



Third Session - Thirty-Sixth Legislature

of the

Legislative Assembly of Manitoba

**DEBATES
and
PROCEEDINGS**

**Official Report
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The Honourable Louise M. Dacquay
Speaker*



MANITOBA LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
Thirty-Sixth Legislature

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

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Wednesday, March 5, 1997

The House met at 1:30 p.m.

PRAYERS

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

PRESENTING PETITIONS

Mobile Screening Unit for Mammograms

Ms. Rosann Wowchuk (Swan River): Madam Speaker, I beg to present the petition of Beverley Terhorst, Sharon Schilko, Linda Phillips and others requesting that the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba request the Minister of Health (Mr. Praznik) to consider immediately establishing a mobile screening unit for mammograms to help women across the province detect breast cancer at the earliest possible opportunity.

Introduction of Guests

Madam Speaker: Prior to Oral Questions, I would like to draw the attention of all honourable members to the public gallery, where we have this afternoon twenty-five Grades 5 and 6 students from Rockwood School under the direction of Mr. Boyd Noble. This school is located in the constituency of the honourable member for Crescentwood (Mr. Sale). On behalf of all honourable members, I welcome you this afternoon.

ORAL QUESTION PERIOD

Personal Care Homes Public Inquiry

Mr. Gary Doer (Leader of the Opposition): Madam Speaker, the Minister of Health yesterday left the impression that the incidents calling for a public inquiry were only isolated to the one personal care home. In light of the fact that Judge Rusen in 1994 issued an inquest report on the death of a resident named Anne Sands in the Heritage house nursing home, a private profit nursing home, and stated that in his opinion the staffing levels were woefully inadequate for the 85 residents placed in that home, I would like to ask the Premier, would he now instruct the government to have

a public inquiry and look at the lack of follow-up dealing with the recommendations from the inquest as reported by Judge Rusen?

Hon. Darren Praznik (Minister of Health): Madam Speaker, the Leader of the Opposition has brought forward some information to my attention which I must admit that I was not aware of that particular incident. I certainly would endeavour to review this particular matter. He puts on the record an allegation that there has been no follow-up. Before I answer that, I certainly would want the opportunity to check with staff in the Ministry of Health to see what follow-up is there. I would suspect that there has been.

Mr. Doer: Madam Speaker, subsequent to the death and prior to the inquest report, a government report was issued. I address this to the Premier because he has had three different ministers of Health through this period of time, and he has been responsible all the way through for the situation of personal care homes. He is the one accountable to the people of Manitoba. The government report stated that residents in private homes are at an increased risk of having falls, fractures, dehydration and pneumonia. Older female residents in private profit homes are at a much greater risk of having dangerous falls in those homes.

I would like to ask the Premier today, will he order an inquiry to deal with the situation in our personal care homes in Manitoba and to deal with the many reports that he has received as Premier of this province in terms of the recommendations that hopefully could have prevented further death and tragedy in other personal care homes here in the province of Manitoba?

* (1335)

Hon. Gary Filmon (Premier): Madam Speaker, the member, I think, referenced 1994 and said that we have had three different ministers since then. That is not accurate, of course. The member for Brandon West (Mr. McCrae) served since the fall of 1993. If he is making some reference as to longevity of service, I believe that when the former member for Pembina

moved from his post, he was at that time the longest-serving Minister of Health in Canada.

The member brings some information to the House that I am sure deserves review, and we will take that question as notice and examine the material that he has brought to the House. The Minister of Health (Mr. Praznik) will report back.

Mr. Doer: The death took place in 1992. The previous member for Pembina was the Minister of Health. The Speech from the Throne in 1990 was with the two previous ministers ago, a Minister of Health. Many of the reports have come down with the previous Minister of Health, and now we have answers from a new Minister of Health. The one thing constant in all of these reports, inquests and inquiries is the Premier has been responsible for all of these recommendations, and we believe the Premier has done nothing through all of these recommendations.

Madam Speaker, the Premier had a further report in 1995 with 39 recommendations. In 1996, the member for Kildonan (Mr. Chomiak) asked the Premier and the Minister of Health directly to get involved in the Holiday Haven Nursing Home. The Premier said that the member for Kildonan was fearmongering. That is what he said on the radio. Perhaps if the Premier would have listened to members opposite, tragedies could have been prevented, death could have been prevented.

I would like to ask the Premier today to stop the cover-up of his responsibility dealing with personal care homes, the inquests and the reports. Have a public inquiry; let us look at his responsibility and the responsibility of his two previous Health ministers in the dereliction of their duties for personal care homes here in the province of Manitoba, Madam Speaker.

