

Fourth Session - Thirty-Seventh Legislature
of the
Legislative Assembly of Manitoba
DEBATES
and
PROCEEDINGS
Official Report
(Hansard)

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Speaker*

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MANITOBA LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
First Session—Thirty-Eighth Legislature

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

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Tuesday, December 10, 2002

The House met at 1:30 p.m.

PRAYERS

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

PRESENTING REPORTS BY STANDING AND SPECIAL COMMITTEES

Standing Committee on Law Amendments First Report

Mr. Doug Martindale (Chairperson): Mr. Speaker, I beg to present the First Report of the Committee on Law Amendments.

Madam Clerk (Patricia Chaychuk): Your Standing Committee on Law Amendments presents the following as its First Report.

An Honourable Member: Dispense.

Mr. Chairperson: Dispense.

Meetings:

Your committee met on Monday, December 9, 2002, at 10 a.m. in Room 255 of the Legislative Building.

Matters Under Consideration:

Bill 2 – The Civil Remedies Against Organized Crime and Liquor Control Amendment Act/Loi sur les recours civils contre le crime organisé et modifiant la Loi sur la réglementation des alcools

Bill 3 – The Legislative Assembly Amendment Act/Loi modifiant la Loi sur l'Assemblée législative

Bill 4 – The Fire Departments Arbitration Amendment Act/Loi modifiant la Loi sur l'arbitrage relatif aux services de pompiers

Committee Membership:

Your committee elected Mr. Jennissen as the Vice-Chairperson.

Substitutions received prior to commencement of meeting:

Mrs. Smith (Fort Garry) for Mr. Cummings

Mr. Dewar for Hon. Mr. Sale

Mr. Aglugub for Hon. Mr. Selinger

Hon. Mr. Mackintosh for Hon. Mr. Lathlin

Hon. Ms. Barrett for Hon. Ms. Mihychuk

Mr. Schellenberg for Ms. Cerilli

Public Presentations:

Your committee heard one presentation on Bill 4 – The Fire Departments Arbitration Amendment Act/Loi modifiant la Loi sur l'arbitrage relatif aux services de pompiers, from the following organization:

Don Fotti, President of Professional Paramedic Association of Winnipeg

Bills Considered and Reported:

Bill 2 – The Civil Remedies Against Organized Crime and Liquor Control Amendment Act/Loi sur les recours civils contre le crime organisé et modifiant la Loi sur la réglementation des alcools

Your committee agreed to report this bill without amendment.

Bill 3 – The Legislative Assembly Amendment Act/Loi modifiant la Loi sur l'Assemblée législative

Your committee agreed to report this bill without amendment.

Bill 4 – The Fire Departments Arbitration Amendment Act/Loi modifiant la Loi sur l'arbitrage relatif aux services de pompiers

Your committee agreed to report this bill without amendment.

Mr. Martindale: Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the honourable Member for Assiniboia (Mr. Rondeau), that the report of the committee be received.

Motion agreed to.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

Bill 6—The Manitoba Public Insurance Corporation Amendment Act (Claimant Advisers)

Hon. Greg Selinger (Minister of Finance): I move, seconded by the Minister of Justice (Mr. Mackintosh), that leave be given to introduce Bill 6, The Manitoba Public Insurance Corporation Amendment Act (Claimant Advisers); Loi modifiant la Loi sur la Société d'assurance publique du Manitoba (conseillers des demandeurs), and that the same now be received and read a first time.

Mr. Speaker: Are you continuing on with the motion, the honourable Minister of Finance?

Mr. Selinger: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. His Honour the Lieutenant-Governor, having been advised of the contents of this bill, recommends it to the House. I would like to table the Lieutenant-Governor's message.

Motion presented.

Mr. Selinger: Mr. Speaker, this will, for the first time in Manitoba, provide advocacy resources to people who feel they would like to appeal a bodily harm claim decision by Manitoba Public Insurance Corporation. They will have resources now to be able to make a fully prepared appeal and support to do that. We believe this will create a greater sense of not only procedural justice but substantive justice in terms of outcomes for appellants. Thank you.

Motion agreed to.

* (13:35)

Bill 7—The Manitoba Public Insurance Corporation Amendment Act (Protection of Crown Assets)

Hon. Gord Mackintosh (Minister of Justice and Attorney General): I move, seconded by the Minister of Finance (Mr. Selinger), that leave be given to introduce Bill 7, The Manitoba Public Insurance Corporation Amendment Act (Protection of Crown Assets), and that the same be now received and read a first time. His

Honour the Lieutenant-Governor, having been advised of the contents of this bill, recommends it to the House. I would like to table the Lieutenant-Governor's message.

Motion presented.

Mr. Mackintosh: Mr. Speaker, this bill will prevent privatization of Manitoba Public Insurance Corporation without the approval of the people of Manitoba by referendum.

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 from Maple Leaf School 67 Grade 5 students under the direction of Mr. Frank Reeves. This school is located in the constituency of the honourable Member for River East (Mrs. Mitchelson).

Also in the public gallery we have from Robertson School 19 Grade 5 students under the direction of Ms. Karla Yallits and Mrs. Mary Wong. This school is located in the constituency of the honourable Members for Burrows (Mr. Martindale).

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

ORAL QUESTION PERIOD

Kyoto Protocol Implementation Costs

Mr. Stuart Murray (Leader of the Official Opposition): Mr. Speaker, yesterday the Premier (Mr. Doer) told reporters that the ratification of Kyoto would lead to the creation of more jobs in Manitoba. In fact, the Premier was so bold to say, and I quote: I am guaranteeing that if we ratify Kyoto we will gain jobs. Yes, I will give you my personal guarantee. This from a government that says costs are irrelevant.

I also believe that we have asked and they have refused to table any documents that provide any clear-cut, meaningful sector-by-sector analysis of costs and benefits of Kyoto to Manitoba. Will the minister responsible now table his Government's so-called viable plan containing appropriate, timely signals that will show Manitobans the costs and benefits of ratifying Kyoto to sectors such as agriculture, manufacturing and transportation?

Mr. Speaker, will the minister reduce his political greenhouse gas and come clean with Manitobans? *[interjection]*

Hon. Tim Sale (Minister of Energy, Science and Technology): Well, Mr. Speaker, at least I do not jump to the pump for Alberta.

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Speaker: Order. I would like to once again draw the attention of all honourable members to the public gallery. We have a lot of students here today and I am sure each and every one of you would like to set a good example. I ask the cooperation of all honourable members, please.

Mr. Sale: Mr. Speaker, one can really wish that the Leader of the Opposition and his staff would do some homework. Agriculture is exempted in the federal plan which was tabled three weeks ago. They have had three weeks to read that, so there are no demands for agriculture to reduce its emissions. In fact, if he would read the plan he would find that agriculture is seen as a source, a net source of sinks, agricultural sinks. By appropriate management, it not only is not required to reduce, it will be able to contribute and thereby earn resources from the sale of appropriate credits.

* (13:40)

Mr. Speaker, I have already indicated to the members opposite that the total cost to the large emitter sector which is the only sector that is included, manufacturing is not included, the total in cost in Manitoba is a maximum of 255 000 tonnes. We will capture 400 000 tonnes from the Brady Landfill, far more than offsetting anything, assuming industry does nothing.

I will continue in my second answer.

Taxation Provincial Comparisons

Mr. Stuart Murray (Leader of the Official Opposition): On a new question, Mr. Speaker.

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

Mr. Murray: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. A new study released today comparing 50 United States and the 10 Canadian provinces reveals that in terms of taxes and government regulations, only P.E.I. ranks worse than Manitoba. Yet the Premier's (Mr. Doer) response to that is to say to taxpayers: Do not hold your breath in terms of any tax relief.

How does the minister rationalize the fact that middle-income Manitobans who used to pay almost \$300 less income tax than Saskatchewan now pay almost \$800 more, a difference of \$1,100 under his watch? How does he rationalize that?

Hon. Greg Selinger (Minister of Finance): As you know, under our Government we have reduced personal income taxes by 11.5 percent. A family of four earning \$60,000 with a single earner have seen their taxes cut 14 percent since the 2000 year Budget. In the year 2000, they paid \$6,394 which was the legacy left to us by the former government, which was the highest in Canada. In the year 2002, they will pay \$5,601 which is the sixth-lowest in the country.

Mr. Murray: Mr. Speaker, according to the economic freedom of North America study that was released, I would ask this minister: How can the minister justify the fact that under his watch in three years the Government debt that every Manitoban owes has increased by \$800? How can you justify that?

Mr. Selinger: Mr. Speaker, if the member opposite would take the time to study the Budget booklet, he will see that the per capita costs that we are paying for the debt, the amount we actually pay in the Budget every year of \$380 million has dramatically reduced from the time when they were in office. We have repatriated our American-based debt from 19 percent when we came into office down to 4.5 percent this

year, and we have improved our net costs for paying the debt in this province over three years far in excess of what the former members opposite did.

Mr. Murray: Mr. Speaker, that is a lump of coal for the Manitobans who know that when they are compared with 50 United States and 10 provinces, other than P.E.I. we are dead last under this minister. The tax gap and government debt is growing, and Manitobans know that under this Government it is only going to get worse. I ask, on behalf of all Manitobans, rather than being a scrooge, when is this Government going to wake up and make Manitoba more competitive? When is he going to do that?

Mr. Selinger: Mr. Speaker, we have seen energy rates escalate dramatically in Alberta and Ontario where Tory governments have deregulated the plan and put an enormous burden on the backs of consumers. We have seen premiums added to health care in Alberta and British Columbia where right-wing governments have reduced taxes while reducing all the user charges and premium charges on everybody else in the country. Our cost of living in this province is either the first-lowest or second-lowest across the country. The bottom line for Manitobans is better than any other province where Tories are in government.

* (13:45)

Out-Migration Post-Secondary Graduates

Mrs. Heather Stefanson (Tuxedo): Mr. Speaker, our leader has a plan to provide incentives for students to stay in Manitoba after they graduate from our post-secondary institutions. My question is for the Minister of Advanced Education. Where is her Doer government's plan to keep our young people in Manitoba?

Hon. Diane McGifford (Minister of Advanced Education and Training): Mr. Speaker, I will of course confine my remarks to the work we have done in post-secondary education. As the member knows, part of our plan to encourage enrolments in post-secondary education and to

keep our people here, keep our students here, first of all, in the year of spring 2000, we introduced the Manitoba government bursary which had been cancelled in '93-94 by the members opposite, much to their shame.

We have also maintained tuition rates at our universities and colleges at 90 percent of what they were when we came into office. Enrolments at our universities and colleges are a testament to the soundness of our policies. I can give the member exact figures, but they are around 25% increases in our universities since we came into office. So I think our policies are extremely clear and that they are working.

Mrs. Stefanson: I ask this minister: What is the Government's plan to ensure that the taxpayers of our province do not continue to subsidize the education of Ontario, B.C. and Alberta's workforce?

Hon. MaryAnn Mihychuk (Minister of Industry, Trade and Mines): The question offers us an opportunity to look at the statistics of youth migration and I think it is important to remember that, during the years from 1996 to '99, under the previous government, we lost 1845 young Manitobans. Now we have reduced that outflow to 1091 over three years. That is 615 young people per year left under the Tory watch. We have reduced it to 250, and we continue to make improvements.

Mrs. Stefanson: Mr. Speaker, will this minister admit, given that she said in an article in *The Winnipeg Sun*, July 11, and I quote: The fact the numbers have worsened since the NDP took office is just a coincidence. I ask this minister: Will she admit there is no plan to stem the exodus of our young people from our province?

Ms. Mihychuk: I think the statistics prove it for themselves that we have a plan and it is working. They lost 615 every single year you were in office. We stemmed it to 250 per year and we are working on it every single day and we are reducing the outflow.

I can tell you the best retention strategy for young people is opportunity. I can tell you when we contacted the Asper School of Business the

retention rate for graduates this year exceeded 90 percent. Mr. Speaker, 90 percent of young people found work at home. At Red River community college their success rate of keeping young people at home is between 96 to 94 percent. That is how we keep young people in Manitoba.

* (13:50)

Winnipeg Child and Family Services Staffing

Mrs. Myrna Driedger (Charleswood): Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Family Services did not tell the truth last week about counselling for kids in care being cut and he did not tell the truth yesterday about reductions in front-line services, as demonstrated by a memo which I tabled which indicated that Child and Family Services in Winnipeg is decreasing the number of front-line social work staff.

I would like to ask this Minister of Family Services if he can guarantee today that creating vacancies in front-line social work positions will not compromise in any way the safety of children who come into care. Can he make that guarantee today?

Mr. Speaker: Order. Before recognizing the honourable minister, I would just like to remind the honourable Member for Charleswood that all members are honourable members and whatever information they bring to the House is factual information that I take as factual information. So I would just like to remind the honourable member, choose your words carefully.

Hon. Drew Caldwell (Minister of Family Services and Housing): I do appreciate those remarks. There is a record of this entire session, in fact the last three years of the critic who is very critical on many, many issues to do with health care and family services, a record of being erroneous with the facts. There are no removals of front-line staff.

Mrs. Driedger: Well, this minister should be ashamed of himself. I would like to right now table a Winnipeg Child and Family Services memo that outlines the difficulties that Winnipeg

Child and Family Services is having with staff reductions, one of which I would note is the elimination of a supervisor of the crisis response unit.

I would like to ask this Minister of Family Services to explain why positions like this one and in other priorities such as services to children and families and community-based early intervention are being cut to the tune of almost half a million dollars while corporate savings amount to a mere \$66,000.

Mr. Caldwell: I appreciate the question from the critic who, as I noted earlier, is quite critical on a regular basis. The fact is we are engaged in an exercise to put resources to where they mean the most and that is at the front lines. We will continue to do that.

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Point of Order

Mr. Speaker: The honourable Official Opposition House Leader, on a point of order.

Mr. Marcel Laurendeau (Official Opposition House Leader): You know, Mr. Speaker, telling the truth and erroneous statements, I do believe they both fall very quietly and closely together. This Minister of Family Services knows quite well what he is responding to.

You have challenged our side to be careful on the words we use, Mr. Speaker. I would ask you to see that this minister respects some of your rulings.

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

Hon. Gord Mackintosh (Government House Leader): Mr. Speaker, I am looking at *Beauchesne*, in terms of the words used by the critic. The statement "untrue statement" certainly has been ruled unparliamentary several times. The word "erroneous" is one that does not impute that there was a deceit or an intentional withholding of the facts.

So I think there are some certain concerns about the language of the member opposite. It

was correct that you remind members there are phrases in this House that if not unparliamentary are certainly borderline and can inflame the Question Period.

* (13:55)

Mr. Speaker: On the point of order raised by the honourable Official Opposition House Leader, I would like to take this opportunity to remind the honourable minister at this point that there are some words that might not be unparliamentary but the way they are stated could be offensive to some members. So I would like to also caution the honourable minister in choosing his words carefully.

Mr. Speaker: Honourable minister, have you concluded your answer?

Mrs. Driedger: The minister did not answer the question. I would like to ask this Minister of Family Services, who is responsible for the care and custody of children under The Child and Family Services Act how can he wash his hands of responsibility for the kids of this province. He has already lost one Child and Family Services board member. Does he want to have another one resign because of his behaviour?

Mr. Caldwell: Mr. Speaker, I just got the paper the member tabled. There seems to be an odd disconnect between her line of questioning and what actually appears in it.

I quote: As you well know, we are working hard to keep our expenditures within the level. To date we have made progress in this area. Last year Winnipeg Child and Family Services had a deficit of over \$10 million. That is being addressed.

I continue to quote: "We also have very few children in hotels in spite of an overall increase in children in paid care. Our use of kinship homes has increased significantly which is an indicator of good service." The people are doing good work out there.

Winnipeg Child and Family Services Staffing

Mrs. Bonnie Mitchelson (River East): It is clear that those who work within the Child and

Family Services system put their heart and their soul in and are committed and dedicated to the work they do, but it seems like this minister has no care or compassion for the children who are directly under his service.

My question for the flippant Minister of Family Services is: How can he stand in this House and deny three memos that have been prepared by staff in his department directly responsible to him that indicate services are being compromised and children are suffering as a result of his actions?

Hon. Drew Caldwell (Minister of Family Services and Housing): Well, I will not be spending \$10,000 on Beaujolais as long as I am minister here.

I will read again from the memo that was tabled by the Member for Charleswood (Mrs. Driedger): Our use of children in hotels, in spite of an overall increase, has been reduced. "Our use of kinship homes has increased significantly which is an indicator of good service."

The child welfare professionals in this province are doing extraordinarily good service to the people of the province of Manitoba. We on this side of the House support their good work and will continue to put resources into front-line services.

Mrs. Mitchelson: How, again, can this minister stand in this House and put comments on the record like he just has, Mr. Speaker, when his own staff in his department say that the turnover in staff in services to children and families and the lower numbers of experienced staff in the program are creating significant strain, which undoubtedly, despite the absolute best efforts of everyone, diminishes our capacity to provide a quality service? How can he stand in his place and say there are not cuts as service is being compromised to children and families that require his care?

Mr. Caldwell: Mr. Speaker, it is important to note the conditions and challenges being faced by social workers in this time of transition in our province to the communities they serve and together who struggle daily to improve lives in our province. We are certainly on this side of the

House, as a government, committed to providing resources to front-line services, not ancillary services, front-line services, and will continue to do so.

Mrs. Mitchelson: Mr. Speaker, a very simple question to the Minister of Family Services: Is he indicating that staff who wrote these memos in his department are lying?

Mr. Caldwell: No, Mr. Speaker.

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Speaker: Order. I have recognized the honourable Member for River Heights on a question.

