old groups were ineffective because of the way they were structured.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I can tell you that the groups that we have established have already been hard at work. The Manitoba round table, for example, since it was formed has met three times, actually since from July. I know that the various subcommittees under the Manitoba round table have also been meeting in between the regular meetings dealing with the very important issues such as water, forests, climate change, planning and waste reduction.

So, as I indicated at the beginning of my address, I am proud to speak to the Throne Speech because we are building on our own work over the last year, and I have announced many more environmental initiatives in this year's Throne Speech. I am pleased to have received the support of the Member for River Heights (Mr. Gerrard) on our vision for the coming years, and I look forward of course to his co-operation on our initiatives.

After meeting with municipalities and reading all the letters that they send in to our office almost on a daily basis concerning drainage issues, I am pleased to say that we have initiated the development of a water

management strategy, including drainage, which we will be sharing with all members and municipalities very shortly. By the way, this action was called for by both KAP and the AMM, and we agreed that we must have a long-term strategy to manage our water.

I know that the Member for Emerson (Mr. Jack Penner) and the Member for Lakeside (Mr. Enns) will also be pleased because last summer during Estimates and public hearings they told me that it was their government's cuts that contributed to the drainage problems, so I look forward to their co-operation and support on this issue. In addition, we have already reduced the time taken to process a licence, and we will continue to streamline that particular process.

Earlier I talked about the boreal forest. The planning for the east side will be the first of its kind for Manitoba, and again I look forward to working with all interested Manitobans on this very important initiative.

One of the most significant parts of our vision is taking action to address climate change. In co-operation with my colleague, the Minister responsible for Hydro (Mr. Selinger), as well as my other Cabinet colleagues around the table, we are introducing some of the most comprehensive energy efficiency measures in Canada. In addition, we have placed an emphasis on research and development as an environmental focus, in particular alternative energy research, wind, solar, geothermal and hydrogen.

Although members opposite may not understand the significance of economic production for our province, we know that our promotion of the ethanol industry supports both agriculture diversification and greenhouse gas reduction. We are pleased therefore to be promoting economic development that is environmentally friendly. That is why we have also talked about an ecotourism strategy that supports local economic development and training, and that development to be based on sustainable principles.

All of these initiatives require us to think in terms of the long-term sustainability of our environment, not just here in Manitoba but

indeed around the world. I look forward to the co-operation of all sides of the House as we look toward the sustainable future for the seventh generation. Mr. Deputy Speaker, with that I conclude my remarks. Thank you.

**Mr. Harold Gilleshammer (Minnedosa):** Mr. Deputy Speaker, I am pleased to be able to rise and make some comments on the Throne Speech. Before I get into that, I would like to welcome the new pages and interns who are a vital part of our system here in the Legislature. I cannot help but think, as a former student, as a principal and a parent, what a wonderful opportunity it is for these young people to be able to work in this building and to serve in this Legislature. I know there are many of them who have gone on to outstanding careers following the experience that they have had in this Legislature. While at times I am sure it might seem a little mundane, I think the opportunity to be here for those special moments and to work with legislators is a very important part of their education as they spend their year here and then move on to further education in most cases and most certainly to some distinguished careers. I know that we all know some of these individuals and how well they do in their new responsibilities.

I would like to also welcome all of my colleagues back to the Legislature after what seems like a brief recess, that we left here in August. While I know this is going to be a short session, I would hope that the Government is able to come back in February or March with a budget and with legislation that we can get on that regular cycle that all of us in this province grow to appreciate. I know that in their first year there are special start-up issues and acclimatisation issues that sort of set the schedule out of whack, but, for all of us, I think we work better if we do have a summer to look forward to, and I know that the Premier (Mr. Doer) has been committed in many of his speeches to both spring and fall sessions. I think now that we are into the second year he has probably got greater control of the timing of that.

\*(16:40)

Besides wishing all of my colleagues the best for the new season, I have a special

welcome for the two new members. It is interesting for some of us who have been here for a while to see members come and members go, sometimes of their own decision-making and at other times at the whim of the public, but I am delighted that my new seatmate has been able to become a member of the Legislature, and I think that he is going to be one who makes a great contribution to this province in terms of listening to people and working with people. His strengths I think will become obvious and I know that the people of Kirkfield Park made a wise decision last month when they elected not only a new MLA but one who is the leader of our party.

I would like to also welcome the Member for Tuxedo (Mrs. Stefanson), someone who just gave a very, very excellent well-researched speech and I think delivered in a way which shows poise and confidence. I think someone of her age, the same age as my oldest daughter, makes me realize what a great contribution that young people can make to our society and indeed this House and I would see a very long and worthwhile career for her as the member for Tuxedo.

Having said that, I would like to turn my attention to the Throne Speech. I think in all charity and fairness, this was a very modest effort. I have sat here and voted on previous throne speeches that I think indicated the direction of government, and I know that ministers and deputy ministers and departments all had input into those throne speeches to indicate what the agenda of government is.

I am not sure where the process broke down, but there are many departments I think who were not represented in this Throne Speech, many initiatives of this Government, I am sure, that they are going to bring forward that were left out of this Throne Speech, and we as Opposition members raise the issue of what is the agenda of this Government.

We saw in the last session labour legislation brought in that was not referenced in the Throne Speech nor the Century Summit nor the speeches that the leader of that party had made to Chambers of Commerce, and people are saying where is this Government going in this next session, what is their legislative package, what

are the initiatives that they are going to move forward with, because certainly this Throne Speech was very light. I guess we are living in a society where there are beverages that come in light fashion and other products.

This very modest Throne Speech was quite light. I know, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that you recognize that, as do members of the Government. So people are wondering, of course, what the agenda is. It will unfold, I suppose, as Government prepares itself with those initiatives and has the courage to bring them forward.