Mr. Praznik: Madam Speaker, first of all, I want to say very clearly that members on this side of this House and certainly myself as Minister of Health and previous ministers of Health take this responsibility very seriously. We believe, yes, we want to ensure that we obtain the highest level of care and concern and security for people in the personal care homes of our province. Let us also remember that this is a very human system. It is one that deals with people and

management and issues. From time to time there are always going to be problems that arise. It is incumbent upon us to work as diligently as one can to ensure that those are minimized and corrected when found.

With respect to the report that the member for Concordia (Mr. Doer) has referenced, from the reports I have from the department, most of those recommendations, if not all, have either been implemented or are in the process of being implemented. That is the information I have from those people who are working on it. I will endeavour to report back to the House if that information is not correct.

Holiday Haven Nursing Home Management

Mr. Dave Chomiak (Kildonan): Madam Speaker, there has clearly been a cover-up and a dereliction of duty on the part of this government and this Premier with respect to personal care homes.

My question is to the Minister of Health and it is very specific. On January 22, I wrote to you about Holiday Haven saying that the report commissioned by your government in December called for a management change at Holiday Haven. I knew that in January. I wrote to you about that in January. Why did it take the government until a death occurred at Holiday Haven for you to all of a sudden recognize and realize that a management change was necessary at Holiday Haven? You had a letter from me saying that your own report recommended a change in management in December of last year.

Hon. Darren Praznik (Minister of Health): Madam Speaker, if you refer to the letter that the member provided, he indicated the date on which I believe the letter is dated. That is fine. If you look at the time in which those letters arrive in my office, the time in which I have to look at that information, all of these events, if I remember correctly, were happening around the same time. I say very candidly to him, the letter that he provided to me, the information that I saw in complaints that were coming through the Minister of Health's office of replies I had to sign to letters were factors that convinced me at that particular time when that incident occurred to move very quickly to change

the management in that facility. So his letter certainly did not go unnoticed. It was part of the information that I used, quite frankly, in making the decision that I did, and I thank him for the letter.

* (1340)

Mr. Chomiak: Madam Speaker, can the minister indicate, and will he table in the House today a copy of that Nursing Home Association report, the recommended change in management, and can the minister indicate when he found out that that report indicated that a management change was necessary at Holiday Haven?

Mr. Praznik: Madam Speaker, I can tell the member that my knowledge of that from within the department came at the time this Holiday Haven issue came up with the incident and was brought to my attention, and I asked for a report on what was going on there. In fact, as a result of his letter and other inquiries I had the previous week, I asked my department to give me an update, and that was in the works as this event particularly happened. So I do not think the member could suggest that it is humanly possible for events to have transpired faster than they did.

With respect to tabling that report, I will endeavour to obtain a copy and find out if it is within my purview to table it. If it is, I would certainly be prepared to do that.

Public Inquiry

Mr. Dave Chomiak (Kildonan): My final supplementary: How does the minister believe that the public will have any confidence in the internal review he is undertaking of his department in respect to Holiday Haven when in fact the person responsible for the internal review, the assistant deputy minister, is the very person who was responsible for looking after Holiday Haven for the past two years? Does that not justify the need for an independent public investigation and inquiry of the situation at Holiday Haven, the department and the failure of the Premier (Mr. Filmon) to live up to recommendations made by countless reports with respect to personal care homes?

Hon. Darren Praznik (Minister of Health): Madam Speaker, to deal with the latter part of the member's

question in the first instance, first of all, let us remember that, yes, we need to have safeguards in place, but it is very much a human system. No matter who is on this side of the House or in this desk, from time to time there are going to be difficulties in the system and we have to deal with them, so there never will be a perfect time. I just think that is not possible, and members across the way acknowledge that.

What I have said, and I think it is only fair, anyone who is a minister I think has an obligation to their staff to ask first for a report and the information. We are waiting to see what the coroner makes, the decision that they make with respect to an inquest, and if they have an inquest, the results of that. I have said, I have said it to the media in interviews, we are taking this one step at a time as we go along, and I think we owe it to those people who have worked on it to have a chance to put the information to me, and I will make an assessment.

If a greater degree of inquiry is warranted, we certainly would consider that, but at that time, we have not yet seen information that would warrant it.

Education System Breakfast/Nursery Programs

Ms. Jean Friesen (Wolseley): Madam Speaker, the Filmon government in successive budgets has chosen to make many of Manitoba's poor even poorer. Cuts to welfare in particular have meant, as any teacher will tell you, that in some rural areas and in some parts of the city the numbers of hungry children are increasing. It is not surprising that this same government also believes that early childhood education and nutritional programs are, I quote, costly enhancements, not educational investments.