* (14:00)

Urban Aboriginal Strategy Update

Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights): Mr. Speaker, there has been much recent focus on the importance of considering the Aboriginal community in Manitoba as, for example, the recent forum put on by the Business Council of Winnipeg emphasized the importance of including Aboriginal people in plans for economic development in Manitoba.

My question is to the Minister of Aboriginal and Northern Affairs. I ask the minister: What is the Government's Urban Aboriginal Strategy?

Hon. Oscar Lathlin (Minister of Aboriginal and Northern Affairs): Mr. Speaker, I thank the member for the question. I would like to advise him, of course, that we are continuing to work with the Aboriginal community. We have been working with the Canada West Foundation and also with the federal government on the Urban Aboriginal Strategy. As far as I am able to tell, so far things have been moving along and we are looking forward to coming up with better results than had been there before.

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Speaker: Order. The honourable Member for River Heights has the floor.

Mr. Gerrard: Mr. Speaker, my supplementary to the minister. I would ask the minister why it

was that urban Aboriginal leaders attending the Canada West Foundation Building the Dialogue conference last week indicated that the Urban Aboriginal Strategy, which had been in place in early 1999, fell apart when this Government was elected. What happened?

Mr. Lathlin: Mr. Speaker, the member's statements, I am afraid, are not based on facts. In fact, the working relationship between Canada West Foundation and the federal government is improving. The strategy, the work that has been started is still moving along.

I would also like to advise the member that in Manitoba here we have reinstated the funding that was taken away from the friendship centres. We have instituted programs like Neighbourhoods Alive! We have also signed a memorandum of understanding with the Winnipeg Regional Health Authority with respect to Aboriginal employment. So I think that shows we are committed and, in fact, we are doing things for the Aboriginal community.

Mr. Gerrard: Mr. Speaker, I ask the minister: Why did a table at the Building the Dialogue symposium last week, a table including four members of Manitoba's civil service from different departments, why did that table report there was no Aboriginal strategy, that one is badly needed? Where is the minister's Aboriginal strategy? If the minister has one, will he please table it in the Legislature today?

Mr. Lathlin: In fact, Mr. Speaker, I would like to table some correspondence that has been going back and forth between the Minister of Public Works and Government Services on the federal side, who was also charged with the implementation of the Government of Canada's Urban Aboriginal Strategy, a letter that he wrote to me on November 18 telling us he is still very much interested in working in a co-operative way with our provincial government as we develop strategies that will address the issues that negatively impact Aboriginal people in Winnipeg.

Palliative Care Government Initiatives

Mr. Doug Martindale (Burrows): Mr. Speaker, in my role as a clergyperson, I have had the

privilege of helping people and ministering to people who are dying. I know that people would prefer to be going through this process in familiar surroundings at home surrounded by loved ones. Since Roy Romanow in his report on the future of health care recommended that provinces increase their support to palliative care programs, can the Minister of Health tell us what our Government is doing to implement this excellent recommendation?

Hon. Dave Chomiak (Minister of Health): In fact, an all-party Senate report several years ago recommended that all provinces put in place a comprehensive palliative care program. I am very happy to report that Manitoba, by the implementation of its access to drug program to allow palliative patients to have access to drugs at home which they formerly had access to without cost at hospitals, to now have access to these drugs at home will have a significant impact and improvement on the quality of life and the quality of lives of those going through a palliative state. In addition, it serves as a model for all Canadians with respect to, firstly, the Senate report that recommended all provinces put in place such a program. Secondly, it was one of the recommendations of the Romanow report, something members opposite have totally neglected and overlooked. It was a specific recommendation saying that home care programs should be expanded to include palliative care. We are very happy to have the most comprehensive one in the country.

Little Grand Rapids Airport Update

Mr. David Faurschou (Portage la Prairie): Mr. Speaker, yesterday, in a media report, the Minister of Transportation was asked a question in regard to the status of a new airport for Little Grand Rapids. The minister stated, and I quote: Certainly, once the federal government comes to the table we will be there. We are there now.

Mr. Speaker, in the same report, Transport Canada has not heard any word from the Doer government. Has the Minister of Transport now contacted the federal government in this regard?

Hon. Scott Smith (Minister of Transportation and Government Services): I am glad to see

this question raised by members opposite. When the working group had done a report and advice was given back to the former government by 1998, there was very little action taken on northern airports. I can tell you from the capital investment that we have made, there is a recommendation of \$50 million going to some of the servicing for northern airports. Members opposite sat on that report for over a year before taking action. This Government has increased our capital expenditures for all northern airports by over 150 percent and we continue to work with communities in the North to make it viable.

Mr. Faurschou: Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Transport indicated that he had studied a study from 1998. However, last year the Doer government commissioned a \$97,000 feasibility study. What has this minister done with that study?

Mr. Smith: Mr. Speaker, I can tell you the improvements that we have made specifically, and certainly with the initiation of that study, and basically the identification that a new airport is needed up there, but in the interim, I can tell you specifically at Little Grand Rapids there has been a lot of work done in that community. There have been dollars invested in precision approach path indicator lights; there have been navigational lights put in at that airport; there have been large amounts of capital investment put into the airport to make improvements that this government did not do.

Mr. Faurschou: Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Culture (Mr. Robinson) stated that unless the runway is lengthened, the situation is in crisis.

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Point of Order

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

Hon. Gord Mackintosh (Government House Leader): On a point of order. I am reluctant to intervene, Mr. Speaker, but we are continuing to get preambles and supplementary questions. Would you please remind the honourable member, members opposite, of 409(2): A supplementary question needs no preamble?

* (14:10)

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

The honourable member does have a point of order, so I would ask the honourable member to please put his question.

* * *

Mr. Faursehou: My apologies, Mr. Speaker.

Can the Minister of Culture (Mr. Robinson) answer the question in regard to the runway of Little Grand Rapids? Does he believe the situation is still in crisis?

Mr. Smith: Mr. Speaker, I think if the member opposite did his homework he would identify that when the study was done, \$25 million to relocate the airport was the option. I will tell you, in the interim, the airport currently has functional runway lights, rotating beacons and a non-directional beacon that has been installed by this Government.

I can tell you this Government has taken action where the previous government did not take action. When you increase your capital expenditures and budget and you care about the northern communities by putting 150% increase in capital investment in the northern airports and in Little Grand Rapids, it shows the people of the community who cares and who did not.

Gull Rapids Hydro Project Employment and Training Programs

Mr. Leonard Derkach (Russell): Mr. Speaker, my question is to the minister responsible for training. The training component in business opportunities of the proposed Gull Lake project or Gull Rapids project, I am sorry, is clearly defined in the AIP or the agreement in principle. The agreement calls for a Cree entity to be established to manage the community employment and training programs for First Nations people related to the project.

I would like to ask the minister whether she can tell the House as to the current status of the entity and whether or not it has already begun its work.

Hon. Diane McGifford (Minister of Advanced Education and Training): Mr. Speaker, my information is that negotiations are not yet complete and that negotiations are ongoing at this point.

Mr. Derkach: Well, Mr. Speaker, I guess my question directly to the minister is: Has the entity been created? The agreement in principle was signed over a year ago, and there should be no hesitation in having that Cree entity established to not only do the employment and training opportunities for people related to the Gull Rapids project but also to the Wuskwatim project. I am asking the minister whether or not any of the two Cree entities have been established to manage the training needs of people in the North for the proposed development projects.

Ms. McGifford: Mr. Speaker, I understand there are two projects. First, Wuskwatim which involves NCN; secondly, Gull which involves four Cree nations: Split Lake, York Landing, Fox Lake and one more. As I have just told the member, negotiations are ongoing. We have some work to do with the federal government and negotiations are ongoing with regard to finalizing those agreements.

Mr. Derkach: Mr. Speaker, I guess I need to ask the minister whether she and her Government are committed to ensuring that there is a Cree entity that will be independent of government, that will in fact provide for the training and employment opportunities for Aboriginal people in the North as they relate to the two projects.

Ms. McGifford: Mr. Speaker, I can assure the member opposite that this Government, my department and other departments are absolutely committed to pre-project training in the North. We believe our future as a province depends on training and educating Aboriginal people. We are absolutely committed to a person, on this side of the House, to this training in the North, so I want to give the member that assurance.

Mr. Speaker: The honourable Member for Russell, on a new question.

Mr. Derkach: Mr. Speaker, on a new question. The minister did not answer the question. I want to simply ask her whether she and her Government are committed to a stand-alone Cree entity that will in fact deliver the training and opportunities for people in northern Manitoba.

Ms. McGifford: Mr. Speaker, as I said a few minutes ago, negotiations are ongoing. We are committed to partnerships with the Cree Nations in northern Manitoba.

First Nations Casinos Minister's Comments

Mr. Harold Gilleshammer (Minnedosa): Following the defeat of the casino vote in Brandon, the Member for Brandon West, the Lotteries Minister, indicated a review of the provincial policy is not in the cards nor will his Government reopen a bidding process to consider new proposals for Aboriginal casinos. Does he stand by those comments?

Hon. Scott Smith (Minister charged with the administration of The Manitoba Lotteries Corporation Act): The member opposite mentions a review of the casinos and the attempt of the casinos through the Bostrom report, which he is mentioning for the Aboriginal casinos.

I can tell you, Mr. Speaker, once you come to a conclusion on a project and times and dates are set, obviously the outcome to that is reviewed after. The process is not revisited. When times and dates are set, sooner or later you come to a conclusion on dates that have been set. You get together with folks that have been involved and you consider their input and consideration. You do not come out and advise of what you might do in your next step, which this member is sort of anticipating that we were going to do.

Mr. Gilleshammer: I would like to thank the minister for clarifying that.

On a new question, Mr. Speaker. The First Minister (Mr. Doer) indicated following this vote, and in reference to this vote he says: I think

there were errors made by the Government. Can the minister indicate what those errors were?

Hon. Tim Sale (Minister charged with the administration of The Gaming Control Act): Mr. Speaker, I am sure that all members recall that the management of the Aboriginal casino process was under the primary direction of the Manitoba Gaming Control Commission. I have had the opportunity in the last several weeks to meet on two separate occasions and privately on a third occasion with the Grand Chief and some of the chiefs and officials of various reserves. We have met with members of the Aseneskak casino. We have met with chiefs who were concerned about Aboriginal gaming and about the reviews that are ongoing.

We assured them that, as we draft new appropriate legislation and regulations, they will be involved from the outset. I am looking forward to a very effective relationship as we move forward to meet the tests that are in the comprehensive framework agreement, which I am sure the members of the Opposition have had a chance to peruse carefully.

Mr. Speaker: The honourable Member for Minnedosa, on a new question.

Mr. Gilleshammer: The Premier had clearly said that errors were made by government and if the member does not want to acknowledge that, that is fine. I think the public is well aware of that.

He also said what was particularly frustrating is various municipalities approached about hosting casinos turned out to be obstacles. Is it the view of the Government that the municipalities are the villains here and that they are truly the obstacles to the success of this Government?

Mr. Sale: I think it is always important in any democratic situation to honour the views that are expressed for and against a variety of issues. These are very difficult issues often for various groups. They have made their views strongly heard. I think that we always have to respect the views of the individuals who make their concerns heard. That being said, Mr. Speaker, I

think there are always things to be learned from processes.

I think that is something that we all acknowledge, that no matter how much we think we know about something at the beginning, there are always things we can learn through the process. I know the First Minister and our other ministers involved in gaming and lotteries will be meeting with First Nations leadership in the very near future to review the process and to look forward to the future in a positive and collaborative way.

* (14:20)

Diking Projects Rebate

Mr. Marcel Laurendeau (St. Norbert): Mr. Speaker, my question is to the Minister of Transportation and Government Services. The people of Grande Pointe were happy to hear they were getting a 10% rebate back for their diking purposes after the 1997 flood, but the city of Winnipeg would like to know if they are going to be treated in the same equal fashion as the people of Grande Pointe and have the same 10 percent refunded?

The people on Lord Avenue in St. Norbert having had to put out of pocket \$130,000, they would like to have that same amount reimbursed.

Hon. Scott Smith (Minister of Transportation and Government Services): I can assure the member opposite that each and every community will be treated exactly the same with fairness and equity. I can tell the member opposite, certainly different circumstances the member is talking about opposite, but every community is treated in the same way with the same 10 percent, in fairness.

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

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

Load Line Manufacturing

Mr. Peter Dyck (Pembina): On November 29, I had the pleasure of attending the grand opening

of Load Line Manufacturing's newest 25 000-square-foot facility located on Highway 32 south of Winkler. Nearly 1000 people braved less than ideal weather conditions to share in this important celebration.

Load Line Manufacturing has been thriving since Jake Friesen and his partner purchased the company in 1988. The company has grown from 10 employees working in a small shop to 60 employees with a customer base that covers both western Canada and the midwestern United States. The company has also sold some units overseas in countries such as Russia and Belize.

Since they started selling trucks in 1990, space has been an issue for Load Line Manufacturing. More production space was required in order for this business to continue serving the needs of its customers. That is why the company has expanded and built a new facility for its truck division. The old building is still being used for manufacturing. This is not the end of the growth for Load Line Manufacturing. The owner and president, Jake Friesen, sees one further expansion to come, possibly next summer.

The expansion of Load Line's operation is indicative of a can-do spirit that exists among the entrepreneurs in the Pembina constituency. They see opportunities and they seize upon them. Our communities benefit tremendously as a result as they create jobs and opportunities for area residents.

I would like to congratulate Load Line Manufacturing on their achievements and wish them much luck in their future business endeavours.

Osmond Theodore Anderson

Mr. Jim Rondeau (Assiniboia): Good day, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to highlight the life and accomplishments of a constituent and friend, Mr. O.T. Anderson who passed away this weekend. I first met O.T. while taking a science class at Daniel Mac in Grade 10. O.T. was an excellent teacher who always gave his students 100 percent and because of his caring attitude and personality always got the best out of his students. I then had the pleasure of being a

student teacher at Daniel a number of years later where O.T. was then the vice-principal. I again appreciated his guidance and support and witnessed his commitment to the school and staff.

O.T. was also very active in the community. He was appointed as chairperson of the Mayor's Race Relations Committee by Bill Norrie in 1984. He also served on the Community Folk Arts Council as secretary, a columnist for the ethnic paper *Our Voice* and a chairman of the Winnipeg School Division No. 1 multicultural education committee. He also held the position of chairperson of the Manitoba Multicultural Resources Centre and was president of the Caribbean Canadian Association two times.

I would like to thank his family for sharing O.T.'s time and talents with our community and province. He has left the province a much better, more tolerant place for his efforts. His legacy will continue through his thousands of students, all those people he touched in his community and work. Ralph Waldo Emerson once said the most important legacy we can leave is a human one, not a financial one. O.T. did a great job as far as our community and I am sure all members of this Chamber will join me in extending our condolences to his wife, family and his many friends. Thank you very much and our best memories.

Manitoba League of Persons with Disabilities

Mrs. Myrna Driedger (Charleswood): Mr. Speaker, today I had the privilege of attending an event put on by Manitoba League of Persons with Disabilities. It was an invitation to the time capsule opening 10 years after.

At the close of the United Nations Decade of Disabled Persons in 1992, time capsule predictions for the future were sealed and hung behind framed plaques in the Manitoba Legislature to be opened on International Human Rights Day, December 10, 2002, and today that day arrived.

It certainly was a pleasure to be in attendance with members of the disability community today. Many media were also in attendance, as well as others that were interested in finding out what these predictions had been

that had been sealed behind these framed plaques over the last 10 years. Certainly it was an opportunity to also spend some time with the Manitoba League for Persons with Disabilities. I would like to indicate that they certainly have gone to a lot of work in addressing this issue of the time capsule and accumulating all of those predictions.

The Manitoba League for Persons with Disabilities is a membership-based organization representing the concerns of people with all types of disabilities in Manitoba. They were established in 1974 and have since developed expertise on numerous issues affecting the lives of people with disabilities. A few such issues are accessibility, education, employment, housing, income security, support services and transportation.

Their philosophy, Mr. Speaker, says that Manitobans with disabilities have the same rights and responsibilities as any other person and that all persons, regardless of abilities, must have access to opportunities in order to exercise these rights.

It was certainly a pleasure today to join with them, Mr. Speaker, and to share with them the time-capsule list which has been behind the plaque for the last 10 years. I would certainly like to congratulate them for all of their work and wish them well in their future endeavours in addressing their future challenges.

International Human Rights Day

Mr. Doug Martindale (Burrows): Mr. Speaker, today is International Human Rights Day, a day of particular significance to people with disabilities in Manitoba.

Ten years ago Manitobans with disabilities placed in a time capsule here at the Legislature their dreams, expectations and predictions as to where society would be in the year 2002, in terms of equality of opportunity for people with disabilities in Manitoba. At an event held here this morning, these predictions were unveiled and revealed to the public for review.

On behalf of our NDP government, it gives me great pleasure to report that while there is

still more work to be done we have made good progress in the last three years since we formed government to meet some of these expectations. Our Government, for the first time in the history of Manitoba, has designated a minister responsible for people with disabilities. This was followed by the release of our Government's strategy paper on disability.

Today we announced the establishment of the Disabilities Issues Office. The first executive director is Mr. Jim Derksen. Today he received the Human Rights commitment award from the Manitoba Human Rights Commission, the Canadian Human Rights Commission, and the Canadian Legal Education Association. We all want to congratulate him. The new Disabilities Issues Office will work with all departments of government to ensure that disability issues are addressed.

In April 2002, our Government announced the adoption of universal design guidelines to promote accessibility. We have developed a process through an annual round table where people with disabilities have access to government policy making. In addition, our Government has shown leadership in the area of employment and created five mentoring staff-years through the Civil Service Commission to train and recruit people with disabilities on the job. Our Government has created a joint community and government committee to ensure that people with disabilities are included in programs under the affordable housing agreement.