There is no question that health care is a top-of-mind issue with many Canadians. In the recent federal election, there was talk about the restoration of huge sums of money that had been ripped out of health care by the federal government in 1994-95. I suppose we sometimes might think the federal government gets off pretty easily. They do not have to take a stand on specific initiatives. They do not have to announce programs. They just found themselves in a position where they could restore a lot of that funding. Even though that funding was withdrawn from provincial governments, most if not all provincial governments backfilled that with resources of their own and for the most part were able to move forward at the expense of other areas.

This whole area of health care was really ignored in this Throne Speech. I know that the Minister of Health (Mr. Chomiak) has a lot on his plate as he struggles with decisions and is trying to assign scarce resources to the appropriate place, but I think all Manitobans recognize that there is still a shortage of professionals of all kinds, whether it is nursing or physicians or technicians, and this is a long-term problem that is going to take some time to find the solution for.

Waiting lists, of course, are always a measure of how the system is working. In a number of areas, those waiting lists have become longer. It seems as you try to make some progress in one area, there are other areas that sort of fall by the wayside, and with an aging population, those waiting lists are going to continue to be a difficult area.

Diagnostic testing, a lot of this is dependent on new technology or renewing the technology that is there, and government will struggle to find those resources to do that and to replace other equipment.

There continues to be failures within the system. I know that the agenda during the election for this party was that they would fix all issues in a six-month period, that an expenditure of \$15 million was going to suffice. This apparently—and it is very apparent to the users of the system—is not happening, and we are seeing individual cases. I respect that the minister does not like to deal with individual cases here in the House, but there are still many, many Manitobans who find the system wanting. There is a very uneven application of health care in the province, and many areas of rural Manitoba are continuing to feel that.

My colleague from Arthur-Virden referenced one today where we are expecting that the regional health centre in Brandon is going to be the health centre that deals with emergencies in the entire Westman area, and they are having difficulty coping with the amount of work that is coming through their doors. We had the case, as was referenced earlier today, where someone who had severed a finger, and there were going to be attempts to save that finger, could not get that service in Brandon and in fact had to be brought on to Winnipeg in private vehicle to have that digit attended to. So there are still breakdowns in the system.

I know that some months ago health care facilities in the Westman region were told not to send any patients to the Brandon General Hospital. So there are needs out there. There are problems out there that have not been resolved. The minister and the Premier (Mr. Doer) can talk about some of the surveys that they either contract for or buy a part of which indicate to them that everything is fine. I can indicate to the minister that many of those facilities, many of those issues, many of the people requiring service are not seeing the system as having improved to any great degree.

I would like to also mention the template for the future of rural health care facilities, and I thank the minister who on December 7 sent me a

copy of his report on his revision to the template on the future of rural hospitals. I notice that not much has changed on here, that he is still calling for the fact that these rural facilities must have four physicians on staff there, that there has to be three nursing staff in the facility at all times. It makes reference to a minimum population in the catchment area of 5000 people. So this is basically the same report that came out last year. However, it does go further in indicating that implementation is now up to the RHAs, and it indicates that of the rural facilities, by this report that the minister has passed on to me, there are 32 facilities which he feels should no longer be called hospitals.

\* (16:50)

I think that it is incumbent upon the minister to get this discussion going within Manitoba and to come forward and talk about this report, because if in fact he is recommending in this template that he sent to me that 32 of these facilities should be closed or converted, this is very significant news in rural Manitoba and one that he should be prepared to discuss and defend and give an opportunity to the public, to municipal councils, and in fact RHA boards to talk about these. I would hope that he would do that in the near future.

He has indicated in the past that the funding is sufficient for those RHAs or if it is not that he is going to fund them appropriately. Yet we still hear of RHAs running deficits and wondering how they are going to manage. Many of the costs and cost drivers in those facilities and RHAs really are beyond the scope and competence of the RHAs because they are related to salaries, they are related to drug costs and other costs of running their facilities.

So I would hope that the Minister of Health (Mr. Chomiak) would want to enter into a public discussion of this template so that Manitobans will understand what the future of health care in rural Manitoba is going to look like and how he proposes to move ahead with this. I know he has indicated in here that it is up to the RHA boards to proceed with this, but I can tell you those board members are not going to do that. They are not going to take the heat of this initiative. They are not going to take the pressure that will

come from citizens out there. This is a government initiative. This is the minister's initiative, and he should be prepared to stand up and talk about it and justify the direction he wants these facilities to go in.

I am also interested in what he is going to do for patient transfers. Last year I had the opportunity to reference a specific case where someone from my community of Minnedosa was in here for treatments, and the treatment bed was only made available for that treatment period. This elderly individual who was in failing health was sent to a hotel for her time in the city when she was not taking the treatment. This in fact made her more ill.

I know the minister has talked on many occasions of what he has done for health care in the city of Winnipeg, what he has done for northern patient transportation. I think another issue that he should try and get his mind around is the rural patients who are brought in here and given their treatment and then left on their own to fend for themselves, sometimes making their condition worse.

If Brandon is going to become the regional centre of the Westman area, I think public statements by the minister should be made. I think appropriate funding should be put in place. I think the Brandon regional board should be aware of that, because I can tell you there are communities in the Westman area who feel that they are welcome there as long as there is a bed and that, if there is not a bed or a medical practitioner to see them, then they should not be taken directly to Winnipeg as was referenced in that case that was brought up in Question Period earlier.

Health care still has its problems out there, and I would ask the minister to look at that, especially since none of these issues were raised in the Throne Speech. I wonder too if he is prepared to make comment on the composition of these boards, whether he has started or is going to place on these boards people who are part of the system, who are employees of the system. I had indicated to him in one other conversation that we had that I saw this as a conflict of interest. He said at that time that he

did not, and I am just wondering if he has proceeded with making those appointments.

Also, he has been quoted on many occasions as saying he favours moving to elected boards, and I am wondering where that initiative is. It is a popular concept out there, that people can be elected to health care boards. Our stance on that was, unless they had taxing authority, really they should not be elected because they had no power to raise their own funds. I hope the minister has rethought that. I had suggested he talk to somebody he knew in Saskatchewan who had a strong opinion on that and someone he used to work for, and I hope he has done that.