I would like the Minister of Education to confirm that she believes that it is the job of the teachers and trustees of Manitoba to only discuss nutritional principles and not to feed the hungry children in front of them.

Hon. Linda McIntosh (Minister of Education and Training): Not accepting any of the preamble, particularly the part about us not doing anything to improve the circumstances of the poor people who now have more job opportunities, more ability to have productive lives in Manitoba, I should indicate first of

all that we know absolutely—and my record on this dating back 17 years is well known and well known by those who have worked with me—that what happens in the early years of a child's life will very definitely affect their abilities to produce in every area of life beyond the age of six.

We have right now in Canada a system of public school education that looks after the teaching of academics. We also know, however, that it is vitally important that when those children come to school that they come ready to be able to learn those academics. I think the question we are talking about is, how do you fund these particular items? We are not quarrelling about the need for them or the importance of them. The member would say that these items are not costly and that, of course, is not correct. The question we need to decide, Madam Speaker, which we are doing in our government, is how to go about ensuring children are ready for school, and I have answers for that with the next question.

* (1345)

Ms. Friesen: Does the Minister of Education truly intend, as she indicated to the Free Press, that the funding of early childhood education, a program of significant long-term value for our children, should be dependent upon attracting foreign students to the inner city and that the feeding of hungry children should rely upon some fluctuating offshore market in education? Because that is what she said.

Mrs. McIntosh: The member is taking two issues: One, the issue of fundraising and should fundraising itself be passive, i.e., lotteries, or should it be active, i.e., educational, the purchase of education from other places? That is one issue; the other issue is how we deal with children before they come to school.

We provide right now to school divisions, particularly Winnipeg No. 1, for example, received an additional \$200,000 this year specifically to deal with their students at risk coming into the school system. Through the Child and Youth Secretariat, which this government formed, this government saw the need to co-ordinate activities between Health, Education, Family Services and Justice. Native Affairs is now included in that number. We each will have our own

specific mandates, but it is important that we co-ordinate those mandates for the sake of the whole child.

We are looking at the whole child even before birth. We are now funding programs for adolescent mothers to help prevent things like fetal alcohol syndrome, teaching proper nutrition in the school system. We believe in a co-ordinated effort, not a piecemeal effort, and we absolutely believe in the importance of early intervention, and we work as a co-ordinated group to provide that.

Ms. Friesen: Would the minister explain why it is that early childhood education and nutrition programs recommended two years ago by the Postl report, endorsed yet again a year ago by the Youth Secretariat, recommended by many studies throughout the world, are now simply reduced in Manitoba in the elitist view of this Minister of Education to costly enhancements to be talked about endlessly in throne speeches and dependent upon offshore fundraising?

Mrs. McIntosh: Once again, there is a very, very misleading implication being left to the House which is not fair to the people, the students and the government members who have worked so hard to try to finally get some co-ordination. We see already \$450,000 has been transferred from the Department of Health to the Department of Education to provide for registered nurses in schools for special needs students, that kind of initiative which we have done so that the education dollars can go to hire teachers, not nurses, the nurses being provided by the Department of Health, when, under their day in government, school boards were forced to take education dollars to hire nurses. Now we are saying education dollars can go to hire teachers. The Department of Health will provide the nurses. We intend to extend that kind of thinking, that kind of common-sense approach to funding sources for important programs in a co-ordinated way, not taking from the mandate of any of the areas to provide for a mandate in another.

Manitoba Telecommunication Service Investors

Mr. Steve Ashton (Thompson): Madam Speaker, in January of this year a dinner was held following the privatization of MTS. The memento given the 80

guests was a global tradition, a 4 by 5 inch Lucite block displaying the tombstone announcing the \$910-million deal. That is what the attendees want, said Darrell Burt of CIBC Wood Gundy. It means they joined the club.

Madam Speaker, MTS's name is indeed on a tombstone. I want to ask the Premier if he can indicate that MTS is now not only a privatized company but in fact that the club, the owners of MTS, are now a majority of non-Manitobans, primarily institutional investors on Bay Street.

* (1350)

Hon. Gary Filmon (Premier): Madam Speaker, I am aware that at least some of the institutional investors are right here in Manitoba. They involve people who are the developers of mutual funds here in Manitoba, the investors of large estate monies here in Manitoba, as well as pension fund investors here in Manitoba. So the premise of his question is incorrect.

Mr. Ashton: Madam Speaker, will the Premier finally tell the truth and that through either the deliberate design of this government or the incompetence, within the first week 40 percent of the shares were flipped, and that it is very clear to any objective observer that MTS is now no longer owned by Manitobans and is basically owned by his friends on Bay Street?