Since we formed Government, more parks and campgrounds have been upgraded for accessibility, interpreter costs for medical appointments have been provided for, there are more accessible buses in Winnipeg than there were 10 years ago, our Government has increased funding for children's special services and support to families and more people with disabilities are living in the community today than in institutional settings.

These are just some of the actions taken by our Government to offer full citizenship and equal opportunity to people with disabilities in our province.

Earl Backman

Mr. Larry Maguire (Arthur-Virden): Mr. Speaker, I rise in the House today to recognize a very important individual who has committed himself for six years to ensuring the health and well-being of western Manitobans. I am standing here to honour the former chief executive officer of the Brandon Regional Health Authority, Mr. Earl Backman, who retired on November 29, 2002.

Following the creation of the regional health authority system by the former Progressive Conservative government in the mid-'90s, Mr. Backman was selected as the first-ever CEO of the Brandon RHA. Mr. Backman accepted this appointment after having served for 15 years as Brandon's city manager.

Immediately following his appointment, Mr. Backman successfully carried out the task of creating the structure and organization that would eventually become the Brandon Regional Health Authority. Mr. Backman's effective leadership and direction resulted in many notable achievements for the Brandon RHA. During the six-year term he served as CEO, the Brandon RHA became well known for its advancements in information technology, its openness with the media and general public and its initiation of Brandon's downtown rejuvenation. In addition, Mr. Backman oversaw the integration of the Brandon General Hospital into the RHA and, under his guidance, strong relationships with Brandon's neighbouring communities and many rural municipalities were developed to help acknowledge and develop Brandon as a regional health centre for Westman and some of eastern Saskatchewan.

* (14:30)

As I acknowledge the past achievements of Earl Backman, it is also fitting that I recognize the Brandon RHA's new CEO, Carmel Olson. Ms. Olson, formerly the RHA's vice-president of community services and long-term care, has a lengthy history of involvement in the health care system. I wish her much success in her new position and trust that she will uphold the high standards set under Mr. Backman's leadership.

To Mr. Backman, I would like to thank you for your dedicated service, to congratulate you for your many successes and to wish you and your wife, Candace, some well-deserved time off as you embark on your planned retirement.

House Business

Hon. Gord Mackintosh (Government House Leader): Mr. Speaker, would you please canvass the House to see if there is leave to set aside the Throne Speech debate very briefly to allow for first reading of a bill not yet listed on the Order Paper, Bill 10.

Mr. Speaker: Is there leave to set aside the Throne Speech debate temporarily to allow for the first reading of a bill that is not listed on the Order Paper, Bill 10? Is there leave? *[Agreed]*

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

Bill 10—The Elections Finances Amendment Act

Hon. Gord Mackintosh (Government House Leader): Mr. Speaker, I move by leave, seconded by the Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs (Ms. Friesen), that leave be given to introduce Bill 10, The Elections Finances Amendment Act, and that the same be now received and read a first time.

His Honour the Lieutenant-Governor, having been advised of the contents of this bill, recommends it to the House. I will table the Lieutenant-Governor's message.

Motion presented.

Mr. Mackintosh: Mr. Speaker, the bill is based on recommendations from Manitoba's Chief Electoral Officer and has been agreed to by the parties represented in the Legislature. They deal with authorizing the payment on a more realistic level, payments to auditors under The Elections Finances Act, and also deals with nominal donation of goods and services to campaigns.

Motion agreed to.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

GOVERNMENT BUSINESS

ADJOURNED DEBATE (Eighth Day of Debate)

Mr. Speaker: Resumed debate on the proposed motion of the honourable Member for Selkirk (Mr. Dewar), and this debate remains open.

Mr. Daryl Reid (Transcona): Mr. Speaker, it is my pleasure to rise to add my comments on the Speech from the Throne for the Fourth Session of the Thirty-seventh Legislature. As a member of the Government, I am quite proud of this Throne Speech and the accomplishments that our Government has made over the course of our three-plus years in office.

First, I would like to start by congratulating you and welcoming you back, Sir, to the Legislative Chamber and we look forward to your guidance as this session proceeds. In the past, you have, as many members have referenced, been very fair to the members of this Chamber in your rulings and we respect you for the guidance you have provided to the members of this Chamber.

In addition, I would also like to welcome back the members of the Chamber staff who have served us so diligently over the years. Of course, we have had many opportunities to chat with them about their involvement, not only in this Chamber, but in their personal lives as well. We welcome their efforts on behalf of the members of the Assembly.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to also welcome and congratulate the pages who have been appointed to help and assist members of the Assembly with respect to the duties that we perform here. The pages form a very vital function to the operation of the Chamber. We hope that they will be able to gain some new insight into the democratic process that we have here in our great province of Manitoba. We hope they will take away many fond memories as a result of that experience and that they will be able to share those experiences with other members of their schools and families and, of course, of their community at large.

I would also welcome, Mr. Speaker, and recognize the support services that we receive from the intern staff, those who have been appointed to the Official Opposition caucus and, of course, to the government caucus. I do know that the interns who have worked with us over the years have been very dedicated individuals and have provided us with immeasurable amounts of effort and work on behalf of the members of the Assembly on the government side of the House.

I would like to thank them for their work over the years because they have done a tremendous amount of tasks, and, of course, what they receive in return is an experience, I am sure, that is second to none, to be able to work inside the democratic process. I hope they, too, will be able to share their experiences with others and will learn from this process, and, hopefully, for both the pages and the interns, perhaps we will see them returning to the legislative Chamber as elected members some time in the future. I would encourage them, if that is their will, to seek public office because I think it is a very honourable job to be involved with. I would welcome their involvement further in the democratic process.

Mr. Speaker, I would also like to start by thanking the constituents of the community of Transcona for their continuing support. Since 1990, I have had the honour of being the MLA for Transcona. It has been indeed an honour to be the MLA for Transcona and to meet the thousands of people in Transcona, to hear their concerns first-hand and to be able to bring those concerns back to the legislative Chamber and to the caucus and Cabinet to share with my colleagues of this place, so that they, too, might be aware of the concerns of my community.

Every single day that I talk to Transcona residents, I learn more from them. For me, Mr. Speaker, this is an irreplaceable and perhaps an educational experience that could never have been gained in any other form. So I thank the residents of the community of Transcona for their continuing support in the past and, hopefully, in the future as well.

Now, Mr. Speaker, many members of the Chamber have made comment with respect to

members of the Assembly who have announced their retirement from this Chamber. I know many of them are long-serving members, and we want to recognize the role that they have played in this place.

Mr. Speaker, I know the Member for Lakeside (Mr. Enns) who is the longest serving member of the Legislative Assembly, in fact, we on both sides of the House have often referred to the Member for Lakeside as the dean of the Legislature for his many, many years, in fact, decades of service to the people of Manitoba and to his constituents in the Lakeside community. So we congratulate him on his long service and for being a loyal servant of the people of Manitoba and for his role as minister of various portfolios in this province, and we wish him well in his future endeavours when he leaves this Assembly.

We know that we will likely see him back, sitting in the loges of this Chamber, providing some guidance to members of the Assembly from time to time, as the Member for Lakeside has brought his scrapbook to the Chamber and has come across and shared with us some of his memories from the past. We appreciate him sharing some of those recollections and some of the advice that he has to share with members of the government of today and appreciate him also bringing forward some of his experiences from the times and some of the debates that have occurred in the past in this Chamber. So we welcome his input into that and also congratulate him on his pending retirement.

Mr. Speaker, we would also like to recognize that the Member for Morris (Mr. Pitura) will also be taking his leave from this Chamber in the future, when the provincial general election is called, no doubt. I want to say that I have enjoyed discussions with the Member for Morris. He has been a true gentleman, as has the Member for Lakeside and the Member for Minnedosa (Mr. Gilleshammer) in their activities in this House.

We do not always agree on policy. I mean, that is part of the give and take of this political process that we have in the Chamber, but I can say that the members I am referring to are true gentlemen. I have enjoyed my opportunities to

talk with them over the 13 years that I have been here, or almost 13 years that I have been here, and also to share in some of the experiences that they have.

I do know that the Member for Minnedosa, who was the minister for the department for which I was the critic, for a number of years we have had our give-and-take through the budgetary Estimates process. I guess if we are being open and frank here, it was somewhat frustrating. The minister was quite a capable minister in his ability to kind of stall the process or obfuscate. I am not sure if that is the right term, but there was an ability there where the minister seemed to portray a tremendous sense of patience in his answering and was very slow and methodical in the answers that he was providing.

* (14:40)

Of course, for a critic who wanted to get at the answer more quickly and also to get on with more questions, it was a bit frustrating for me, but I do appreciate the opportunity to work with the Member for Minnedosa. I do know that he had had some difficulties in the past with respect to personal circumstances with his family members. My understanding is that those circumstances have worked themselves through, and I hope and would wish that the continuing good health of his family will remain and for himself as well. We want to make sure that he is also given best wishes with respect to his impending departure from this Legislative Assembly.

Mr. Speaker, with respect to the Minister of Labour and Immigration (Ms. Barrett), who has been a colleague of mine, as well, in this Chamber since 1990, we were both elected, as we say, to the class of 1990, and it has been my honour to serve both in opposition and in government with the Minister of Labour. I can say I have never once doubted her integrity and her sincerity and her interest in serving not only the people of her constituency, but the people of the province of Manitoba. So I would congratulate the Minister of Labour for her efforts on behalf of all Manitobans.

In fact, Mr. Speaker, I was just at an event this past weekend when we were having the

evening of Christmas with the Winnipeg Fire Paramedic Service. Members of the Fire Paramedic Service have referenced over and over again, both in the forum of this building here and also in public forums and other venues, that they are quite appreciative of the fact that the Government and, in particular, the current Minister of Labour has listened to the concerns of the Winnipeg firefighters and the Winnipeg paramedic services and have taken those concerns to heart and have put in place the necessary legislation to reflect those concerns on behalf of the people of Manitoba.

The paramedics and the firefighters, of course, provide services to us. We have often said in this place that firefighters will, in the performance of their duties, put themselves in harm's way to protect the citizens of Manitoba. We want to recognize, as the Minister of Labour has done through her efforts, the valuable contribution that firefighters and paramedics have made to our province.

In addition to that, Mr. Speaker, I am doubly proud of the Minister of Labour and the efforts that she has made with respect to the operations of her department. I want to reference, in fact, something that I hold very near and dear to my heart, and that was the legislation dealing with the firefighters. We used to call it the heart and lung legislation, but, of course, it is dealing with catastrophic illnesses that firefighters would encounter in the performance of their duties. The minister has brought forward legislation which is now a part of the laws of this province, and I want to thank the Minister of Labour for her efforts in that regard.

The minister has also brought forward through the operation of her department an increase in the number of Workplace Safety and Health inspectors, something I also hold near and dear to my heart with respect to the safe workplaces, the healthy workplaces of our province. The minister has taken steps very early in the process of our Government to ensure that those services are in place, Mr. Speaker.

While the operation of the department is often difficult, the minister, I think, has handled the challenges of the department admirably and I would like to congratulate her on both her duties

as the minister and also for her impending retirement from this Chamber as well.

Now, Mr. Speaker, with respect to the provincial Throne Speech that was announced here just last week, a little over a week ago, there were a number of issues that were contained within the Throne Speech that I am very proud of. Of course, members of the Opposition also had their so-called alternate throne speech. There were a number of items that were missing from the Opposition's alternate throne speech.

I want to reference that the Opposition, for some reason, did not make mention with respect to the importance of the floodway to the operations of the community of the city of Winnipeg and the communities south of Winnipeg. Now, our Government has made significant improvements with respect to flooding arrangements, with respect to diking and other flood relief measures, EMO, and we heard that again today in Question Period with respect to the answer and questions that were presented here relating to flooding.

Also, Mr. Speaker, we did not hear from the Opposition with respect to their involvement with Manitoba Hydro or their lack of involvement with Manitoba Hydro. That is one of the things that has mystified me as a member of this Assembly over my years here, why that has not been more front and centre or a centerpiece of the opposition party's platform. I have never understood that. As members of my caucus have often said, there have been over 30 years, 30-plus years, that the members of the Opposition have never been involved in the construction of one watt of electricity in this province. I have never understood why that is the case. There have been successive NDP governments that have been involved in the construction of hydroelectric projects. I would think it would be, as we have seen demonstrated many times in the history of our province, the benefits of our hydroelectric power are immense.

As we have seen the questioning that is going on in this legislative Chamber with respect to the future of our province as it relates to Kyoto, and I will not go into that right now, but I will in a few moments, I want to say that you would think it would be a centerpiece of any

provincial government's policy to have hydro-electric development.

As has been pointed out by my ministerial colleagues here, the Conawapa dam that had been planned to service the Ontario market back in the nineties was cancelled. The contract was cancelled by the Ontario government at that time, I understand that, but, at the same time, I recognize that there was a considerable amount of work and expenditure made with respect to the construction of portions of that project and roads into and cofferdams, et cetera. We could have gone ahead with the environmental licence so that we would have had the opportunity to proceed perhaps more timely with the development of the Conawapa project, should the Premier (Mr. Doer), who is now in Ottawa talking with the Prime Minister and is obviously going to have or has had discussions with the Premier of Ontario with respect to Conawapa, have the opportunity to have this project move forward in a timely fashion and also to address the environmental concerns in a way that would be beneficial to those that were concerned about those issues but also to the province as a whole.

So, from my perspective, Mr. Speaker, I cannot understand why members of the Opposition in their alternate throne speech did not mention Hydro as well, did not talk about nurses and the training programs that are going on in this province. That is an oversight on your part. I am not sure why you left that out. It is an important issue.

An Honourable Member: It is nice for you to be debating our throne speech.

Mr. Reid: I will get to my Throne Speech here in a couple of minutes, as I have started with, but you have also neglected to talk about the North.

Now, I do note that today in Question Period, for the first time in my memory, you started to ask questions about the involvement of Aboriginal people. Now, it is nice to see that you are finally asking those questions, but I guess the obvious question is: Why did you not do this years ago? Why did you not have this as a part of your government operations?

I can say quite proudly, Mr. Speaker, as has been referenced many times through Manitoba

Public Insurance, we have a strategy within Manitoba Public Insurance to involve First Nations people in training to become employees to help us with the operations of Manitoba Public Insurance. We want to make sure that they are actively involved in those opportunities as resident Manitobans. We are taking those steps to make that happen now in addition to other activities that we have with respect to other government departments.

We understand the significance. We are happy to see that you raised it in Question Period this day, but it would have been nice if you had made this part of your long-term strategy when you were in government.

In addition to that, there is little or no mention, except in Question Period here where you are trying to go on fishing expeditions, with relationship to the Kyoto Protocol. I do note you did not seem to place that too highly in the alternate throne speech that you had, but I can tell you it is a cornerstone of the future of this province and that we very much see that this is an opportunity for our province.

Mr. Speaker, I will say quite openly and on the record here that I support the steps that need to be taken with respect to climate change. The Kyoto Protocol goes a long way, in my mind, to helping to address those issues. Now, I have never considered myself to be one of those strong environmentalists. I am actively interested and involved in issues relating to recycling and those types of activities. I would like to see us have opportunities to have our automobiles, the vehicles that we drive, driven by fuel cell technology. A couple of years ago, I had a chance to travel with the former Minister of Transportation and Government Services and visit the Ballard fuel cell plant in Vancouver and to see first-hand some of the activities that they are involved in. They are not the only Canadian company that is involved in fuel cell technology. I do know that there are opportunities for us in Canada with respect to technology improvements and changes in the way we move ourselves about our province and our country. I think it is worthy of us to be actively engaged in the development of those projects. As a society generally, I think that we have a role to play in

that process to make sure that that succeeds as well.

* (14:50)

With respect to the Kyoto Protocol, I do know that the Kyoto Protocol will create opportunities in this province. I know the questions in Question Period were relating to, well, we are going to be, and, as the members of the Opposition often like to do, they like to paint situations black and in the negative context. Yes, there are going to be some changes in this province. We have already seen some of the companies in our province that have made some changes. Hudson Bay Mining and Smelting, for example, Tembec, Bison Transport, Midwest Foods have already moved to cut their emissions in this province. I think that is very responsible of industry to take that step. There are others, no doubt, that will be involved as they recognize, and I think the vote is occurring today in the Parliament of Canada with respect to the ratification of Kyoto. I am not sure if that has passed the Parliament of Canada, but I expect that may occur and that Manitobans and Canadians in general will then be in a position whereby they will be taking the necessary steps to do our part to reduce greenhouse gas emissions.

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

There will also be opportunities in our province. The Premier and our Minister of Energy, Science and Technology (Mr. Sale) has often said that there is significant opportunity for us in this province with respect to our hydro development. We have negotiated agreements with our First Nations communities with respect to hydro dam development. We are partnering in this province with First Nations communities on those hydro dam developments. There will be opportunities for construction.

I can recall quite clearly in my particular trade as an electrician in years past when we were constructing the Limestone project and encountering others that were in my trade that had worked on the Limestone project, what an employment benefit it was for the province of Manitoba to have those employment

opportunities, not only for the electricians and the carpenters and those that are steelworkers and those that do the building of the dam itself and the installation of the generators themselves and the controls that are associated, but all of the spin-off industries that go with that. There are thousands upon thousands of jobs that will be created as a result of our hydro-electric dam development.