Just leaving the health care areas aside for now, I would hope that the light coverage that the Department of Health got in the Throne Speech does not deter the Minister of Health (Mr. Chomiak) from working those 20 hours a day to solve the problems that are still in the system and that I think he is a long way from solving at this particular time.

I listened earlier to the Minister of Education, who was very proud of his department's contribution to the Throne Speech, and I daresay he should be, that the majority or at least a good part of the Throne Speech was devoted to the Department of Education. I would indicate that there are still issues out there the people are talking about. One has to do with school division boundaries. I know, when I raised this question a year ago, the minister was able to say, no, I did not say that; I was misquoted. Then, some months ago, he made the same statements, this time a little more boldly, and I believe he is sticking to them, that this Government wants to condense the number of school divisions, and if school divisions do not do that on their own, there is going to be some sort of forced amalgamation. I think what is missing is dialogue right now with school divisions. They are looking for some direction. They are looking for some procedure and none of that has been forthcoming from the minister or the Department of Education.

The Grade 3 guarantee, people are wondering out there what that guarantee means. There are still youngsters at the Grade 3 level who have difficulty learning, reading, writing,

comprehending, and they take some comfort in the fact, practitioners do, that they did not make that guarantee. It was the Minister of Education who made that guarantee, but they are finding it was a very hollow promise and that the struggles that young people in education have from time to time are still being experienced out there. Some youngsters are held back to spend more time in Grade 3 and other grades, and it appears that Grade 3 guarantee was rather a promise with a lot of fluff and without much substance.

I think that perhaps the Government, the minister maybe should retract that and give parents and teachers out there the knowledge that, yes, that was kind of a silly idea that did not work and that they should not fret about that anymore.

The assessment that is being done in Grade 3 this year has been a burden. I understand that the Government wanted to replace the standards test with something else at the Grade 3 level. This very time consuming, intrusive assessment is keeping people from moving ahead with their curriculum. The idea of assessing students and what their needs are is something that good teachers have always done, but the fact that so much of that time has been on a one-to-one basis over the first part of this school year has taken that teacher away from teaching the class, taken that teacher away from moving ahead with the curriculum. I know in the Westman area there are a number of Grade 3 teachers who are saying we are way behind in curriculum. We are going to have to try and catch up on this sometime. This has not been a good thing.

\* (17:00)

I would like to talk about taxation and the economy and labour legislation as well in the second part of my speech. I was at a breakfast this morning with the Manitoba Chamber and have had an opportunity to meet with other people in the business community. Yes, they recognize that the momentum that the economy gained in the last half of the 1990s is still there. They recognize that that momentum is there because the government of the day got a lot of things right, that there were the appropriate signals sent to the business community which

gave them the confidence to invest and to expand their businesses in this province.

What they are looking for is something more definitive on taxation. My colleague who spoke earlier talked about the delinking of the provincial income tax from the federal tax a year early. This did allow the Government to cloud the taxation issue. The fact of the matter is during the 1990s the provincial income tax was reduced from 54 percent to 47 percent of the federal tax. This Government claimed responsibility for the last one-and-a-half percent of that which had been announced two Budgets ago. I do not take great issue with that. It did reduce taxes, but I think what the Minister of Finance (Mr. Selinger) and the Premier (Mr. Doer) need to know is that other provinces are moving ahead with this. Alberta and Ontario are the two most obvious examples, but I think often the best comparison for Manitoba is the Government of Saskatchewan. They have reduced their sales tax from 7 percent to 6 percent, I believe, and they have committed to reducing personal income taxes by 25 percent, I believe, during this mandate.

That is the signal that Manitobans are looking for. That is the signal that Manitoba businesses are looking for, individuals are looking for, because the way the tax regime is right now, with a family earner of \$60,000, and I daresay that is pretty typical of a Manitoban today earning \$60,000, he or she is paying the highest personal taxes in the country. In fact, their taxes went up this year with the de-linking process.

We can always find examples within the tax structure of somebody whose taxes went down. Certainly the Government made a move to lower property taxes. That is recognized that that is the way they wanted to go, but I can tell you, if the business community is going to keep this momentum going to create more jobs, to expand, to hire more people, to have the confidence in the economy, this Government is going to have to make a major statement on taxation. Yes, they can wait till the Budget, and they can do their Budget consultations and they can do their Treasury Board consultations, but I can tell you that, in the Throne Speech and before that, we

saw many ministers trumpeting new expenditures.

Yes, there are going to have to be new expenditures to keep up with contracts, with some of the initiatives that are ongoing. I am not going to say there is a sense of alarm, but there is a sense moving in that direction that this Government is going to either make very modest tax decreases in this Budget or perhaps none at all or perhaps look at new taxes or taxes which are beyond the scope of the balanced budget legislation.

I can tell you that is something, I think, as a government, you will be sorry for, because you will be out of step with what other governments are doing in the Maritimes but most specifically in Saskatchewan, Alberta and Ontario.

The community is also concerned about where this Government wants to go with labour legislation. Last year, unheralded, unannounced, it brought in a bill making major labour changes. It was not mentioned in the Throne Speech or the Century Summit, which was come and talk to us about business and brought labour in. This came as a surprise to the business community, and you got a very strong reaction to that. Rob Hilliard has written a letter to the Minister of Labour (Ms. Barrett) and the Premier (Mr. Doer) saying: Listen, these things go over better if we just do a little bit at a time every year. Yet nothing has been announced in the Throne Speech, nothing has been signalled about where the Government is going with labour legislation.

The one thing they have mentioned is the minimum wage that they ran on a promise to review it every year, and after a year and two or three months, they have increased it by 25 cents. They are saying it is the seventh highest in Canada, but I think, in fairness, you can take the northern territories out of the mix, and, yes, after British Columbia and Québec and Ontario, Manitoba is really the fourth highest province. But the best comparison you could make on minimum wage is to Alberta and Saskatchewan. Manitoba is now higher than those two prairie provinces. I believe the minimum wage in Saskatchewan is \$6, and the minimum wage in Alberta is \$5.70.