One of the major projects, obviously, of our Province is to move in that direction in addition to the floodway project, but I think there will be many, many jobs created as a result of our involvement in the Kyoto Protocol and the development of our hydro dams to provide clean, renewable energy to not only Manitobans, but also to other jurisdictions in Canada and for any reserves that may flow to the United States. There are opportunities for jobs in there. I have witnessed in the past those job opportunities and know of many people that were involved and employed on those hydro dam projects in the past. I see there is a great future for us in our province as we move in that direction.

In addition to that, I am quite proud of the fact that we have currently the lowest unemployment in Canada. We have moved back and forth. I have just got the latest sheet on my desk this week. It was 5.3, if I am not mistaken. I am going from memory here. We float back and forth, first and second place, between ourselves, Manitoba, and the province of Alberta. We are quite proud that our economy has done very well. We hope that that will continue in the future. I know our Government is working very hard to ensure that we have a continuation of those opportunities for all Manitobans.

We are also involved and have been proud of the fact that we have combined the two hydros, Winnipeg Hydro and Manitoba Hydro, together and that we have provided uniform hydro rates for all of Manitobans. All Manitobans, no matter where you live now, have the same hydro rate, and I think that is a question of fairness. I am quite proud that we have taken that step.

In addition to that, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I am also proud of the fact that as a Crown corporation—and I know the Minister responsible

for Hydro has introduced the legislation here just today with respect to the referendum requirement related to Manitoba Public Insurance. I will not go into discussion about the legislation itself because I think that would be inappropriate. That will be left for another day, but I do note that over the course of our term in government we have been able to have a continuation of the frozen rates at Manitoba Public Insurance.

In fact, it was, I think, two years ago that we were able to return a rebate premium to Manitobans of some 16.6 percent with respect to the premiums that were collected, and Manitobans I know were—*[interjection]* Well, there was some controversy with respect to the decisions that were made, and I understand members opposite were opposed to the enhancement of our universities and colleges in this province. That is unfortunate, that you are opposed to the rebuilding of our colleges and universities and opportunities for our young people in this province, as you seem to be with respect to that particular decision.

But that is a decision that happened in the past, and I can say I am quite proud of the fact that again this year we had made an application to the Public Utilities Board for a zero revenue change, so we were at flat rates with respect to Manitoba Public Insurance, and PUB in their wisdom saw to roll that back to a minus one percent.

So, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I think we have been able to manage that operation very effectively, and Manitoba Public Insurance is a corporation which I am very proud of in the role that they have played in our province providing us with among the lowest, if not the lowest, automobile insurance rates in all of Canada. I do know, I receive information relating to the activities of private insurers and public insurers across our country, and I will share with you some examples.

In Atlantic Canada, as an indication, the private insurers in those jurisdictions, they are raising their automobile insurance rates between 15 percent and 20 percent this year. That is on top of about a 12% increase that they saw last

year, and into the foreseeable future, they see that there are going to be rising insurance rates at a time when Manitoba Public Insurance premium rates are flat. We are asking for no increase. In fact, we are going down in the premiums that we are asking for.

In the Atlantic Canada provinces and in the province of Ontario, we are seeing seniors having their automobile insurance applications rejected out of the sheer fact that they are seniors, because the insurance companies, I would expect from what I am reading, see that the risk is higher for seniors, and, therefore, they are turning away seniors' insurance application renewals. I think that that is not the direction that I would want my insurance company to go, and I know that MPI insures and takes on all risks that come to its door with respect to the basic insurance program.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, in addition to that, we have taken steps through Manitoba Public Insurance to be involved in the anti-theft program. Although I know the Member for Portage la Prairie (Mr. Faurschou) has referenced that there are still some concerns with respect to automobile theft in his community and that that is an issue that needs to be addressed, we have taken steps in the corporation to reduce the number of thefts.

We are starting to see a bit of a trend here which I hope will continue, that auto thefts are on the decline in the Capital Region, and we hope that that particular trend will continue because I think we all want to make sure that our vehicles are safe, that our property is safe and that we do not need the inconvenience of having our vehicles stolen. I hope that Manitobans will recognize that we all together have a role to play in preventing those thefts, and I would encourage Manitobans to be involved and to have the necessary automobile anti-theft features on their vehicle to help in that regard.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I do know that we, through our Throne Speech, which our Throne Speech has pointed out, have played a role in training more nurses in this province, something that we were in serious need of in this province. I recall in my days as a member of the Opposition here where members of the

Government, for whatever reasons, decided that they were going to reduce the number of nurses in our province and, in fact, eliminate the LPNs as an effective job in our health care system in this province. I never understood the logic of that because I valued the services that LPNs—

An Honourable Member: It is the unions that did that. The unions did it.

Mr. Reid: Well, I can see the Member for River East (Mrs. Mitchelson) is now blaming the nurses' union for that. That is an interesting position for her to take, but I know that perhaps when she has her chance to speak to them, she will share her thoughts that it was the nurses and the nurses' unions and the representatives that caused that to happen. So, if she wants to blame the nurses for the decisions of her Government, that is her decision to make. I do not support that position.

* (15:00)

I saw that all the nurses played a role in our health care system, and we are quite proud as a government to be able to increase the number of nurses in training. In fact, Mr. Deputy Speaker, it is my understanding that we are now graduating three times the number of nurses that the previous government did and that over 90 percent of those nurses are staying and working inside our province providing health care services, vital health care services to the people of Manitoba.

We have increased the number of doctors in training, the number of spaces for doctors that are in training in this province. We are quite proud of that achievement. In fact, Mr. Deputy Speaker, with respect to our doctors in training, we had some 2037 doctors that were in our province in 1999 when we took office, and, now, it is my understanding that we have now 2122 licensed doctors in our province. So we are training more doctors, and we are going in the right direction with respect to our health care system, and we are training the necessary people to fill those jobs in our province. We are quite proud of the role that our Minister of Health (Mr. Chomiak) and our Government has played in the reversal of the health care fortunes of our province. I think the people of Manitoba recognize that as well.

Having had the opportunity to canvass parts of my community over the years and again just recently, I am hearing from Manitobans that health care is again, and it still is their No. 1 concern. In fact, they want us to go further. In fact, they are talking about bringing in Pharmacare as a part of the health care program in this province. They want to see an enhancement of those opportunities as well. That is what I am hearing from my community. They want to make sure that we have opportunities right within the community.

I do know that I have talked many times with our Minister of Health with respect to the Transcona health access centre. I have told our minister how important that is to our community. Our Government has made a commitment to make sure that that project goes forward. In fact, it was just recently announced that we are going to be moving forward. We are in the design phase of that particular project now, following close on the heels of the River East project.

I was at the announcement on that particular day, and from my understanding the Transcona health access centre project will be going to tender this coming spring. We welcome that announcement because that is an issue. Health care services is an important issue for the people of Transcona that I represent. They want to see that project move forward in our community, to bring those preventative health care services to the community to make sure that they are there into the future, something that the Transcona people want to see.

Now, Mr. Deputy Speaker, it was interesting to note that there was some discussion here, in the last session, about the amalgamation of school divisions. I do note that just yesterday there was an announcement that the trustees of the River East Transcona School Division just voted themselves a 32% increase in their salary. Now, 32 percent. I know the nurses of our province received, I think, a fair and reasonable increase in their salaries, about 20, 21 percent, and I think that was reasonable. I think the nurses understood and accepted that. They signed the contract for that, but when the trustees of the River East Transcona School Board voted

themselves a 32% increase in their salaries, I think it sends the wrong message.

I wish they had done something different. I understand that trustees have a challenging job in front of them trying to provide the best education for our children, but to vote themselves for that particular type of increase, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I think is irresponsible. I know in talking just today with some of my constituents, they referenced the fact that they think that that is irresponsible as well, but that is something that the trustees themselves are going to have to be accountable for. With the coming school division budget, it is going to be interesting to see how those trustees portray their salary increases in light of the budget decisions that they are about to make. I am going to be watching that particular issue very, very closely.

With respect to the school division as well, there are a number of superintendents and assistant superintendents that are within that division, and you only need to look at the assignment list that they provide. I think that we have, perhaps, too many assistant superintendents in the division. I think that that was not what the intention of the school division amalgamation was about, to create further bloated administration. I think it is important to see that we have a containment, and that is why we built in a cap of 4 percent of the school division budgets related to administration costs. I think, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that the number of assistant superintendents that are involved in this school division perhaps needs to have a further look at as well. I know that, I have had a chance to talk with some of the trustees just a week ago, and I will have other opportunities in the future. I will be raising that matter with them at that time.

Now, Mr. Deputy Speaker, there are a number of issues related to assignments that I have had the pleasure and honour of taking on. I know my colleagues, the Member for Selkirk (Mr. Dewar), the Member for Flin Flon (Mr. Jennissen) and I have been actively involved in the steering committee related to the 2020 Manitoba transportation vision. We have had the chance to travel to many communities of the province of Manitoba to consult Manitobans about the state of our transportation system in

our province. I know the Member for River Heights (Mr. Gerrard) has talked quite openly about transportation in Question Period here, where he questioned our Minister of Transportation (Mr. Smith) about how we expend our fuel taxes that we collect in this province, and took some exception to the fact that the monies that he said were not all expended back into transportation, all the revenue we collect is not expended back into transportation.

Well, I can tell the Member for River Heights that, and we go back into the years '96 and '97, so it is a combination of the two governments, Mr. Deputy Speaker, the revenue that was collected in this province through driver's licence premiums, fuel taxes, sanctions and other permit fees, amounted to \$1.6358 billion over the course of that time, from 1996-97 budget year until now. We expended \$1.646 billion over the course of that period of time; \$10.2 million more was expended on our transportation system than we took in as revenue. So we are spending more than we are actually taking in. The dilemma that we have, and the information that we are sharing with Manitobans through the 16 public meetings that we are holding around the province, and the 15th meeting will occur this evening in Swan River, the 14th meeting was in Dauphin last evening, is the fact that we have more transportation infrastructure than we can sustain at the current funding levels. That is the dilemma that the previous government faced. That is the dilemma that our Government faces, and it is a challenge that we are taking in and through our consultations with Manitobans. We want Manitobans to be aware of the circumstances, and we want Manitobans to be involved in solutions to those challenges.

So, Mr. Deputy Speaker, through our 2020 process, we are consulting with Manitobans about our transportation system, and we will bring that information back to the Government through the form of a report that will occur sometime next year. Of course, then, Manitobans will also be able to share with us, through their challenges, how they anticipate the system that they envision for the future, leading to the year 2020 and beyond, and how we are going to sustain that transportation system.

We have heard questions here again today with respect to the airports. The airports, the marine, the rail and the road systems of our province are vital to the continuation of the economic and social opportunities for the people of our province, and we want to make sure that Manitobans, no matter where they live, are afforded similar opportunities to proceed and to continue with their daily lives, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

With that, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I think I will conclude my remarks. I want to wish members of this Legislative Chamber and the staff that are here, yourself and the Speaker, the very best for the coming Christmas season. Economic opportunities, we hope, will improve and continue to improve, and we wish you the best in health and happiness for the coming year. Thank you for the opportunity to add my comments and my pride about this Government's Throne Speech here in this Fourth Session of this Legislative Assembly.

Mr. David Faurichou (Portage la Prairie): It is once again a pleasure to rise as the Member for Portage la Prairie, which I believe and feel always is an honour and a privilege to represent that great community of Portage la Prairie, steeped in history, that is coming up to 200 years as a continuously inhabited settlement on the plains of western Canada.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I would like to welcome all members of the Manitoba Legislative Assembly back to the Legislature here in regard to the fourth sitting of the Thirty-seventh Legislature. I would also like to take this opportunity to welcome back the staff of the Clerk's Office, as well as the staff of the Sergeant-at-Arms.

*(15:10)

Also, I believe that the pages are going to have an experience of a lifetime, so I have heard and understand. I hope that is indeed the case. I also want to recognize the interns that are working with the respective caucuses here in the Legislature, and I wish them well and hope their experiences are positive as well.

The members have made note of announced retirements pending the call of the next election.

I want to do the same, Mr. Deputy Speaker, and recognize those colleagues that have indicated that they are giving up their tenure as members of this Assembly, most notably the dean of the Legislature, the representative for Lakeside. I will miss his counsel. I have always respected him and had the opportunity growing up in the constituency of Lakeside to have the honourable member represent my interests in the Legislative Assembly. I hope that he has a long and very prosperous retirement, one filled with many pleasures. I hope to, at times, come calling and enjoy once again discussions of a political nature.

I also would like to recognize the honourable Member for Morris (Mr. Pitura) who has announced his retirement, being an individual that I came to know and recognize his skills as an agricultural representative when he served the people of Manitoba as an agricultural representative through the Department of Agriculture.

I remember very vividly travelling cross-country here in Manitoba in the dead of winter, one very frosty cold morning at 7 a.m., to meet with the agricultural representative that was putting together groups around the province that would bring together a collective wisdom in marketing of their commodities. These marketing groups came to be in the Portage la Prairie area, of which I was one. I have to say that was the end result of the honourable Member for Morris's wisdom and counsel. I want to say that I appreciate that always.

As well, the Member for Minnedosa (Mr. Gilleshammer) is going to be leaving the Legislative Assembly to pursue a number of different interests, but most notably, as he stated here in the Legislature, is that of his family which I know he holds most dear to him. I am certain that the family will keep the honourable Member for Minnedosa very active once he finds a little more time on his hands when retired from the Legislative Assembly.

I might just note that it was not only the Member for Minnedosa that stated family as a deciding factor in their announcements, but, as well as the Member for Minnedosa, the Member for Morris (Mr. Pitura) and the Member for

Lakeside (Mr. Enns) said "the family." As you can appreciate yourself, Mr. Deputy Speaker, family does give up a lot, so that we can give of ourselves and of our time in the service of the people of Manitoba.

As well, I look across the Chamber to the Minister of Labour (Ms. Barrett), who also has announced her retirement and is going on to pursue other interests. I know that she has dedicated a lot of her life to the political process, not only as a member, but behind the scenes in the New Democratic Party. Without the dedication of persons who support us here in the Legislative Assembly, as members, we would be much the lesser, and, perhaps, we would not even be able to serve, have that opportunity without many, many people supporting us.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I have spent many days here in the Legislative Assembly listening to the debate about the Throne Speech. I would like to, at this time, dedicate my time to examining what we do and what we do not see in the Throne Speech. There have been numerous headlines that have been in the respective media outlets that give their indication as to their thoughts and their editors' that this particular Throne Speech is what they term a real snoozer, a Throne Speech that is dull, weak and shallow, a Throne Speech that talks of the economy, yet little is mentioned about the economy.

I would like to talk of the Throne Speech that few have really wanted to truly debate, because listening to the respective members rise from their seats to debate this particular document, rarely have they chosen to do so. A lot have talked about their particular activities in the time away from the Chamber. Others have chosen to talk of their successes elsewhere. Others have chosen to talk of the alternative throne speech which we on this side of the Chamber put to the people of Manitoba a couple of days in advance of the Government bringing forward their Throne Speech.

It is obvious by the amount of time spent by members on the government side of the House to debate of the alternative throne speech, obviously the headlines ring very true. It is dull. It is weak and it is shallow, because there is nothing there to talk about. They have to talk about the

alternative throne speech to have even anything to talk about whatsoever. Actions speak much louder than words. If, in fact, there was substance to their Throne Speech, then they would want to extol and highlight those particular points.

Before I get right into the depth of discussion, there are some slightly less than accurate comments that have been made by members opposite in just the last few minutes. I want to say that we have fallen in the rankings of unemployment so far as that we no longer hold the top spot. Alberta now has fewer persons unemployed than Manitoba. We here in Manitoba are maintaining a low unemployment rate because we are exporting all of those young, bright Manitobans to other jurisdictions, because we do not offer the employment opportunities they are seeking and can build their own lives upon.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I will state that in a news article from this past weekend, that here in Manitoba we have grown in the number of individuals who are seeking employment by 1700 workers. Of those 1700, only 800 that entered the workforce found employment; 900 of the 1700 individuals entering the workforce last month joined the ranks of the unemployed. They were looking for employment opportunities that would fulfil their own lifestyle requirements and have not seen that here in Manitoba. So they remain unemployed. Also, the news article refers that Alberta continues to lead the way with 16 000 additional employment opportunities, following that with Ontario, Québec, Nova Scotia and New Brunswick. The rest remain largely unchanged, Manitoba being one of those.

Now, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I do not know how the Minister of Industry, Trade and Mines (Ms. Mihychuk) can stand in the House here and extol all of the virtues happening under the current administration with little recognition of the previous administration that put in place a lot of which today is providing opportunities to Manitobans. We listened to the Industry and Trade Minister yesterday talking about immigration, an immigration Nominee Program that is, indeed, doing good work. However, it was the previous administration, under the

Filmon direction, that provided for that program. The only thing that bothers me at the present time about the immigration Nominee Program is that it is so understaffed. They are overwhelmed. In fact, I placed a telephone call asking that someone from the program respond to myself as an MLA on a query so that I can, in turn, guide others regarding this program. I have yet to receive a reply. The minister said that her staff is overworked and does not have the time to respond.

* (15:20)

Now, why, then, are we adding staff in other departments that are perhaps not contributing as much? I should not get into the situation as to playing one employee in the civil service against the other employee, but right at the present time, we need individuals in the province of Manitoba to address the skills-set shortages that we see in numerous, numerous fields. So it is the Department of Immigration that I look to as playing a large role in satisfying that requirement. So I believe that that department needs to have the resources so that it can, indeed, satisfy the requirements, as all of us hope that they can.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, this particular Throne Speech, as I said, has very little substance, although it tries to draw attention to numerous successes, as I have mentioned through immigration. Yet nowhere in the Throne Speech does it credit the previous administration.

They also talk about affordable government. Again, that is from the previous administration's goals that a government always be affordable to that of the people.

An Honourable Member: Not the way the NDP handle it.

Mr. Faurshou: That is very, very true in regard to this New Democratic Party. They pay only lip-service to the statement of affordable government, when the documents released by the Department of Finance say that this administration has added over \$800 additional debt to every man, woman and child living in the province of Manitoba. That is unrefuted. No one can say differently.

So, Mr. Deputy Speaker, we talk about the Throne Speech, and it says that they are building

through research and innovation, once again extolling the virtues of the SMARTpark that is now under construction at the University of Manitoba. Yet that project had its roots in the previous administration. All of the foundation work towards that project was done before the present Government came to office, yet they are highlighting that as their accomplishment. Non-sense.

Raising and retaining investment: The previous administration is responsible for making the most dramatic reinvestment here in the province of any administration at any time in the history of the province, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, another point is building communities, that this Government is working on a strategy for rural Manitoba.

How can this administration say that they are working on a strategy for rural Manitoba and not even mention agriculture. Agriculture, the very backbone of rural Manitoba. Unbelievable that they would not even see fit to recognize agriculture.

They do mention, though, the building of the Simplot plant in Portage la Prairie. Once again, that particular project stemmed from the good work of the representative for Lakeside, who went out of his way to provide for that particular project. It is just under this administration that the project is now coming into being, because we are all aware of the length of time between the foundation work until full construction of those particular projects.

Once again this Government speaks nothing of their vision or understanding of what it takes to move Manitoba forward. They talk of building on the energy advantage. I know that there are other things that one can speak of here, but I hope you get an understanding of where I am going with this particular text. It is a rehash of the previous administration, trying to take the credit for in their administration.

Now, we are again talking about what we are looking for to the future. I believe the future lies within the context of the alternative throne speech. I know that members across the way agree with me, because they have spent so much

time debating that particular document. That particular document does talk about advanced education. I do want to take a moment to talk about education, because education is empowerment. It empowers persons to succeed, to provide for themselves and those that rely on them within their families.

Our alternative throne speech talks about tax credits and making certain that those individuals look to Manitoba, not only as an opportunity for employment, but opportunity for prosperity, because they will be able to realize a greater return after their hard day's labour remains in their jeans. Through these tax credits, their education will effectively be offset. I believe that that is not only something that will come to be after the next election, it will, in fact, be looked upon and, indeed, it has been recognized, when we first put this particular program out, as being innovative and progressive. I believe that the young people of Manitoba will benefit from that.

In regards to the education here in the province of Manitoba, it is paramount that each and every individual, regardless of where they reside here in the province, has the opportunity to gain the skills necessary. A lot of that additional cost, if you reside in the rural, comes from a second residency or from the expenses of a commute to and from the post-secondary educational institutions that are located in Brandon, The Pas and Winnipeg.

The previous administration saw the necessity and encouraged the providing of programming to the rural of Manitoba with the Campus Manitoba concept. The Campus Manitoba concept, I am pleased to say, is growing and is, in fact, providing that university education to those that perhaps would not have had the opportunity to do so through additional costs of travel and commuting.

The community colleges, as well, have been putting forward programming throughout the province, and, again, it is the previous administration that provided for that. I might just speak very specifically of the licensed practical nursing program which the Assiniboine Community College is moving around from site to site within the province of Manitoba, providing that valued program to persons without the additional cost of

relocation. That is a true success story because each and every location that that program is offered in has had applications far in excess of the ability of the program to provide. Each class has 25 positions, and always many more than 25 have applied for that.

* (15:30)

On that point of licensed practical nursing, there was one member of the government side of the House that spoke extensively about the licensed practical nursing program that was attempted to be killed by the previous administration. The Minister of Health (Mr. Chomiak) could not have been farther away from the truth. I speak from experience. I have a sister-in-law who is a licensed practical nurse, and through the previous administration, she saw her responsibilities expand at the Portage and District General Hospital, not contract. There are more licensed practical nurses working at the Portage and District General Hospital than there were, and it is being expanded. That was under the previous administration, once again. The licensed practical nursing program is, again, a success story. When the current Minister of Health attempts to downplay that very vital career as a licensed practical nurse, I have to say on behalf of my sister-in-law how much it pains her.

We are debating the Throne Speech, and I would like to say that, although we do not say who is in or out of the Chamber, we know today, as we are coming to the vote, that, at the present time, the Premier (Mr. Doer) is down glad-handing in Ottawa with those that are responsible for ratification of the Kyoto Protocol, and I can only wonder aloud as to whether or not the Premier will be able to join us for the vote later this afternoon on his Government's Throne Speech, which I believe is unprecedented that that could possibly take place.

Mr. Speaker in the Chair.

Much more can be said but, perhaps, something is up in regard to the Throne Speech and some of the members opposite, as one of illusion, that they are the ones responsible for some of the successes going on with the economy, some of the successes going on at the present time in various constituencies throughout

the province as to their success. That could not be farther from the truth. Upon examination of the Throne Speech, specifics that that Throne Speech cites, all have their roots, and, I repeat, all have their roots in the previous administration. *[interjection]*

I know the Member for Dauphin-Roblin (Mr. Struthers) chuckles at that remark. Yet, when he was on his feet, I looked at his dialogue, and there was, again, not one specific example that 100 percent could be attributed to the current administration. Not one. All of the things cited, complained about, done and promoted all came from the previous administration. *[interjection]*

Mr. Speaker, I now hear from members of the government side of the House that I should support the Throne Speech. How can I support a Throne Speech from individuals who want to give the illusion to Manitoba that they are responsible for some of the examples cited therein? That would be hypocrisy, so I will not be supporting the Throne Speech as a work done by the current administration, because it is not.

So, Mr. Speaker, just leaving the opportunity to address and debate the Throne Speech, I want to say with dismay, some of the shortsighted legislation that has come forward and is causing no end of grief to Manitobans and Manitobans trying to go about their business. I speak specifically about the legislation that was supposed to crack down on solvent abuse and intoxicating substances that are readily available in retail outlets by passing legislation making it the responsibility of the store clerk to keep those intoxicating substances out of those who might abuse those particular substances.

This administration believes that it is always somebody else's responsibility, and they want to make someone else responsible for others who are not taking responsibility for themselves. This particular legislation speaks specifically to that. They want retailers, grocery clerks, bag boys and girls to make a decision as to whether somebody who is handling a particular product is going to abuse that product. How can anyone be expected to make that judgment call? Yet this Government passed legislation asking Manitobans to do just that.

Another piece of legislation, one that makes a failed attempt at combating the use of tobacco products here in the province. They feel that by hiding tobacco products, they will successfully cut down on the use of tobacco products. Mr. Speaker, I do not know what has brought this particular illusion on, but the reality of it is that retailers throughout the province are changing their business plans after the passage of this legislation.

Just two days ago, the headlines in the paper cite Mac's Convenience Stores' Kim Trowbridge, vice-president for Mac's Convenience Stores, Western Canada, that they have decided to change their business plan, and instead of opening 20 to 30 stores in Manitoba, they are moving that business plan over to a more business-friendly province, as she states. What province, you ask? Alberta and B.C. With a great deal of government intervention into our business, it just becomes an unreasonable environment for us to want to invest, so we are moving to a more business-friendly province, Trowbridge said.

I think, Mr. Speaker, that speaks, once again, volumes about another piece of legislation that is totally ineffective. If one was really, really serious about underage consumption of tobacco products, one should have gone about creating legislation that possession of tobacco products when a person is under the age of majority should, in fact, be illegal. That would really cut to the chase. If one was serious about young people and tobacco products and keeping them apart, that legislation should have been brought in, not legislation to hide from view of underaged individuals. I have no idea how anyone can be sold on that.

* (15:40)

I leave with those two examples of poorly thought out and totally ineffective legislation that we Manitobans have had to endure under this current administration. In parting, I know that those on the other side of the Legislative Assembly recognize that they have erred on occasion. We are willing on this side of the House to hear their apologies and to see a rescinding of legislation, especially legislation, I might add, that is known as Bill 18 that is

prohibiting the purchase of a rail line running north through the Interlake, providing a valuable transportation link that may not be there because of a piece of legislation that is preventing the sale of that particular rail line.

Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the opportunity to rise in the House and to debate some of the legislation that has been passed, most specifically the Throne Speech that we will be voting on later this afternoon. I will say at this juncture I am not in favour of the motion to adopt the Throne Speech because, basically, it does not provide for what we need here in the province of Manitoba, because, if we are not moving ahead, we are falling behind. That is what this Throne Speech is effectively doing to all Manitobans. It is keeping us stationary where we must be moving ahead. Otherwise, we are falling behind.

Hon. Drew Caldwell (Minister of Family Services and Housing): It gives me great pleasure and is indeed a privilege to rise today in the Manitoba Legislature to put a few remarks on the record on behalf of the people of Brandon East with regard to the Throne Speech.

Mr. Speaker, the Throne Speech, as introduced by the Doer government this session, gives unprecedented profile to Brandon and western Manitoba. This unprecedented focus on Brandon is manifested in reality through the initiatives that the Doer government has undertaken in Brandon over the course of its mandate, first and foremost the construction of the Brandon Regional Health Centre, a project that had been announced by the Filmon government five times and never delivered on throughout the 1990s, a shameful record of raising expectations in western Manitoba and then dashing them. I am very, very proud that our Government, the Doer government, is the Government responsible for constructing and funding the renewal of the Brandon Regional Health Centre for all citizens in western Manitoba.

On that same note, I am very proud that the Doer government has undertaken the construction of the health studies building at Brandon University to support our Government's commitment to expanding health care excellence in the province of Manitoba. Further along this line, I am very proud of the rural recruitment and

retention strategy that the Doer government has undertaken to ensure that health care professionals have opportunities in rural Manitoba to practise their profession and to support the health care of Manitobans in western Manitoba.

I am also very proud, Mr. Speaker, that the Doer government has undertaken an expanded nurse training program that will result in hundreds of nurses graduating from programs in Manitoba post-secondary institutions to assist in the provision of health care excellence for Manitobans wherever they exist in the province.

Mr. Speaker, the Throne Speech's focus on Brandon also underscores our commitment to post-secondary education. Mention in the Throne Speech was made to the exciting prospect of establishing a campus for Assiniboine Community College on the north hill of Brandon in the very historic site of the former Brandon Mental Health Centre. This very grand campus on the north hill of Brandon allows western Manitoba an unprecedented opportunity to profile post-secondary education in that part of the province and, indeed, allows the province of Manitoba itself to establish its reputation as a centre of educational excellence in Canada. So I was very, very pleased to see in the Throne Speech mention of that exciting opportunity for Brandon, for Assiniboine Community College and for western Manitoba.

The Brandon School Division, Mr. Speaker, is also a beneficiary of the Doer government's commitment to educational excellence, as are school divisions throughout western Manitoba. In Brandon, I had the privilege to attend last week with my colleague the honourable Minister of Transportation and Government Services (Mr. Smith) at the official opening of the new expanded gymnasium and science laboratory at J. R. Reid School in Brandon. Soon, we will be opening a new expanded facility at Linden Lanes School in Brandon, and some months ago, I had the privilege at my alma mater of Neelin High School to open the most comprehensive life skills suite of any public school in the province of Manitoba.

In terms of education, post secondary and public, Mr. Speaker, the Doer government's record is second to none in the history of the

province of Manitoba. In Brandon and western Manitoba, it means expansion of programming opportunities and capital projects at Brandon University, expansion of program opportunities and capital projects at Assiniboine Community College, expansion of educational opportunities in the public school system in western Manitoba and, indeed, throughout Manitoba, as well as the construction of capital projects in the Brandon School Division.

Mr. Speaker, joining health care and education as areas of significant profile and importance to this Government, is our commitment to the economy. In western Manitoba and in Brandon, this has meant support for the Keystone Centre, capital support for the Keystone Centre, organizational support for the Keystone Centre, developing that facility to place it amongst the leaders in terms of convention and agricultural event facilities, not only in western Canada, in the Great Plains of the United States and Canada, but in Canada totally. The development of a capital works project for the renewal of the Keystone Centre, the development of an organizational framework that will see that facility expand in the years to come and, indeed, the development of a hotel complex with in excess of 150 rooms adjacent to that facility, places the Keystone Centre at the front of convention and conference facilities in western Canada and the North American Great Plains.

Also, in terms of the economy, Mr. Speaker, more than just the Keystone Centre and our focus on developing that convention agricultural event facility in Brandon, we have undertaken the single largest energy project ever undertaken in Brandon, with the development of a \$180-million gas turbine conversion and renewal of the Brandon East hydro generating station. It is very important to all Manitobans that our hydro resources in the province are maximized to benefit Manitobans, are maximized to benefit the economic development opportunities that hydro presents for Manitoba.

This is very important, Mr. Speaker, because members opposite oftentimes like to portray themselves as the champion of rural Manitoba. *[interjection]* It is lip-service, as my colleague the MLA for Thompson (Mr. Ashton) suggested. It is lip-service when members portray them-

selves as the champions of rural Manitoba. For 12 years, nearly 12 years, they sat on the government side of the House and allowed hydro rates in Winnipeg to be lower than hydro rates in rural Manitoba.

* (15:50)

It took a change in government, an NDP government, to equalize hydro rates for all, thus giving rural Manitobans the benefit of the lowest hydro rates in North America, something that members opposite seemed not to concern themselves with during their time of government.

Of course, my colleague for Dauphin-Roblin and my colleague for Swan River, my colleague for Brandon West and myself representing Brandon East look forward to being joined by more members from western Manitoba after the next election so that the benefits of our focus on rural development and the rural economy can be spread throughout the province more aggressively than they have been in our first mandate.

In terms of tax reductions, members opposite again sat in this Chamber and portrayed themselves as the champions of taxation reform in this province. Well, the record is very clear: 12 years from members opposite with no meaningful tax reduction; 3 years in office for the Doer government. We have averaged over 11.5 percent in terms of taxation decreases for Manitobans over the course of our first three years in office. We have begun and announced the elimination of the education support levy property tax, something members opposite could have done during their time in office, their 12 years in office where they talked a good show but did not follow that talk through with action. We have seen it over and over again.

I made reference earlier to the five announcements for the construction of the Brandon Regional Health Centre, five announcements, five ribbon cuttings, no project off the ground. The same can be said for the lip-service in terms of rural hydro rates, the lip-service in terms of tax reductions; no meaningful tax reductions over 11 years; 11.5% reduction in three years of our mandate; no movement on reducing the ESL property tax for 11.5 years; \$10-million reduction last year and announced to

phase out that tax over the course of our mandate in the future.

Our Government, again, Mr. Speaker, in terms of corporate taxes, the first reduction in corporate taxes since the Second World War was made under the Doer government; 11.5 years' talk from the other side, but no action. I think Manitobans understand that record very well. We are building health care excellence in this province as a government. We are building educational excellence in this province as a government. We are building for meaningful economic development and tax reductions during the course of this Government, all of which were sadly lacking during the 1990s when members opposite had power in this Legislature and in this province.

Another note that is of some importance to Brandon is the Neighbourhoods Alive! initiative that was undertaken by our Government upon forming office in 1999. Members opposite again held office for 11.5 years, had no affordable housing programs, in fact no public housing program of any nature. Neighbourhoods Alive! has assisted in supporting the Brandon Neighbourhood Renewal Corporation. We are approaching 400 new units, new and renewed units in the city of Brandon in three years in office. That is 400 more units than were built during the time of members opposite when housing was not even on the radar screen, not even spoken of, unlike the other areas that I addressed that were spoken much of but no support provided for it to see the words translated into reality.

Mr. Speaker, in terms of early childhood education, in terms of child care, in terms of child welfare, this Government's record is second to none in Canada. We are leaders. We have established ourselves as leaders in Canada in providing through the Healthy Child Initiative and a variety of other initiatives that flow from Healthy Child, meaningful partnerships with those who provide child welfare services in our province, meaningful partnerships with Aboriginal and Métis people who have serious, serious challenges within their community and have been looking for a partner in the provincial government for nigh on 15 years.

Again, it took a change in government to address serious issues for Aboriginal and Métis child welfare, to establish a partnership with government to address these issues that are facing our Aboriginal communities, our Métis communities and, indeed, I daresay, all communities in this province concerned with child welfare. It was not on the radar screen during the dark years of the nineties when members opposite held power in this province.

So, Mr. Speaker, I just wanted to touch on a few areas of importance to me personally and of importance to my constituents in Brandon East and, indeed, of importance to constituents in rural Manitoba and in western Manitoba, touching upon the development of health care excellence in this province, something neglected by members opposite.

The evidence is everywhere to be seen in western Manitoba, the construction of the Brandon Regional Health Centre. Our words are indeed matched by actions, in stark contrast to the words, the hollow words of members opposite: the Brandon Regional Health Centre construction and development in health care; Brandon University with the provision of the health studies building at Brandon University supporting our desire as a government to enhance opportunities for young Manitobans to seek training and professional opportunities in health care; the expansion and renewal of Assiniboine Community College; the expansion and renewal of capital projects in our school divisions throughout the province, in Brandon as well as elsewhere throughout the province; our commitment to developing community economic development through such initiatives as Keystone Centre renewal; hydro gas generating capacity in Brandon; heritage tourism opportunities in western Manitoba; our meaningful tax reductions; our focus on increasing affordable housing and developing improved quality of life in Brandon and other communities in western Manitoba; our support for housing initiatives through Neighbourhoods Alive!; our support for community renewal through Neighbourhoods Alive!; our national leadership on child care issues, child welfare issues through the Healthy Child Initiative.