The change you have made is not dramatic, and I think it is accepted, but I can tell you that what is bothering the business community and others is the fact that, if you review it every year, are you going to raise it every year, what is the process you are going to put in place to do that, because there was no process used this time. It was simply the back half of a recommendation made in 1998.

So I think the Government owes it to the business community, the public at large to say this is the process we are going to follow in changing minimum wage. There should be legitimate consultation with the public. In the past there has been a process with the Manitoba Federation of Labour and small businesses to appoint a task force with a chairman and come forward with recommendations. I would hope that that process is going to continue to be followed and that people will have some input into it. I can tell you that as a government you should be very weary about what our minimum wage is relative to Saskatchewan and Alberta.

There are many other issues that have come up over the course of time that have not been mentioned but have come up in Question Period. Maybe I should turn now to the speech from my honourable friend from Dauphin-Roblin whom I know members on this side generally have a reasonable amount of respect for. I think he is one of the members in this Chamber who is well-respected and usually brings some insight to debate and some consistency in the manner in which he conducts himself.

I did not read his entire speech, but one of the things that jumped out of Hansard at me was his comments on what our view of Crown corporations is. My colleague challenged him and he had an opportunity to, at that time, correct the record and say yeah, I have gone too far. I would offer that to him today because I think there is an intellectual dishonesty in making statements attributing policies to members of this side of the House that are not correct. I think the member knows that. I would say that being intellectually dishonest is not a role that he normally plays, but at some point I think he should stand and correct this because it does leave an impression out there with Manitobans who sometimes believe what they

hear from the member. It does confuse some people too. I would offer him the opportunity to stand now and retract this, if he is so inclined.

I would have him reference page 34 of the December 6 Hansard where he imputes motives to our party and our caucus on the dealing of Crown corporations. He knows that he went a little too far and he should correct that. I will give him time to look at that.

\* (17:10)

There are other issues that we could talk about, the casinos. One of the reporters recently said "casino farce reveals NDP government is incompetent." Probably that went a little further than it should have. Clearly it has been an issue that this Government is being judged on. I do not say that the motivations were wrong, but the implementation has been a bit of a disaster. It is one of those growing pains that governments will have from time to time.

Other issues around the Department of Conservation, and I think a lot of them could be solved by having the minister go to meetings, attend meetings and resolve some of those issues. I can tell you that members of the AMM are elected officials, reeves, mayors, and councillors, and they have to be treated with a certain amount of respect. I think part of that respect is having access to ministers. In fact, the Premier indicated very clearly at the AMM banquet that his ministers were accessible. Well, that does not appear to be the case. Again, it is a behaviour that could be corrected, but something that needs to be done in the near future.

I would like to just end my contribution to the Throne Speech by talking to rural Manitoba. I am hopeful the Minister of Agriculture (Ms. Wowchuk) would pay some attention. I think that the area of the southwest corner of Manitoba that was so devastated by excess moisture in 1999 has been badly served by this Government. I think it has been rather shameful that members of Cabinet have not found a solution to assist those people in the southwest corner. I would hope the Minister of Agriculture and the minister of rural development and others would find a solution for those people.

We are finding this year that there are businesses closing. The school enrollment is going down. People are losing their jobs and rather than blame the federal government or blame the government that preceded you, you need to find new and innovative solutions to that area that was so devastated by that excess moisture. I know I brought this up in the House in August, and the Premier drove out No. 2 highway or No. 3 highway and visited in Killarney, Boissevain and Melita, and came back saying, yes, I have been out there, I understand. But nothing has happened, and those people deserve better from their Government. Those people have legitimate issues. Those people need better treatment.

I would ask the Minister of Agriculture, I know that targeting support for that area of southwestern Manitoba is vital. She can go to her stock answers about dealing with crop insurance and dealing with some of the revenue issues, but I think that the Premier, the Minister of Agriculture and the Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs (Ms. Friesen) need to find a fresh approach to that area. These are people who are long-time producers. They feel that they did not get the same treatment that the Red River Valley got in 1997. Rather than blame other people for this, I would challenge the Minister of Agriculture to go out there and find some solutions.

I know the Member for Brandon West (Mr. Smith) will hear this in Brandon, that the business community very much depend on southwestern Manitoba. I know being at a Chamber meeting a number of years ago—perhaps he was there, too—when the owner of Canadian Tire received the Man of the Year Award. He wanted to tell his fellow Chamber members that 53 percent of his business that came through his door came from outside of Brandon. I know that other members in the Brandon community recognize that and it is the heart of western Manitoba.

There is such of shortage of money in that area, going back to 1999. I think the Government has to continue to pressure the federal government, who did not elect any Liberals out there and it is difficult to get through to them. I think this Government, just as

we did on the Shilo issue and were able to bring that to their attention and hopefully a successful conclusion at some point, the Government in Manitoba needs to take another look at that southwest region of Manitoba, because there were crops that were never planted. There was money just lacking in the communities, in the economy, and it has been a very stressful time out there.

I say, too, to the Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs (Ms. Friesen), formerly the Department of Rural Development had a lot of unique opportunities, unique programs for rural Manitoba. There is a feeling that they are being neglected. There is a feeling that there are very few Grow Bonds that are being issued out there, that the REDI program and other programs have gone by the wayside and that there is not attention being paid to the economy, in rural Manitoba but most specifically in southwestern Manitoba. I would urge the Premier (Mr. Doer), the Minister of Finance (Mr. Selinger), the Minister of Agriculture (Ms. Wowchuk), the Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs (Ms. Friesen) maybe to take a fresh look at that excess moisture issue of 1999 and try and find a solution.

Now the late Bob Rose chaired a committee that looked at some of the businesses that were devastated. Yes, that report was delivered in the middle of an election campaign, and this Government has chosen not to deal with it. I would urge you to take a second look at it, that there are some solutions there, solutions that were applied in the Red River Valley in 1997. With some modest input from the Government, some of these things could be made to work in that area so we would not have businesses closings, schools losing population, people losing their jobs. I would ask the Government to look at that.