Mr. Speaker, we have a record in government that we are certainly proud of. It is a record of working with Manitobans on a basis of building this province. We are the party that builds Manitoba. Members opposite are the mothball party. This is increasingly evident as we move through the fourth year of our mandate.

Mrs. Myrna Driedger (Charleswood): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to rise today to respond to the Throne Speech. It does give me great pleasure to have the opportunity to address the members of this House, the people of the province, and particularly the people of Charleswood, whom I am very honoured to have the opportunity to represent.

At this time, I would certainly like to welcome all honourable members back to the House and extend a warm welcome to our new pages and to the six legislative interns who are working here with government and opposition caucuses. I would also like to welcome back to the House the Speaker himself, the table officers and the Sergeant-at-Arms who all serve us so well in this challenging environment.

I would also at this time like to personally acknowledge those caucus members of mine who will be retiring within the next year: the Member for Minnedosa (Mr. Gilleshammer); the Member for Lakeside (Mr. Enns); and the Member for Morris (Mr. Pitura). I wish them very well and want to say how much I have truly enjoyed working with them and how much I have learned from them. I certainly want to wish them well. It has truly been an honour and a privilege for me to have had the opportunity to work with these fine people.

At this time, I understand the Minister of Labour (Ms. Barrett) has also decided to retire. I wish her well, as well, in all of her future endeavors.

Mr. Speaker, I found this particular Throne Speech, as with all of the other ones that the NDP have put forward, one that is disappointing. This one appeared to be more hollow than the other ones that we have heard. Although the member from Lakeside has always encouraged us to try to find some good out of situations and out of speeches, it was really difficult in this one. I am sure he might even agree with me on this

one that this was a tough one to find very much good to say.

It certainly was a lost opportunity to make our province a stronger province. It lacked in its plan. It lacked in its vision. It looked back more than it looked forward, and it was full of re-announcements of broken promises, although we can certainly understand the sensitivity of the NDP in trying to find some way to get around all of the broken promises that they have made in the election and even as they have gone forward in government.

* (16:00)

Our alternative throne speech offered a much more concrete vision and would actually strengthen this province. It would keep people here. It would improve our social systems. It would strengthen our economy, and it would certainly put money back into people's pockets. The NDP have obviously been intrigued with our alternative throne speech because none of them could stop talking about it. Their Throne Speech responses have focussed more on what was in our speech than what was in their own. I think, Mr. Speaker, that this certainly says a lot about the vision that we were able to put forward.

I look for an economic vision for Manitoba in the NDP Throne Speech. Instead, what we have seen is a government which inherited the healthiest economy in a generation and received and spent almost a billion dollars of new money. When we look at the challenges they are facing, when we look at the extreme challenges in health care, when we look at what is happening in Family Services right now with the Minister of Family Services (Mr. Caldwell) who has overspent and now he is trying to find ways of saving money through cuts to care for children, I really have to wonder what have they done with a billion dollars of money.

I still recall sitting in this House and hearing them heckle and laugh when we talked about a billion dollars and a plan to find the billion dollars in five years. Yet, we have a government here that found a billion dollars in two years, spent it and still ran a deficit and still takes money out of the Fiscal Stabilization Fund and

out of Hydro. What they have done is they have weakened any economic strength that this province could have seen with that kind of money because they have spent every cent of it. They are still faced with their many, many challenges.

After three years of ramping up spending, ramping up expectations, they are now telling their departments to cut costs. Where was their fiscal prudence in the first place? Why did they not plan better? Why did they not save? Maybe, if all of their Throne Speech had had a little bit more vision in it, a little bit more planning in it, they may not find themselves in a position now of having to take money out of Hydro, take money out of the Fiscal Stabilization Fund and demand that all of their departments start to cut. When we see cuts coming at the expense of patients or at the expense of children, it raises some alarms on this side of the House. In fact, their attitude of live for today, tomorrow will take care of itself, is irresponsible and demonstrates that they are, indeed, poor stewards of this province's resources.

I think Manitobans are becoming more and more concerned that the Doer government will take this province back into the age of deficits. We are on the brink of seeing that particular situation happen. The fact that they are running deficits is not the appropriate way and appropriate response for creating a stronger province. Rather than runaway spending, they should be controlling their spending a lot better.

It is becoming more obvious that the NDP government is bankrupt of vision because there certainly was no vision portrayed in this particular speech. We did not really see a plan that would take this province and take advantage of all the wonderful opportunities we have here. It really was no wonder that they really liked our alternative throne speech. In fact, one NDP MLA told me that they liked some of our policy positions so much that they were actually going to adopt them, and I think that says a lot.

Mr. Speaker, our policies would build on Manitoba's potential, and I think that is a good thing because Manitoba does have a lot of potential. It is just such a pity that the NDP do not know how to tap into that potential and,

instead, squander any opportunities that are put before them. I do not imagine that that is going to change because they have demonstrated so far over three years that they really do not have a clue on how to manage and instead live day to day. I think that, in effect, squanders a lot of opportunity for this province.

Mr. Speaker, a Throne Speech should give people hope for the future, and I think this particular Throne Speech failed miserably to do that. With that billion dollars of new spending, I would have thought we would have seen a brighter future for Manitoba, a brighter vision, brighter opportunities, but I do not believe we have a government that knows how to do that.

There are a number of areas I would like to touch on, Mr. Speaker, and I wish I had more opportunity to get into all of them. As I do not, I will focus on a few.

One aspect of the Throne Speech that I was extremely disappointed in was their section on health care, because, certainly, all they have done is maintain the status quo. They want to just add more money to it, and, in essence, all they will end up with is a more expensive status quo. I do not understand how they can think that money alone is going to resolve any of their problems and is going to address the many challenges in our health care system. They have already sunk almost three-quarters of a billion dollars into health care, and we still have waiting lists; we still have hallway medicine; we still have patients going to the States for care and diagnostic treatment. The nursing shortage has more than doubled under their watch. Obviously, money has not resolved those issues, yet all we can hear from their side is put more money in, and this is going to be the panacea that is going to fix health care.

They jumped to support the Romanow report even before the report was tabled, further proof that a government that does not do its homework is always looking for the easy way out, and they certainly were prepared to take an easy way out. Just give us more money, and we will put it into these areas, and everything will be fine. Well, Mr. Speaker, it is not going to be fine because after three years, it is not fine. The challenges are not going away, and they do not

have any idea how to be innovative and how to look for the kinds of resolutions that are needed to address some of the challenges.

While there are aspects of the Romanow report that certainly are supportable, what a lot of it also does is tend to expand on what is already there. So, again, I was somewhat disappointed at some of the lost opportunity that Mr. Romanow had to address some of the challenges in the system, but I guess we probably should not have expected too much more from him because of his very, very strong beliefs and his background and all the time that he has spent in politics. I do not think we should have expected too much more than what he put forward. Health care on its current course is certainly not sustainable, and that is certainly demonstrating itself. I think that that is only going to get worse over time.

In fact, Mr. Speaker, I think the major challenges in health care are still to come. My fear is that with the demands for technology, with the demands being put on health care by our aging population, by the demands put on health care by our serious lack of information technology, the Pharmacare challenges, the expectations from the public and the professionals in the system are all just such huge challenges that I think we are going to see the next decade facing many more challenges in health care. I truly and honestly believe that this Government has not come forward with a vision to address that, and they had the opportunity to do that in this speech.

I think Manitobans truly are the ones who lost out. Manitobans have certainly lost out on this Throne Speech because we had a government that really, really was bankrupt of ideas, particularly in the area of health care, to address this troubled health care system.

Education is certainly another area that I would have hoped we might have seen a broader vision from this Government. I know as a mother of children in the health care system, there are other parents out there who certainly want to see their children do well and achieve well, but it is very hard to measure that sometimes when we do not have the system set up in such a way where the accountability and trans-

parency is there so that we truly know how our children are dealing with their education system and how well they are learning.

It concerns me as a mother that young people are leaving Manitoba. We are training them here, and they are leaving this province to go to Ontario, to go to Alberta, to go to British Columbia. We are losing the most valuable resource we have as a province, a resource this province is going to need in the next few decades to deal with the challenges that are going to be coming upon this province. Yet they choose to be educated here, in many instances, and then they leave.

* (16:10)

In fact, there was a census report, I believe, that was being talked about today in the media where it indicated that a large number of our young people are heading for Alberta. It is certainly where they are finding more opportunity than they are finding here in this province.

Amalgamation is something I have great concern about, because my area of Charleswood is going to see their taxes increase because of amalgamation. There has already been some serious number crunching done. That is exactly what the school trustees have determined is going to happen. I am extremely disappointed to see that that will happen to my constituents of Charleswood.

It is certainly a credit to our hardworking trustees and superintendents who, with great dignity, are trying to manage a very bad situation foisted upon them by this Government, a government that, by the way, could not demonstrate where they would find these so-called savings they had purported were going to occur with amalgamation. Despite the number of times the Premier (Mr. Doer) or the Minister of Education was asked to provide the evidence, the proof there would be savings, they were unable to do that, just as they are unable right now to provide any information about what will happen with Kyoto.

We just see this being repeated more and more by this Government. They are just out there. They are out front on issues, but they have

not stopped long enough to do all of their homework to find out what the ramifications are going to be later on. It is just live for today, tomorrow is going to take care of itself. Well, tomorrow will take care of itself at the expense of people in this province. I truly believe that is the track we are on.

In the area of Justice, we certainly have to wonder where the support is for our police. I was hoping to see a much stronger component in the Throne Speech as it related to Justice. Where is the support for the police? Where is the support for children abused through prostitution? We are talking about child abuse there. Yet here we had a government in their early days who were quite willing to look at this and, for some reason, three years later, have backed away from addressing the issue of children used in prostitution.

That is child abuse. Why does this Government not have the courage to move on that when three years ago, it was so easy for them to say, yes, we are going to look at it? Three years down the road we do not hear a peep from them on what is happening in that area.

Where are the teeth in their Throne Speech to deal with the gang issue? Where are the teeth to deal with court backlogs? I think there were a lot of gaps in the area of justice in that particular speech.

The Throne Speech also has failed to commit to modernizing Winnipeg's water treatment system so that major sewage spills into the Red River do not continue to occur. Instead, we have a minister or a Premier here of this province that is so gung-ho on Kyoto, yet we have him totally ignoring what is happening in his own backyard with regard to the sewage spills into the Red River.

An Honourable Member: He is going to sue the United States, but he will not sue his own municipal government.

Mrs. Driedger: That is right. As my colleague from Russell said, he is certainly prepared to sue the United States for the biota in the water, but he is not prepared to do anything to address the situation right in his own backyard. In fact, in his own backyard, he is driving a big SUV, so we

have to really wonder how committed he truly is to some of these issues.

The Throne Speech failed to ensure that Manitoba's parks would not be carved up and sold. Why would not something as important as that be put into a Throne Speech? Why did they fail to ensure decisive action would be taken to address uncontrolled net fishing? Why would a government not try to take care of a tourism issue like that? They can talk about tourism and opportunities for that, and yet, they do not do anything to address the uncontrolled net fishing in this province.

They fail to mention any election promises that still have not been kept. I mean, hallway medicine does exist. What happened to the Grade 3 guarantee? What happened to e-mail addresses being given to all children? What happened to putting nurses in schools?

Mr. Speaker, when we look at taxes, it was an opportunity for this Government to find ways of giving some incentives for people to stay in Manitoba, and tax cuts, certainly, would have been one of them. We remain the highest taxed west of Québec, and this Government has already indicated that is not in their vision. They have no plan to address this area. Again, we are back to a government, live for today, tomorrow will take care of itself. Well, that does not happen without a lot of fore-planning. We are not going to find ourselves in a good situation down the road when we have a government that does not have the ability to look into the future and to put something in place now that will make us a stronger province down the road.

With Kyoto, Mr. Speaker, we have a Premier (Mr. Doer) who has said: Trust us. In fact, he said, there will be no job losses here. Where does he get that information? When all of the studies out there are talking about job losses, then he stands in front of the media and says, well, you know, I will guarantee there will not be any. In 10 years, if I am wrong, I will retire. Well, I figure that is a really cheap gimmick because in 10 years he probably will not be here anyway. So that was an easy promise to make, but he got his 10 second clip and this Premier does like his 10 second clips.

Where is the cost analysis for Kyoto? Where is all of this information they supposedly have? It has certainly not been forthcoming from them.

In the Throne Speech, where was the support for farmers? Where was the support for our rural communities in Manitoba? Again, another lost opportunity by a government who we find speak more for specific groups, rather than looking and governing for all people in this province.

Mr. Speaker, I will end my speech with final comments on Family Services. As an area of growing concern to me right now from what has been happening in the last few weeks, again, with no plan, no vision, we now find that we have a Minister of Family Services who is in a situation where he has overspent. Now what we are finding is that he has no money left in Family Services. Because he has no money left, he is telling people that cuts have to be made to children's services.

In the past two weeks, we have had the Minister of Family Services making misleading statements in this House to those of us in this House and to Manitobans. This is very alarming to me because of some of the people I have been speaking with who are front-line workers, who are parents, who have told me horrific stories about children whose counselling was abruptly terminated at the end of November. They were calling me in tears because these children were in dire need of help; they were in dire need of counselling, and they were cut off without even a termination meeting with their counsellor.

The regression of some of these children has been absolutely distressing and I cannot believe that this Minister of Family Services basically has called these people who have called me, he has basically called them liars, that this is not true, this is not happening, we did not cut off care to children, when, in fact, there are memos I have tabled in this House that actually support that that did happen.

In fact, Mr. Speaker, I will review for the record two memos that I tabled in this House. One was written on November 25 and it was from Winnipeg Child and Family Services. I will quote from it: We are currently attempting to clean up some existing service contracts in hopes

of having more monies. However, our budget is currently depleted. Assessments that are required by the courts will need to be court ordered. As of today's date, we can no longer enter into further contracts for therapy. How can the minister, in the House, turn around and say this is not true, when a memo from Winnipeg Child and Family Services states exactly that that is what happened?

Another memo of November 28 the subject was Clarification of Treatment Budget. I will read one piece of that, Mr. Speaker, and, again, the memo is from Child and Family Services. It says: If the service contract has ended and needs to be renewed, no money is available to pay for these services and should be terminated. How can this Minister of Family Services (Mr. Caldwell) in this House tell us that this situation does not exist, when, in fact, two memos here say that it does exist. When this was brought up at the end of November, this Minister of Family Services then went and spoke to Elaine Gelmon, and on December 2, he made her write a memo to say that everything was all right. That was a week after children had already been denied therapy. They had been cut off for a whole week already. Some of the stories I heard from people involved with those children are extremely disturbing, that children who desperately needed service were cut off, and this Minister of Family Services has the audacity to stand in this House and deny that that even happened. That is absolutely shameful.

* (16:20)

Besides the abrupt termination of counselling to children in need, vulnerable children in need, vacancies are also being created in the front lines of social workers in Winnipeg Child and Family Services. Again, two memos tabled this week support that allegation. Yet, Mr. Speaker, again, we have a Minister of Family Services standing up in this House and saying that did not happen. Yet two memos from Winnipeg Child and Family Services say it did happen. How can we have a minister entrusted with the programs that deal with children at risk, that deal with child safety, how can he stand in this House and say that these things do not exist when memos actually prove that they do? That is shameful for a minister who is entrusted to be

responsible for the programs to stand in here and make those kinds of comments. It really is despicable and is contemptuous of the House for him to be making comments that he has been making and then getting away with making those kinds of comments.

Certainly, Mr. Speaker, with the over-spending, the fact that they have no money, the minister has admitted that that has led to closing of 14 shelters and 4 more shelters will be closed. What is happening to those children? Are they ending up in hotels? The minister refused to answer that question the other day. Yet, when the Premier was in opposition, he said that it was a disastrous government policy to have any children in hotels. He said that was scandalous. Yet, he has still got children in hotels, approximately 10 a day. In fact, there have been 122 children, since the spring until September, in hotels. It seems to be okay with this Premier, now that he is the Premier of this province, and he does not make any noise about it. Yet it was scandalous when he was in government. Again, that certainly is contemptuous as well.

Mr. Speaker, what it does lead me to question with what is happening to children in this province is whether or not children coming into care in Manitoba are safe. That is a serious, serious issue that I think this Minister of Family Services and this Premier need to address, and I think they need to address it very quickly, because they have moved to cut services to kids. I am really concerned as to whether or not that is affecting the safety of children coming into care in Manitoba.

Is their care being compromised? A memo that I tabled today of November 12 by Linda Trigg from Winnipeg Child and Family Services certainly, in writing, worries about quality care for children being affected. That says a lot when the head of Winnipeg Child and Family Services puts that into a memo, and yet we have a Minister of Family Services (Mr. Caldwell) today who discounts that that even existed or discounts that that is even happening.

Mr. Speaker, the minister's responses have been grossly misleading this week. In fact, workers from Child and Family Services have found some of these comments to be malicious

of the Minister of Family Services. His flippant responses, his arrogant approach to questions being asked of him about child safety are certainly disturbing. How can a minister act in such a manner? How can a minister entrusted to ensure child safety in this province act in such a manner? I find that extremely shameful.

When asked in the last few weeks to guarantee that his policies will not harm children, he will not give a guarantee. Why not, Mr. Speaker? Winnipeg Child and Family Services workers are appalled by his responses. They have told me that children are regressing because of this Government's policies that have been implemented recently.

This minister, this Government has fired the board of Winnipeg Child and Family Services. In fact, the former minister called that board out of control, so they did a takeover. With the takeover and the setting up of a board made up largely of paid government bureaucrats, we find that there are not a lot of changes, the deficit continues, and this minister has not been able to make the kind of changes he so arrogantly believed that could be made in the first place. So he is making a mess of the finances. They have overspent. Now they are trying to manage their financial mess at the expense of children in Manitoba. I have a lot of concerns in that particular area.