So the Government gets another opportunity with the Budget speech. Many will argue that the Budget is really the policy document of the Government and that the Budget is the instrument—

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** Order, please. The member's time has expired.

**Mr. Gilleshammer:** I thank you, and I know that members opposite will act accordingly.

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** Before I recognize the next speaker in the Throne Speech, may I remind all honourable members of the House that the presumption of all members being honourable is being negated by an imputation of being intellectually dishonest. How can you be honourable if you are intellectually dishonest? So we should be careful about terms we use because this term "dishonest intellectually" implies deliberate intent. *[interjection]*

The Speaker has not recognized the member.

**Mr. Scott Smith (Brandon West):** It is a pleasure to stand again, rise and speak for my second time on our Government's second Throne Speech.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, it is a vision that is set for Manitoba by the Government, and in this case very, very favourable. It is a pleasure as well to welcome into the House two new members from opposite, the Member for Kirkfield Park (Mr. Murray) as well as the Member for Tuxedo (Mrs. Stefanson). I wish to bring quickly, and I will get off this point, I hope that they do represent their community. I am sure they are committed individuals. Obviously, the 57 members in this House care deeply about their individual communities and that we can hear and listen to each other. During the initial Throne Speech I hope they do not follow in the footsteps of some of the members in the House. The decorum I believe was very, very poor in the House. It certainly set a poor example for any new members, and I was quite appalled myself as were many of the people that viewed the Throne Speech.

\* (17:20)

I am sure that those two members will have made this observation themselves and conclude that that is not the best way to hold themselves in this House.

Getting off that, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I would like to welcome, new to this Legislature, six new interns that work very diligently. The

ones in the past have worked hard assisting and helping, helping in their duties. I would like to welcome Vincent Barletta, Jürgen Derrer, Sarah Freund, Bonnie Hiltz, Colin Lemoine and Erin Melrose and wish them well in their year and in their education in the process.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, as well, I would like to again thank Brandon West, who placed their confidence in me to represent them here with their views. I believe very strongly that people need to be assured that their input is considered as part of the decision-making process, not subsequent to decisions being made. I have tried to make myself available to people in Brandon West and have had a lot of input, and I appreciate it very much. Their constructive voice is a voice that I like to bring to this House and will continue to do that in the future. With this Government, I found it to be a government that very much listens to people.

It is unfortunate that we only have a short period of time each to talk on the Throne Speech and the visions for the Throne Speech. However, in this Throne Speech, the vision that was put forth was the continued rebuilding, restructuring of health care that our Health Minister (Mr. Chomiak) and this Government have worked very astringently and tirelessly over the last 14 months to create health care in this province that is a complete turnaround from what it was a mere 14 months ago, with the vision of a Health Minister who, the member opposite had mentioned, works 20 hours a day. I believe that would be a short day. He does work continually and has set up a structure for a vision of health care in Manitoba. It is becoming very, very evident and obvious in each and every facility throughout our province.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, the continued vision and support to education is a vision that this Government holds dear, as do Manitobans. A society committed to lifelong learning is one of the most important legacies that we can create for our children. This Government believes strongly in that. Our Education Minister (Mr. Caldwell) has worked very well with parents within the communities, with teachers, with the school boards, and again has believed very strongly that the input should be part of the process, not subsequent to a decision being

made. That has been evident with bringing together the working groups of all for the benefit of our children here in Manitoba, as well as for adults in secondary education.

The health care and Healthy Child Initiative that is being brought forth and was in this Throne Speech obviously is very, very important and will be something that will be focussed on in the next year by this Government.

The consultations on sustainable development in Conservation, the environmental strategies that are being put forth by this Government are strategies that will be implemented to increase protection of our drinking water, our lakes and our rivers for all people in this province.

I know the member opposite, the new Member for Kirkfield Park (Mr. Murray), had mentioned that some of these visions that were mentioned in the Throne Speech were utopian in outreach. Mr. Deputy Speaker, if, in fact, they are utopian in suggestions, it may be a little bit hard for that member to grasp that the quality of life is very, very important to Manitobans. That was loud and clear. He likes to mention coming in third in a by-election, but it was very evident and very clear in the priorities of Manitobans in 1999. People in Manitoba do not believe health care, education, the environment and some of the growth potential in working with strategies for community economic development, to enhance our priorities for the health of our boreal forest, as well as the opportunities there, is not utopian; in fact, it is visionary.

That member also mentioned some of the people that he had worked with that he was so proud of. I believe, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that Casey Stengel said it quite well when he said some people make things happen, some people watch things happen, and some ask what happened. I would consider that maybe the Kirkfield Park member was in the latter category, in that process asked what happened, whereas this Government, in fact, will make things happen.

The history of this side of the House with Howard Pawley and not only people in our party but the likes of Duff Roblin and, of course,

Tommy Douglas, J. S. Woodsworth, Ed Schreyer I would pit and put against Brian Mulroney and the Devine government and the members that he had worked with previously, myself as well. So I guess there is a difference in philosophy. That philosophy is becoming increasingly evident with debate on the Throne Speech, and I think Manitobans will certainly side with a vision such as leaders of this party have continued to have over the last number of years.

The future growth and the advantages our Government sees for Manitoba Hydro are outlined in our Throne Speech, and the quality of long-term jobs through that very important corporation that we had said a year ago in the last Throne Speech is something that we committed to and said during the election that Manitoba Hydro would not be considered for sale at any price. It is something that people have got and have a share and own part of in every part of this province. Our strategy working with Manitoba Hydro is going to become evident and very constructive for rural residents within Manitoba with the rates being the same in The Pas or Virden or Portage or Lac Du Bonnet or any area you might mention in the province, the same as it is in Brandon, Winnipeg, or the larger centres. This not only gives a fair playing field and the same advantage for people within their own homes but businesses as well to set up and compete in any part of this province on a fair and level playing field.

The new Healthy Child initiatives and other program changes will be announced this session. It was mentioned in the Throne Speech and I believe very visionary with our ministers. Again that might be one of the things that the member from Kirkfield Park called utopian in nature, but quite frankly I do not believe that is what Manitobans believe. I believe it is something that Manitobans realize benefits their families. It benefits their communities. It benefits what we believe is community economic development, building with everybody in mind to give everybody a fair and level playing field.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I would like to get into a little bit of some of the initiatives that we have seen over the last year. Since our taking of office in September of 1999, it is incredible the

changes that have been seen over the last 14 months.

Last year around this time, close to this time, we had seen a budget of overspending in health care in this province when we took office of somewhere in the area of \$170 million. The health authorities this year are working with our Health Minister (Mr. Chomiak), and I must give credit to all the health authorities and the hard work that they have done. It looks like they are going to be very, very close at this time in being balanced, in budget, and the initiatives that have been taken by our health care minister and been taken by the amalgamations of the Winnipeg health authorities and some of the other incentives that have taken place over the last 14 months.

\* (17:30)

The people in Manitoba have seen this. They sent a message very loud and very clear in Manitoba health. In health focus, health care issues polling that was done in February of 1999, we saw an approval of the health care system. Forty-four percent of the people in Manitoba believed that the health care system was sufficient, that it was doing a good job and it was progressive.

Under the guidance of our health care minister, we have seen in October of 2000 that turnaround for Manitobans, for Manitoba families, children, and everybody in our communities to an approval of 75.8 percent. That is a substantial change. It is a 30% increase in Manitobans saying that they believe the initiatives that we have taken have been a good job and in the right direction. We will be the first to admit and say on this side that there is work to do.

There is more work to do in the health care field. It is continual; it will never stop, and we will keep striving towards that goal of making this the healthiest province in North America and hopefully the world, and I believe under the guidance of the minister that we have that is certainly very, very possible.

I believe strongly opposition parties are meant to oppose the Government, to keep the Government addressed on issues that are

important to constituents and people in their communities, and I believe that the lack of leadership and credibility has hit into the hole for members opposite in the Member for Kirkfield Park's (Mr. Murray) example of demanding lower taxes and balanced budgets and nonconsideration for some of the health care issues that we find so important.

**An Honourable Member:** That is the Domo dollars.

**Mr. Smith:** The members opposite had a billion dollars. I believe they probably do have a billion dollars now and one of the members mentioned that that might be funny money or Domo dollars or whatever names that we might have.

But in 1994 the members opposite promised a prostate cancer centre and where was that after the election? Where was that in 1995, you have to ask yourself. I know they promised \$600 million in capital expenditures for health care prior to 1995 and where was that I would like to know. I know it was not in Brandon where it was promised in my community, in the constituency where I come from. We have heard a few members opposite speak today about some of the incentives our minister has for Brandon and region. The hospital in Brandon has long been considered a regional hospital; however, it has never received the funding or it has never received any dollars for capital investment.

**An Honourable Member:** They paid lip-service to it.

**Mr. Smith:** Paid a lot of lip-service to that over the years, and yet here, going in very shortly after 14 months, we are seeing strides in that area, we are seeing bricks and mortar and holes being dug. We are seeing tenders being put out; we are seeing what really is a vision for a regional health care centre in southwestern Manitoba that will serve a lot of rural Manitoba and a centre of excellence for the area. So it is interesting the promised prostate cancer centre in '94 went nowhere. This year, in 2000, our first year, the centre is really a vision. It is being completed. It is being done. People are benefiting from it, and this really is a substantial move forward in health care.

Our minister said that the five-point plan to increase the numbers of beds, improve admission and discharge policies, strengthen prevention programs, increase community-based service and expand provincial home care would be implemented. Promises made, promises kept. These are the vision of our Government. They were promises that were made and I again say were kept.

We implemented a plan to train and hire more nurses featuring a two-year diploma program, nurses' retention fund, advisory council and recruitment strategies, and we see now in the *Winnipeg Free Press* today some of the initiatives in that line that will be announced very shortly by our Health Minister. Again, promises made, promises kept, and moving forward.

*Mr. Speaker in the Chair*

Mr. Speaker, we have seen over the last 11 years, from '89 to '99, the expanded vision of the members opposite. Firing well over a thousand nurses was their solution with Connie Curran, someone who got somewhere in the area of \$4 million for her efforts and her vision to bring back—and I will tell you they created the frozen food fiasco, and I am proud to say our minister ended the expansion of the frozen food fiasco and that poor little carrot that ran back and forth between here and Ontario and was abused and pounded and freeze-dried and sent back and slopped on the plates and thrown to some of our bedridden people here in Manitoba is not going to happen anymore.

The reduced number of patients, Mr. Speaker, is very evident. Obviously, it is day to day and week to week, but we have seen an incredible substantial reduction in what was termed the hallway health care division of members opposite. Today I believe there are zero people in the hallways. It is something that our health care minister should be quite proud of. Last year at this same time there were more, and the year previous to that there were just about three times the amount.

The streamlining costs I had mentioned in the Winnipeg Health Authority, some \$800,000 in savings, was done very quickly by our

minister. The recent health poll I believe really shows what Manitobans feel has happened in health care. Just about 76 percent, 75.8 percent of Manitobans, satisfied with the health care system, saying it is good or excellent and moving in the right direction is something that I believe this Government can take a lot of credit in and certainly be very, very proud of a health care minister who has brought us so far so quickly.

Mr. Speaker, the vision of children and youth in our communities, we have seen a minister take the Healthy Child Initiative, \$13 million allocated to parent/child centres, prenatal and early childhood nutrition, nurseries and schools, teen pregnancy reduction has been our vision. I guess maybe again that is an utopian-type vision that the Member for Kirkfield Park (Mr. Murray) spoke about earlier, but certainly our vision for Manitoba.