I am just going to end my comments to the Throne Speech with a final comment about the absence of the Premier of this province for his own Throne Speech, being opportunistic, oh, I apologize.

Mr. Speaker: Order. I would just like to remind the honourable members that Manitoba practice is to not make reference of members that are in or out of the Chamber and away for whatever business.

Mrs. Driedger: Mr. Speaker, I do apologize for making reference to the Premier being absent from the House or from the Throne Speech. I do realize that is not common practice in this House that is accepted.

Mr. Speaker, this has been a time when Manitoba needs to have a strong vision for its

future, and what we have seen from the Throne Speech is certainly a lack of the kind of respect for Manitobans that should be there.

On those notes, Mr. Speaker, I do thank you for the opportunity of putting these few comments on the record.

* (16:30)

Hon. Scott Smith (Minister of Transportation and Government Services): Mr. Speaker, it is a pleasure to stand and put a few words on the record regarding our Throne Speech.

Mr. Speaker, the vision that Manitobans have seen over the last three years has been nothing but positive. This Throne Speech enhances and carries on the productivity the people are seeing for Manitoba. It has been promises made, promises kept, and this Throne Speech is another example. As we have made promises in throne speeches and as we have told Manitobans about the vision that we have for Manitobans, that has been kept over and over again.

Certainly, when we consider health care which has been a priority for Manitobans, we have seen positive gains in every direction in health care over the last three years. You take a previous vision from the former government that had the vision of reducing, firing and getting rid of front-line staff, and that vision that we had to pick up the pieces of and expand and put people back onto the front lines is working well in Manitoba. We are seeing the creation of more nurses to the front lines. We are seeing more graduates coming out of our programs and into our system and into our health care facilities, certainly in Winnipeg, in Brandon, in Thompson, in Portage, in every community right across Manitoba where we are actually getting people back onto the front lines who were removed by the former government.

I will tell you, Mr. Speaker, the vision as we move ahead in the Throne Speech on health care, building our health care and modernizing floodways, on education and things that matter to families and people in Manitoba has been steady and strong. Manitobans have recognized that. When we came in in 1999, and the over-expenditure that the previous government had on

health care, it was disastrous pieces. When we look at the disastrous financial budgeting of the previous government and you take our Budget this year, a 2.5% increase in our Budget, the previous government was over that in every year of the previous four years that they had. They had a spending problem. They had a habit of good years and good resources coming into Manitoba and years of unprecedented dollars and revenue coming in.

They sold off a system, a system that we had in our telephone company and even spent that money, Mr. Speaker. Not only did they not take that money and reinvest it and put it into an investment and grow it, they spent it and they overspent revenue that was coming into the province. We have worked at curbing their terrible spending habits of overexpenditure and we have brought it under control. Manitobans have seen it. They have seen the increase in their paycheques with the cuts that we have made in income tax. They have seen the increase in their homes where we are now funding \$400 as opposed to the previous government's \$250, and they are seeing the slow, steady pace that we can pay for.

Now, the previous member talked a little bit about their alternate throne speech. Let me just mention on the record here, Mr. Speaker, about when they talked about health care. I tell you, I have paid attention to throne speeches over the years. They would make these allegations. They would say we are going to build health care. We are going to put a new hospital in Brandon. They would talk about that in throne speeches and they would talk about that pre-election. They would talk about that in budgets. You know what? Right after elections, the three previous elections to our Government being elected, what happened? They did not do it.

They can talk about the building of the Trans-Canada Highway. They had 12 years to consider that from Virden to the Saskatchewan border, but they did not do it. Manitobans are not fooled by what you might do. What they do know is in our throne speeches, our promises made are promises kept. They have seen that in every area that we have addressed.

I will tell you, Mr. Speaker, with the economic growth that we projected at a slow, steady rate, by not being like the previous government not being able to control dollars, overexpending dollars, we have actually brought that under control. It has been Manitobans that have recognized not only have we done that, we have done it with our promises made, promises kept.

As we rebuild health care in the province of Manitoba, as I had mentioned before, actually putting the nurses back in the front line that they cut out of the system, we are also rebuilding the capital investments in communities that matter, rebuilding in Brandon, rebuilding the Health Sciences Centre with unprecedented capital investment into our province here, promises made by the previous government, never kept, promises made that we did keep, but also keeping within a balanced budget legislation and spending wisely.

Now Manitobans know when a promise is made by this Government, it is a promise kept. When we look at the lowest unemployment rates now in Canada in our province, and the positive attitude that Manitobans are having and youth have and young people have with stabilizing the expenses for education and we have made that promise, we have kept that promise. Families can now look at post-secondary education and say, instead of the vast and huge increases that the previous government had every year in education, we can now look at sending our children, or going themselves and having a stable education system in the province. There is no wonder that we have seen a 19% increase in college enrolment since 1999, to produce people in Manitoba, for Manitobans, to expand business and make growth in Manitoba a reality.

You are seeing that in other areas, Mr. Speaker, when you take, for instance, the market in housing in Manitoba, unprecedented in the city of Winnipeg, certainly, and in Brandon and throughout a lot of other areas in the province. You are seeing housing starts and dollars gained in the housing market that we have never seen before hitting historic and high levels, for this year hitting a billion-dollar mark in housing sales is a reality that was a reality last year as well.

We are seeing the reconstruction and the re-investment in housing in our inner cities in Winnipeg and in Brandon and in Thompson and in other areas in this province, where you are seeing those values continuing to gain with re-investment through our housing programs that we have initiated here in the province of Manitoba. It has included inner cities and it has included common sense that when you bring the values up and you invest in inner cities, you will have that value broadly distributed throughout the entire areas instead of focussing in on expansion on the peripheral areas and not the entire city. You are seeing that in other areas throughout the province.

When we consider the amount of dollars and the value of dollars that are now into housing and the increase in revenue, not only for the cities that have the housing, but for the province and the growth and the construction industry and people that are out there that actually gain by it, Manitobans recognize that. They recognize cranes on corners. They recognize construction. They recognize everybody working in Manitoba and in fact one of the lowest, if not the lowest unemployment rate in all of Canada.

I will tell you, Mr. Speaker, people are not fooled by the rhetoric of members opposite with a phony Throne Speech that makes all kinds of promises on things that they will not do right after the election. Manitobans know this Government. They trust this Government and they know that a promise made by this side of the House is a promise kept.

I will tell you the action strategy for economic growth, for education-first targeted training and support for leading-edge growth for industries that have been saying all through the nineties and trying to talk through the locked doors of the members opposite, trying to get in and trying to get their foot in the door and say: You need to address this issue; you need to re-invest in education; you need to grow business and industry in this province; you need to do something with post-secondary education.

They talk about it, Mr. Speaker. Obviously, they talked about in a lot of throne speeches through the nineties, but would they do it? No, they would not. This Government will do it. I

will tell you on every single issue that has been identified we are seeing what was for a long time cranes that we never saw in Manitoba, the growth we never saw in Manitoba, the large capital construction we never saw in Manitoba. People are not fooled. They drive to work. They are out in their communities. They are talking to friends. They are seeing the large re-investment in things that matter to Manitobans.

I will tell you a good example of that, Mr. Speaker, is in my community. The community that I represent, Brandon West. You are seeing the Brandon University with an increase in capital dollars going into that university to support a nursing program that is going to expand and put more nurses out on the front line for people in Manitoba.

Now, let us compare those two visions; let us look for a minute at the visions where we had Connie Curran saying, we have too many nurses; we need to cut 1000 jobs out of this province, and our vision, where, you know what? We need to reinvest in health care. We need to put more people through school. We need to put those people into the rural communities and rural areas where they are needed and we need to have more people graduating in Manitoba to support that system. That is the difference.

*(16:40)

People see that. They drive by the corner of 18th and Rosser in Brandon. They see the cranes and construction, people working and building a Centre of Excellence at Brandon University for graduating nurses. Now they drive a little ways down the street and they see the Brandon Health Care Centre that was promised previously by this Government for a number of elections. They see the investment. They see the actual physical structure being put up, being built, being funded and all done within a balanced budget.

These folks opposite, Mr. Speaker, with all their so-called wisdom on financial excellence, used to make promises and they would never budget for it. They would make promises and, then, right after the election, they would say, oh, you know what? We cannot afford it now. We have actually put a lot of things on the record and we have said we are going to do a lot of

things, but we are going to cut out Brandon Hospital. We are going to cut out funding for nursing programs. We are going to not support education in the way that we promised before. There is a distinct delineated difference in what is promised and what is kept.

I will tell you, when we spoke earlier today, we had talked about northern airports. The members opposite, I think, when they go north, consider Gimli as the North. There is a lot of area between Gimli and the Hudson Bay. There was nothing mentioned in their alternate throne speech about areas that went from Gimli to the far north. I am not sure they know where Thompson is. I am not sure they know where Flin Flon is. I am not sure they know where a lot of those areas are up north because nothing was mentioned in that. Certainly, I can tell you there was not a lot mentioned on my community in Brandon.

They talked about an expansion and they would support a lot of things, but I will tell you they had the nineties to support airports in the North. They had the nineties to support expanding and putting more capital dollars into a system that was needed to put money into.

When we came in, in '99, and they were funding capital improvements for northern airports at \$1.6 million, we increased that by 150 percent within three years to fund our capital improvements at well over \$4 million per year because it is important the transportation link with people in the North. It is important to deal with the safety issues in a way that is balanced and structured and will, in fact, enhance transportation links with our northern neighbours.

Mr. Harry Schellenberg, Acting Speaker, in the Chair

When we looked at the floodway and the importance of the floodway to Manitobans, the members opposite barely had a sentence regarding the floodway and the importance of modernizing our floodway and the opportunities for modernizing our floodway here in Manitoba. I can tell you it is the same in our Throne Speech. When we make a promise, and we say we will expand our floodway and expand the plans for our floodway to protect our community here

around the Capital Region, Manitobans know this side of the House, when a promise is made, a promise is kept. They have no vision on protecting this city and the Capital Region. It was not even included in remarks that the members opposite had made.

I know they may not think that the vision of Canadians and the vision of Manitobans is out for the Kyoto agreement. I will tell you instead of the glass being half full of water, for them it is half empty. The opportunities for Kyoto and beyond are immense. Manitobans know it, young people know it, youth know it and these members opposite just do not seem to be getting the big picture on the advantages we have in Manitoba and the growth advantages we have and the revenue advantages we have by going with the Kyoto agreement.

I can tell you, Mr. Acting Speaker, it strikes me as passing strange that members opposite, instead of doing drafting notes and considering the advantages that we have, not only socially and environmentally by moving and expanding and going past the Kyoto agreement, but the economic advantages that we have here in our province of Manitoba. The Premier has made it quite clear the advantages that we have out there, the job advantages that we have here, the economic advantages that we have in Manitoba with expansion of our hydro and our hydro-electric here in Manitoba.

If it had been up to the members opposite, and without the vision of this side of the House, they have not produced one 60-watt light bulb of power in any of their terms that they have had out there. They have not had a vision for what is really, truly an economic advantage to Manitobans. They talk about rural Manitoba and the advantages and the things that they have done.

Well, where were they on equalizing hydro rates for rural Manitobans? Where were they in making that move to say to people in Russell and in Gimli and in Shoal Lake and in Minnedosa and in ridings outside of capital regions, you know, you are important to us as Manitobans? We have an asset here in our province that is an advantage for everybody. We need to expand and grow our hydro for an advantage we have and you need to be getting some of the game by

equalizing the rates for you in rural Manitoba. Members opposite never did that. They talk about doing things, but when it comes to materialization after a Throne Speech, after an election, it is funny how all these things seem to drop off the table.

Mr. Acting Speaker, the personal income tax cuts we have had here, I spoke previously about an affordable government, a government that is very conscious of balancing the books and the consideration for people's tax dollars in Manitoba. Manitobans have seen an 11.5% reduction in their PIT since 1999, come January 1, 2003. A slow and steady and balanced approach is what Manitobans have seen.

I can tell you, that combined with building through research and innovation to expand advantages that we have here in Manitoba is what Manitobans know they will get from the Doer government, I can tell you, building the communities and growing through immigration, putting more affordable education to Manitoba families and keeping those youth in our community with real, true vision of expanding in every area in this province, an affordable province, a province that families can settle in. They can have affordable homes. They can have affordable car insurance. They can have affordable communities to live in, and they can have the opportunity of jobs in our communities.

I can tell you that the youth that I talked to in Brandon and the youth that I talked to around Manitoba, as I travel around Manitoba, have seen a distinctive difference in the way that the Government's approach, the respect for youth and the opportunities for youth in this province, the education component that we have put into our Throne Speech, Manitobans know will be followed through with. It will be a continuing process with vision, a vision for a future in hydroelectric power and the advantages that we have, a vision for a cleaner environment, a vision for improved and better health care, the reinvestment in that health care.

Mr. Acting Speaker, just in conclusion, Manitobans have got used to this side of the House following through on their vision and their commitment and their promises. I can tell you, all Manitobans need to do, and they know it

and we know it, is to look back on our promises made and our promises kept, as opposed to members opposite making throne speeches and promises prior to an election and then saying, oh, we did not plan for that. We need to cut out that piece of it. Oh, sorry. We cannot do that. We promised it, but we cannot do it.

You know what, a promise made by the Doer government is a promise kept, and this Throne Speech follows through with those commitments. It follows through with a vision for Manitobans, and it follows through with our province growing at unsustained rates that we have not seen by the previous government ever in our three short years. Manitobans know there is a future here in our province.

Mrs. Bonnie Mitchelson (River East) Mr. Acting Speaker, at the outset, I would just like to welcome all back to this session of the Legislature and wish everyone good health throughout the term of this session. I would like to also say a welcome to the pages who have joined us and indicate to them that there will be good days and bad days as you sit through this session. I hope the experience is rewarding and that you find a lot of personal growth and development through the next year of your life.

Also, a welcome back to Mr. Speaker and to the table officers and to the Sergeant-at-Arms. I say to them, thanks very much for the support they have given us to date, and I know that the support that will be forthcoming in this session will be very helpful to all members.

* (16:50)

Mr. Acting Speaker, I would like to pay a special tribute to those members of the Legislature who have indicated they will not be seeking another term of office. There are three on our side of the House and one on the government side who have already expressed their intentions not to seek re-election, and there may be more. We are not sure.

Anyway, for those who have already made that commitment, I want to say thanks to all of them for their contribution. To the Member for Lakeside (Mr. Enns), the Member for Minnedosa (Mr. Gilleshammer), the Member for

Morris (Mr. Pitura) who have been my colleagues, I want to say, thank you. Thank you for the major commitment you have made. I know the dean of the Legislature has been invaluable to all of us who have come after. His words of wisdom and his knowledge and understanding of the political process, the democratic process, and the reminders he gives us from time to time about how things have happened in the past certainly have helped us in our deliberations around the caucus table. He will be missed, but I do know that he will only be a phone call away and that if we need to seek those wise words of wisdom in the future, he will be only too willing to contribute.

My colleague the Member for Minnedosa was elected in 1988, just two years after I was elected to the Legislature in 1986. We have been good friends and colleagues, have shared different ministerial portfolios, both Family Services and Culture, Heritage and Citizenship. I know he has made significant positive contributions to what Manitoba is today as a result of his commitment and dedication. I wish him and his family well in their future endeavours.

The Member for Morris (Mr. Pitura), Mr. Acting Speaker, was a minister in government during the 1997 flood and was responsible for Emergency Measures and did an admirable job of keeping things together. It was the worst disaster in our recent history. One of the things we said at the time and we will say again was that not a life was lost during that time. It was the commitment and dedication of those who were serving Manitobans in our bureaucracy and under the leadership of members like the Member for Morris, the minister who was responsible at the time, that got us through.

Mr. Acting Speaker, I would also like to pay tribute to the Minister of Labour (Ms. Barrett) for her commitment to public office over the last 12 years. She and I have been colleagues in the Legislature for those 12 years. As women, although we are ideologically different and we have very differing points of view from time to time, there is also a unique bond I think that women in the Legislature do have. We do take care to ensure that we understand the personal side of each other's lives.

I do want to say she is leaving at a time when the rules in the Legislature are going to change for the better. I daresay if maybe she and I had had the opportunity to sit down and negotiate on behalf of our caucuses that we may have seen rules changed much sooner to the benefit of all those that are elected. But, nonetheless, she can leave knowing that those that follow in her footsteps will have the advantage of, I am sure, some of the significant contribution and discussion that she has had around her caucus table, around the rules and the operating times in this Legislature. So I wish her well.

I will not mention her age on the record, but I do want to indicate that many of us were extremely surprised to know that she was the age that she is. We thought that she was much younger. I would never have guessed. She obviously has taken care of herself. Again, I just want to thank her for her contribution.

It is interesting to have sat and listened to speeches from members of the government benches in the House on the Throne Speech, and very heartening to me personally to have heard comments about our alternative throne speech. It was spoken about, I think, in every speech that was made. I am glad to hear, I am glad to know that members of the government benches took seriously our alternative throne speech, took the time to read it and took the time to make significant comment on that alternative throne speech. I sense that it really grabbed their attention. I know that it did grab the attention of many Manitobans, too, who are looking for an alternative to what this Government has to offer. I have to say I am extremely proud of my leader and the job that he did in helping Manitobans understand who we are, what we stand for and how we are different from the governing NDP. As we move forward over the next number of months, there will be some meat put on the bones to those commitments that we made. Manitobans will know if there is a viable alternative to the Government that presently governs in Manitoba.

Mr. Acting Speaker, although I will not make comment about the presence or the absence of any member of this Legislature, I do want to indicate that the Premier (Mr. Doer) today has done something that is extremely

unprecedented. He has chosen not to speak on his own Throne Speech that was introduced by his Government. You know, it is the Premier that makes the decision on calling back the Legislature, bringing this Legislature back into the House with the Throne Speech. He knew full well when the votes on his Throne Speech would take place. He had the option and the opportunity to speak on his Throne Speech.

We would have understood if he had come last week or even yesterday and said, I will not be here and I would like an opportunity to speak on my Throne Speech and defend my vision and my plan for the province of Manitoba, but he chose to abdicate those responsibilities and not stand up and be counted when his Throne Speech is voted on later today. I find that unacceptable for the leader of our province.

Well, where is he? Some would say, and I know members of the government side would stand up and defend his going to Ottawa to fight for what should be Manitoba's, whether it be funding for flood protection, whether it be funding for health care, but we all know that today was not the magic day, that the Premier is not going to come back with a cheque in his hand that says Ottawa is giving us millions or billions of dollars to build the floodway or to implement the Romanow report or to build Conawapa. We know that is not the case.

* (17:00)

For our Premier to show the disdain for the people of Manitoba that he has shown by running to Ottawa at the whim of the Prime Minister, a Prime Minister who has not shown himself to be very credible over the last little while with all kinds of patronage, payouts and gun control legislation that has cost a billion dollars—we have our Premier who wants to stand hand in hand with the Prime Minister of Canada today when they pass the Kyoto accord in the Parliament of Canada. He wants to be standing there because he is hoping he may get some patronage payout as a result of being a lapdog for the Prime Minister of Canada today.

Mr. Acting Speaker, there was no need for that meeting to be scheduled today. That could have taken place tomorrow or the next day. Is

the Prime Minister saying you be here today or we will not meet with you? We know that this was a last-minute commitment by this Premier to go to Ottawa.

Mr. Acting Speaker, the Deputy Premier (Ms. Friesen) is trying to defend her leader, and there is no defence for him abandoning Manitoba today, the day when his Throne Speech—

Point of Order

Hon. Gord Mackintosh (Minister of Justice and Attorney General): On a point of order, Mr. Acting Speaker, the member is going on about the absence of a member from the Chamber. There is a long-standing practice that we avoid that. There is a rule not to refer to the absence of any particular member.

The reason for that is because MLAs and people in different positions in this Chamber do have, from time to time, duties outside the Chamber in the public interest. As well, it is very convenient, I know—[interjection]

Mr. Acting Speaker, it is also, of course, patently unfair to be raising issues that the Premier (Mr. Doer) cannot respond to in the Chamber today about the need for him to meet with the Prime Minister.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Schellenberg): On the same point of order, the Member for Turtle Mountain.

Mr. Mervin Tweed (Turtle Mountain): On the same point of order, the minister, in even making his references to the Member for River East's (Mrs. Mitchelson) comments, suggested that the Premier was not in the building. I do not see where one person or one side of this House can say that and the other side cannot even make a reference.

I listened very intently to the Member for River East's comments, and not once did she mention the absence or the presence of any person on the other side. What she suggested was that the person in control of managing the affairs of this House and calling this House back to the Legislature and the timing of the Throne Speech and the voting on the Throne Speech

should have enough common sense to be here when that vote takes place.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Schellenberg): I would just like to take this moment, just a friendly reminder to all members of the House, that the presence or absence of any member should not be referred to. I thank both people for their contributions to this point of order.

* * *

Mrs. Mitchelson: I just want to indicate that I have listened intently to much of the debate from the government benches and heard just the last speaker, the member from Brandon West, say several times in his response that a promise made is a promise kept and our NDP government keeps our promises.

Well, Mr. Acting Speaker, I think maybe he should consult with some of the people in his constituency or throughout Manitoba when he says that with conviction, because we know that the main commitment and promise made during the last election campaign by the NDP was to end hallway medicine in six months with \$15 million. They also indicated that they were going to hire more full-time nurses, that nurses deserved the dignity of a full-time job, and they were going to hire more full-time nurses immediately. Did the Government fulfil those promises? Did they keep those promises? No, they did not.

Also, the Premier today, who was then the Leader of the Opposition, stood on Highway 75 and put a sign over Grafton saying: Closed for business. If you elect me as your Premier, no longer will people be going to the United States to get tests done. We will close things down. Well, did he keep that promise? No, he did not. We see people going down to Grand Forks, to Grafton, to other places in the United States to get treatment because this Premier and this Government did not keep their promises.

So, for the Member for Brandon West (Mr. Smith) to stand up in this House and say, when we make a promise we keep that promise, is hypocritical. It is dishonest, and he should be ashamed of standing in the House. He should apologize, because he has misled this House with those comments.

Mr. Acting Speaker, we know that the NDP in opposition believed that they could be all things to all people and made all kinds of commitments that they could not keep. We just have to go back to what they said in opposition time and time again about what they believed in and what they stood for and where they are today, because very often we hear the Premier from his seat talking about how we have had a conversion on the road to Damascus.

Well, let me tell you about the debate that was held in 1995 when we introduced balanced budget legislation. We know that this Premier and colleagues sitting in the government benches today voted against balanced budget legislation. I do want to quote from Hansard what they said during the debate on balanced budget legislation. I see the minister responsible for Kyoto and Hydro and energy and one of the economic portfolios on the government benches today, and these were his comments during the balanced budget debate that he voted against. He says balancing a budget every year cannot be defended on any economic grounds. Well, we know what his bent and his philosophy is. He does not believe in balanced budgets, and yet he is responsible for growing the economy in Manitoba.

Mr. Acting Speaker, again we will quote from the minister responsible for growing the economy today. Back in 1995, on balanced budget legislation, he said, and I quote: This is a bill that is destined to make Manitoba the laughing stock of the financial management world. Well, we know what the minister responsible for growing the economy really believes. That does not bode well for where Manitoba is headed under his stewardship.

*(17:10)

Mr. Acting Speaker, we also know that the Minister of Industry, Trade and Mines (Ms. Mihychuk), who, again, is responsible for economic growth, said back in 1995 when she spoke against and voted against balanced budget legislation that, I quote: This is an election gimmick to bind themselves into an irresponsible fiscal straitjacket. Well, what a flip flop, but we know what she truly believes and she truly feels about balanced-budget legislation. I guess that is

why they raided Manitoba to the tune of \$150 million last year in an attempt to look like they balanced the books when they ran a deficit. You see those on the government benches today who are responsible for economic portfolios, that do not believe that balanced budgets are sound economic policy and economic strategies.

Mr. Acting Speaker, I would venture to guess that if balanced budget legislation was not in place today, not only would they have overspent the \$150 million that they overspent and the deficit that they ran last year, but we would probably see much more than the billion dollars that they found over the last two years spent because we know the track record of a New Democratic government. We know the track record of the tax-and-spend regimes that they have implemented in this province under their stewardship in the past, and the mess that is left and needed to be cleaned up when they have been turfed out of the Government.

Mr. Speaker in the Chair

You know, I just go back to 1988 when one of their own members on the government benches voted against their budget and caused an election to happen because he knew that this province was going to hell in a handbasket under their leadership and that he needed to vote against their budget and cause an election, hoping that Manitobans would see and understand that, unless there was a change in government, we were in for some very difficult times.

Mr. Speaker, we have seen time and time again how this Government has not lived up to its commitments, is spending out of control and—
[interjection]

I guess I did not really speak to what the Deputy Premier had to say about balanced-budget legislation back in 1995. I might quote from her that it is one of the more unthinking pieces of legislation. Well, Mr. Speaker, she must have thought about it an awful lot before she decided to put those comments on the record and vote against balanced budgets. But what does she say today? She says balanced budgets are right, they are wonderful, and it is a piece of legislation that she and her colleagues support.

Well, what has happened? What has happened in the last five or seven years? Who are we to believe? I mean, right now they are talking the talk and they are paying lip-service to balanced budgets, but if they had their way, they would raid every Crown corporation. They tried. They tried to raid MPI, and the public was so outraged that they had to back off and flip-flop on that. They have already raided Manitoba Hydro for \$150 million for last year's deficit, and another \$78 or \$98 million to try to balance the books this year. They have run out of options on where they can find additional money.

The Minister of Agriculture (Ms. Wowchuk) says that they have not run out of steam yet. They can still find more money to raid. But let us look at what she said back in 1995 when she voted against balanced budget legislation. Mr. Speaker, I will tell you. The Minister of Agriculture stood in her place and she said, no government needs balanced-budget legislation. Those were her comments.

Again, she did not only speak once against balanced-budget legislation, but this was another comment that she made on another occasion or opportunity. She said, the legislation will endanger the economy, will not maintain Manitoba as a wealthy place where our young people can continue to live and prosper.

Well, Mr. Speaker, I guess the question that needs to be asked of all of those on the government benches is: What made them change their minds? Was it political opportunism, because we know that these were their thoughts? This is their ideology; these are their beliefs. Members opposite may be trying to convince Manitobans that they have changed, that they have had a change of heart. But we know deep down what they truly believe. When they have an opportunity, they will make sure that Manitobans are worse off, that the cupboard is bare, and they will have no option but to tax Manitobans more in order to continue to support their excessive spending habits.

Manitobans will catch on. They always do catch on. We know that when Manitobans have had enough, we will see a change in the direction that this Province takes.

I want to speak a bit about health care. I have already talked about the promises that were made during the election campaign and the promises that were not kept. Manitobans and many of my constituents are extremely upset. They are calling and indicating to me that they voted for the New Democratic Party during the last election campaign because they had some hope. Because of the commitments that this Government made, they had some hope that maybe health care would improve. Well, they are telling me today that they were fooled, they were misled, and they are extremely upset with the track record of this Government and this Minister of Health (Mr. Chomiak).

Mr. Speaker, he stands up, and I would not say he waxes eloquently, because most of the time he looks like he is just on the verge of falling apart at the seams, but he talks about how things were dark and things were terrible in the 1990s and how he has fixed everything, but he has not fixed the issue of hallway medicine. People are still lining the halls on a regular basis. People are waiting on waiting lists for knee and hip surgery, and he has not resolved the problem.

Mr. Speaker, we know that their ideological blinders are on when they look at where the health care system should be going in Manitoba and the Premier (Mr. Doer) talks about Americanization of our health care system and how he will not allow that to happen. Well, I will tell you that there is Americanization of our health care system ongoing under his watch. I know that Manitobans that live right on the Premier's street, in the Premier's community, take their Visa cards and go down to Grand Forks or go down to Fargo or go down to the Mayo Clinic to buy their health care in U.S. dollars right now, right today under his watch, because he has got blinders on and will not look at how things could be done differently in Manitoba.

* (17:20)

So Manitobans are forced today to go to the United States to buy private services. This Premier and this Minister of Health are wanting to make the clinics in North Dakota and in Grafton viable. They are wanting to make the doctors and the technicians across the border in

the United States rich with Manitobans' dollars because they are too hidebound in their ideology to take their blinders off and look at what can be done differently right here in Manitoba for Manitobans that are waiting and Manitobans that are in need of our health care system.

Mr. Speaker, could they not broaden their horizons a little bit? Could they not look at a different way of delivering our health care system? Could they not admit that what they are doing is wrong? It is wrong to ration services right here in our province to Manitobans when they have the opportunity to listen to many out there who are saying just give something different a try. What is happening today is not working.

This Government misled us when they went into the last election campaign and told us that they would be able to fix everything overnight with a few million dollars. Well, we know that the health care system is ailing, that there is no vision and there is no plan, and Manitobans have quickly come to realize that this Government talks the talk but cannot walk the walk.

Mr. Speaker, we have seen a disaster under this new Minister of Family Services (Mr. Caldwell). Not only did he mismanage the Education portfolio, he handpicked the school divisions that he was going to force to amalgamate when his Premier (Mr. Doer) said that forced amalgamation was not the Manitoba way one day, and the next day, announced that certain school divisions were going to be amalgamated, with no rhyme or reason, no plan or no process in place, and then he got moved, and he got moved over to the Department of Family Services.

Well, the kind of flippant attitude that the Member for Brandon East (Mr. Caldwell) displays when he answers serious questions about serious issues and about some of the most vulnerable people in our society, children that have been abused, children who have been neglected and children who need our support and the support of Child and Family Services, it is despicable.

We have four months left until the end of the fiscal year, and the budget in the Department

of Family Services has been overspent, and the minister's directive has been to cut off services to save money in Family Services. What is going to happen to all of the children over the next four months in the province of Manitoba who can get no service from Winnipeg Child and Family Services because this minister has ordered by directive that the funds be cut to provide those services?

Mr. Speaker, I am appalled. I am absolutely appalled that this minister can stand up in this House and deny that there are cuts when the board of Child and Family Services has been fired, when the employees of Child and Family Services are now direct employees of the minister's department and fall directly under his watch. For him to stand up and say that he did not give a directive when staff in his own department who report directly to him have written memo after memo saying that support services, counselling for the most vulnerable children in our community have been cut. I say, shame on him.

Mr. Speaker, I do want you to know that there are many difficult choices and decisions to be made in the Department of Family Services. In many instances over the years, there has been a shortage of money to continue programming. But I guess my question is: Did this minister not fully understand the issues and the implications of cuts? Did he not plan and prepare? I know that the staff in the Department of Family Services understand the issues. They would have come to him and they would have briefed him and told him what was happening. He should have directed them immediately to prepare a Treasury Board paper to take to his colleagues who sat around the Treasury Board table and should have had a complete analysis of what the needs were.

Mr. Speaker, that should have happened before he directed his department to cut services to the most vulnerable children in our communities. Those are children who have been abused. Those are children who need support services. He basically has said for the next four months of this fiscal year, because we have overspent our budget, we are not going to provide the services that are needed.

Those who work in the system in the field have their hands tied by a heartless minister and a heartless government who have had a billion dollars more to spend over the last two years and have not been able to focus on where the priorities are. The priorities are, Mr. Speaker, in dealing with those who are the most vulnerable in our community.

So, Mr. Speaker, I say, shame on the Minister of Family Services for his attitude, and I say to him, maybe he should sit down, maybe he should be briefed, maybe he should understand exactly what is required, and possibly he could have the strength and the fortitude to go to his colleagues and say we need some additional support for those who are in need.

Point of Order

Mr. Speaker: The honourable Official Opposition House Leader, on a point of order.

Mr. Marcel Laurendeau (Official Opposition House Leader): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. Today is an historical moment. Back in 1944, there was a premier who had not debated a Throne Speech, but he did show up to vote for it.

Mr. Speaker: The honourable Official Opposition House Leader does—

On the same point of order?

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Speaker: Order. On the same point of order?

* (17:30)

Hon. Dave Chomiak (Minister of Health): Yes, thank you, Mr. Speaker. There also used to be a habit of decorum in this House, where members who did not want to listen, actually would at least listen to what a premier had to say. I know that for four years, members opposite have avoided that, and that is at their own peril.

I might add, Mr. Speaker, that the Premier (Mr. Doer) is attending a very significant meeting with the Prime Minister of Canada, fighting on behalf of Manitobans for Kyoto, for farm support, for the Romanow Commission,

something members opposite oppose because they support Stephen Harper and the Parti Québécois.

Mr. Speaker: Order. On the point of order raised by the honourable Official Opposition House Leader (Mr. Laurendeau), he does not have a point of order. It is a dispute over the facts.

* * *

Mr. Speaker: Pursuant to subrule 43(4), I am interrupting the proceedings in order to put the question on the motion of the honourable Member for Selkirk (Mr. Dewar). That is the motion for an address in reply to the Speech from the Throne. Do members wish to have the motion read?

Some Honourable Members: No.

Mr. Speaker: Dispense.

THAT the following address be presented to His Honour the Lieutenant-Governor:

We, the Members of the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba, thank Your Honour for the gracious speech addressed to us at this Fourth Session of the Thirty-seventh Legislature of Manitoba.

Mr. Speaker: Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the motion?

Voice Vote

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

Some Honourable Members: Yea.

Mr. Speaker: All those opposed to the motion, say nay.

Some Honourable Members: Nay.

Mr. Speaker: In my opinion, the Yeas have it.

Formal Vote

Mr. Laurendeau: Yeas and Nays, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: A recorded vote having been requested, call in the members.

The question before the House is the motion of the honourable Member for Selkirk. That is the motion for an address in reply to the Speech from the Throne.

Do members wish to have the motion read?

Some Honourable Members: No.

Mr. Speaker: Dispense.

Order. Before conducting the vote, could I please have the co-operation of all honourable members because the page is going to be calling the vote and the Clerk needs to hear the members that are being recorded to vote. I ask the co-operation of all honourable members, please.

Division

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

Yeas

Aglugub, Allan, Ashton, Asper, Barrett, Caldwell, Cerilli, Chomiak, Dewar, Friesen, Jennissen, Korzeniowski, Lathlin, Lemieux, Mackintosh, Maloway, Martindale, McGifford, Mihychuk, Nevakshonoff, Reid, Robinson, Rondeau, Sale, Santos, Schellenberg, Selinger, Smith (Brandon West), Struthers, Wowchuk.

Nays

Cummings, Derkach, Driedger, Dyck, Enns, Faurshou, Gerrard, Gilleshammer, Hawranik, Helwer, Laurendeau, Loewen, Maguire, Mitchelson, Murray, Penner (Emerson), Penner (Steinbach), Pitura, Reimer, Schuler, Smith (Fort Garry), Stefanson, Tweed.

Madam Clerk (Patricia Chaychuk): Yeas 30,
Nays 23.

Mr. Speaker: I declare the motion carried.

Mr. Mackintosh: Six o'clock, Mr. Speaker?

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

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 10, 2002

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