The Throne Speech spoke about vision for the future and some of the opportunities that we have for our expansion here, for economic development within the province. It is becoming very, very evident again in some of the philosophical differences between ourselves on this side and members opposite. Just early this afternoon, we heard the Member for Fort Whyte (Mr. Loewen) speak about business and development within our province. It is sad when you hear the gloom and doom and the-sky-is-falling scenario that comes from the members opposite. He spoke briefly about 100 or 101 economics. I can tell you, in that course, as I recall, one of the main disadvantages to any company or corporation or community is the doomsayers and naysayers.

It is incredible when we see the potential for Manitoba that we have seen in the last little while. In the last year, in fact in the last few months in and around the Brandon area alone we have seen expansion in the Albchem plant in moving to the Wallace community just outside of Virden. It is a \$40-million investment within our province. They are moving here from Alberta. Often I hear the members opposite telling us that there is business and people pulling out of Manitoba. I see an investment there of \$40 million in a benefit, in a Manitoba

advantage that we have in our hydroelectric power here in the province of Manitoba.

\* (17:40)

We see a \$55-million expansion announcement just recently on a sodium-chloride plant in Nexen, in Brandon. It is incredible that again is a plant that is combining. It is moving its operations out of Alberta and combining and expanding its operations in Brandon.

We are seeing another corporation and company from Medicine Hat that is looking at expanding to Manitoba. Obviously the advantages with the hydroelectric rates that we have here are of benefit to that corporation as well. It is a company that manufactures in steel production. In fact, it has been in Alberta in the same location for 103 years and now sees the advantage of moving to Manitoba, an incredible bottom-line advantage to moving to our province. There are some 200 jobs that are a potential there into Manitoba.

We are seeing other companies. Today we saw an announcement—the member opposite from Portage should be very happy at the announcement of Simplot chemical company. It is a company that I know well in Brandon, a producer that employs some 240 people looking at setting up a manufacturing plant with the future in potato production in the Portage area of some 250 new additional jobs. Not only that, it is some 500 jobs that should probably hit the farm gate. There should be some spin-off out of that, which is excellent for rural Manitoba and very good for Portage and area. In fact, it will come all the way to Winnipeg.

The potential here in Manitoba is obviously something that is alive and well in Manitoba. There are corporations and companies moving in a big way to Manitoba. I am seeing the expansion of many small businesses. Small businesses—I say companies with 25 employees or less. The expansion in the Brandon area has been alive and well. I am seeing it here in Winnipeg. I am hearing it at meetings that I am having with the Chamber of Commerce, a positive attitude that they have here in the province with this Government.

We are hearing it from the banks. We are hearing it from Wall Street. We are hearing it in our bond rating. We are hearing it continually, although the member from Fort Whyte would like to bury his head in the sand. I am not sure he has got over the election. It is just unfortunate that we have that type of a naysayer and doomsayer here in the House. We know full well that the advantages here in Manitoba abound.

I would like to move to some of the reasons we are seeing some of that economic boom and initiative here in our province, and that again is in our education. The corporations, when they relocate or they move to different areas, I can tell you from being in an economic development board in Brandon, understanding full well that there are many reasons that companies will relocate and businesses will locate into a province. But many times it is for the quality of life that is initiated within that jurisdiction. I can tell you that educational opportunities for families are high on a priority list of relocations of businesses into provinces. You have got community safety that this Government takes very, very seriously. There are initiatives in there through our Minister of Justice (Mr. Mackintosh) that are coming up in the next session. There is the labour force, which is critical to business expansion and some of the businesses that move and relocate. Obviously, the educational ability for trained labour here in Manitoba is a focus and a commitment by this Government in expanding Red River Community College. The expansion that we have seen there over the last year is unprecedented in this province. We are seeing the expansion of a trained workforce in higher education, secondary education, in our universities now with the incentives and initiatives that our Minister of Education (Mr. Caldwell) and this Government have put forth. We are seeing funding back to our educational system.

When the members opposite talk about taxation, they have one narrow view and bottom line for some of the people that they answer to. Unfortunately, the member from Kirkfield had mentioned that he had worked with many people in some of the smoky backrooms of Brian Mulroney's cabinet that had a vision. Their vision was to have taxation cut for industry,

which is always something that is nice. There is more of a vision, and I guess he mentioned it is utopian in our nature to think that there are other advantages.

Members from the opposite side downloaded educational costs onto municipalities. It was unfortunate when we saw in Brandon, in '97, '96 and '95, double-digit increases in our educational costs because of the underfunding to the educational system. They do not like to mention those types of costs to people and people relocating to this province, but I can tell you that is a focus, that it is a commitment for this Government to fund the educational system to the levels that it should be funded at and relieve the pressure off some of the local municipalities and the folks that work so hard in the school boards to try to keep costs in line. Downloading our responsibilities as a province onto them is not a focus that this Government wants to take.

The costs in tuition in Assiniboine Community College, I can certainly speak for, in Brandon, went up over 214 percent from '89 to '99. It went up about 180 percent, tuition, in a decade under the members opposite from '89 to '99, and this Government has given a cost reduction of 10 percent in our first year, which gives I guess, again, that Utopian vision that the Member for Kirkfield Park (Mr. Murray) spoke about of everybody having the ability to take advantage of secondary education and our Government acting, not giving lip service but actually acting on it, and taking strides toward it.

The member opposite from Kirkfield Park again mentioned the obvious deficit that this Government has seen in infrastructure, the infrastructure deficit, the \$250 billion in infrastructure deficit that was left by this previous government that we are starting to address. Our minister has put substantial funding into the infrastructure of our facilities, and that is a direction we will continue to head into.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to speak just quickly on some of the vision for rural Manitoba and some of the commitment that this Government has taken in that direction with our Throne Speech and one we will continue to take. I must admit, one of the members opposite, in

speaking yesterday, had mentioned that it would be nice to get together on this issue and, if we could work together, we could make great strides. I will agree with that. I will say that it would be nice if we would work toward the benefit of our rural neighbours. Certainly I would say, and I think we would all agree in this House, that the federal policies in terms of agriculture support are a national disgrace. We have tried to bring that message loud and clear. Federally, I know our Minister of Agriculture (Ms. Wowchuk) acted very quickly when we went in last year taking that message straight to Ottawa on a number of occasions. You worked with some of the folks on the Brandon Chamber of Commerce, with the Premier (Mr. Doer). In fact, the member opposite from Arthur-Virden (Mr. Maguire) went to try to carry that message.

\* (17:50)

But we all must agree, as well, that the federal commodity price support program in Canada, and certainly in Manitoba and western Canada, for our producers is shameful. The farmers here, and the Member for Russell (Mr. Derkach), I believe, yesterday had mentioned, and I do agree, that farmers do not like to have to operate on subsidies. They certainly do not like to consider it a handout. That is very true, but when you have competing in the global marketplace that we are in, certainly in the grains market, we are seeing subsidies here in Canada stay at 9 cents on the dollar where you are competing against Americans at around 40 cents and into Europe that is rising. I am not sure what it is this week. It was 57 cents. It was up to 60 cents and may well be more.

Our farmers certainly have the best practices in the world in grains. They have proven it over and over again in their practices. But when you base it in terms of average yields, standard costs of production per unit in the grains is certainly a losing proposition now trying to compete against the commodity influx that we are competing against in some of the other G-7 nations. There is no way that we are going to be able to do it. We need the federal support on the program. Everyone in this House would agree with that. It is a matter of how we approach it, how we get together, and we do have to convince the federal government that they have to commit to our

agricultural producers like the rest of the world and the markets that we are in.

The province in the last two years has experienced a disaster in southwestern Manitoba that we were at the table for. They would not come forward on a 90-10 split which should have been the case. They should have been coming up with 99 cents to 1 cent. For every penny we put in, they should have been putting in 9.

I will tell you, Mr. Speaker, it is something that we have to continue to pound. It is something that we were there for the producers; and we were there for a 90-10; we were there for a 50-50; we were there for 60-40, but some of the members opposite seem to forget that when this was brought up in the House certainly by one of the federal members of the Conservative Party from Brandon area, the MP Rick Borotsik, the answer was no, no, no. Unfortunately I heard that same member on a radio program with Mr. Harvard and the member from Emerson suddenly forgot that ever happened. We were at the table. We will continue to be at the table, and they can misconstrue or move toward falsifying some of the information that is put forward anyway they like, but the simple fact is that we were there, we are there now, but Manitobans want to hold us accountable. People hold us accountable.

As our minister has mentioned, it would be a disaster to set a precedent of moving out and paying the federal responsibility, the federal government's share, and it would be irresponsible, and we are not about to do that. We need the federal government in there. We will be there. We continue to be there, and our minister has stated that over and over again. We have been there with \$70 million to the farmers that have been hit by the rains and the flooding in the area, and we will continue to be there with our dollars when the federal government gets off their duff and takes their responsibility seriously and treats us like they treated the rest of Canada.

The Throne Speech speaks of Project 2000, and we have committed to easing the transition from farming to retirement, enabling younger generations to move into agriculture. This is an important step and it is an important process.

The new crop insurance and the reduced premiums to assist farmers facing continued low prices for grains and oilseeds will be a commitment. I mentioned potatoes earlier. When you have input costs on grains of \$150 per acre, you are not even getting your input costs out. Moving to potatoes, \$1,400 for the same acre strikes me as a good move forward. It is diversification that is doable, possible, and we will support these visions and these efforts for our farming community and farming families and people in our rural economy. The visions of filling a truckload of pork for \$90,000 as opposed to a truckload of grain is also a good diversification in pork production in this province. We support the livestock industry which is very strong now however has hurt many of the producers because of the AIDA system we have. We recognize that. We realize that and believe that there is a better form that has to be brought forth provincially and by the federal government.

We have moved to equalize the rural and northern hydro rates. Again that is a benefit to our rural communities and improve the infrastructure for our rural communities with a \$177-million budget in construction, road maintenance, and bridges. We have moved forward.

The minister of natural resource in the Throne Speech has moved forward with a commitment, the hiring of more staff to look at the problems we have with water in our communities. I know the members opposite have spoken to it, unfortunately not a lot done about it in a number of years. There was not a lot done about it in years to that. We have a big job, as the minister has mentioned. We have willows growing out of culverts. We have some of the drainage that has been blown in, sand dunes and drifts off the farming fields that diverted the water. We have to invest more money into that. It is a commitment we have made. It is a commitment we will keep. It is working with AMM. It is working with the rural communities and working with our Government towards that issue to address that matter.

It is a big undertaking. I am sure the members opposite will assist us in the endeavours with some of the knowledge that

they have. The Member for Russell (Mr. Derkach), the Member for Emerson (Mr. Jack Penner), certainly have mentioned, and I am sure others will, that they want to see some headway in that area. Our side wants to see headway in that area. I believe it is something we can work on together. Some of the members are indicating that there are a lot of costs and a lot of dollars in doing that. I will certainly agree it cannot be done overnight, but I believe the initiative is there, the commitment is there, and we will move in that direction.

Having only two minutes, I would just like to wrap up in saying that the future looks bright for Manitoba. The Throne Speech speaks not to all the things we will do. Certainly in the next year, in the Budget that is coming up in the spring, the agenda is set and the vision is set. In a Throne Speech, of course, it is not set to exclude or eliminate any of the other programs that we will be following up on in Manitoba but certainly a vision for a brighter future for Manitoba.

Manitobans have responded very favourably to the last 14 months, and certainly in my com-

munity they have been very, very pleased with the vision and the direction that we have set with our Throne Speech. The members opposite I know will certainly do their job as Opposition to point out direction or in their opinion misdirection. I am sure they will agree that a vision for all Manitobans and every single person in Manitoba is a priority.

I thank you, Mr. Speaker, for the time to put those words on record.

**Mr. Glen Cummings (Ste. Rose):** Is it the will to call it six o'clock, Mr. Speaker?

**Mr. Speaker:** Is it the will of the House to call it six o'clock? *[Agreed]*

When this matter is again before the House, the honourable Member for Ste. Rose will have 40 minutes remaining.

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

# LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Tuesday, December 12, 2000

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