Madam Speaker: Order, please. I would remind the honourable member for Thompson that "to tell the truth" has been ruled parliamentary on many occasions, and I would ask him to exercise discretion in the choice of his words.

Point of Order

Mr. Ashton: Madam Speaker, on a point of order.

Beauchesne Citation 490 states very clearly that "not telling the truth" has been ruled as parliamentary. I believe it is not only parliamentary but absolutely appropriate to question whether the Premier was not telling the truth when he said that MTS would end up being a Manitoba-owned company and when his minister issued a press release on December 20, 1996, indicating the exact same thing.

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

Hon. James McCrae (Government House Leader): On the point of order raised by the honourable member for Thompson, I believe it has been seen as appropriate and remains appropriate for the interpretation of the rules, the reading of Beauchesne to be taken in a context of the intent surrounding the words used, and so that is why it is never always as clear as one might think to find words in a list here and in a list there. It is what is the intention of the speaker when using language such as "not telling the truth," and I would invite you, Madam Speaker, to take that into account as you assess this point of order.

Madam Speaker: I will take the matter under advisement and report back to the House after having researched it in more detail.

* * *

Mr. Filmon: Madam Speaker, as the member should be aware, many of the large institutional investors who did indeed buy shares in Manitoba Telephone System after the commencement of trading were from Manitoba and were Manitoba based. So his premise is not accurate.

Brokerage Firms—Fees

Mr. Steve Ashton (Thompson): Madam Speaker, the facts speak for themselves and the Premier knows what has happened.

I would like to ask one further question to the Premier. Since he would not give this information before the sale of MTS, will he now confirm that the brokers made at least \$24 million prior to the issue of the shares on the stock market and that indeed the lead brokers, Wood Gundy and Dominion Securities, each received \$4.8 million apiece, the same companies that recommended the sale of MTS in the first place?

Will the First Minister finally admit to the greed that was the real basis for the sale of MTS?

* (1355)

Hon. Gary Filmon (Premier): Madam Speaker, as is the case with any private share offering, commissions are paid to the people who sell those shares. Indeed, in return for that, Manitoba received \$910 million in revenue, of which a very substantial part of that revenue will go to pay down the debt of this province, the long-term debt of this province, that will pay for hospitals in this province, that will pay for health—

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

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

Mr. Filmon: Madam Speaker, that money will go to the long-term benefit of the people of Manitoba as money that they used to pay in interest on the debt that the New Democrats put on this province, and instead of being put as interest on that debt, will be put into health care, into education and into vital social services. That is the difference between the twisted thinking of the New Democrats and what the people of Manitoba want to have happen. They do not want the money to go to the bondholders in Zurich and in Tokyo and New York. They want the money to go to health care, to education and to the social services that they depend upon.

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Point of Order

Mr. Ashton: Point of order, Madam Speaker.

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Madam Speaker: Order, please. The honourable member for Thompson is attempting to cite his point of order, and I am having difficulty hearing him.

Mr. Ashton: A point of order, Madam Speaker. I asked about the commissions that were paid to the friends of this government. The Premier referenced Switzerland. I do not know if he was referencing his many trips to Davos, Switzerland, but any reference to Switzerland in response to this question is obviously out of order.

Madam Speaker: On the point of order raised by the honourable member for Thompson, I would remind the honourable First Minister that his response should be

explicit to the question asked and should be as brief as possible.

Regional Health Authorities Deficit Reduction

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Inkster): Madam Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Health.

In moving towards the creation of regional health authorities, this government has been using somewhat heavy-handed tactics to co-op local volunteer boards. This government in essence has been blackmailing boards all over Manitoba. Unless a volunteer hospital board amalgamates or agrees to surrender their independence and control and submits to the dictatorship of an unelected Tory-dominated regional health care board, your government is not interested in helping reduce their debt.

The question is, why is that?

Hon. Darren Praznik (Minister of Health): Madam Speaker, first of all, I certainly look forward to a very rational discussion on this issue because I think it is one that deserves a rational discussion. The rhetoric that the member for Inkster has used in talking about dictatorial boards and unelected boards, let us put some things into perspective. There are very few, if any, health care boards in Manitoba today that are elected. In most cases today, they are appointed by their constituent municipalities. I do not hear the member calling them dictatorial boards to the people, their community. Let us not forget that the vast majority of funding for health care in Manitoba is voted by this Legislature; so this is where the responsibility exists.

What we are trying to achieve through regionalization is grouping large enough blocks of citizens together so that we can find ways of providing better and more services. If one allows it to continue to exist, an organizational structure of small institutions, the member, quite frankly, will condemn rural Manitoba in particular to declining health care over the years.

Mr. Lamoureux: Madam Speaker, my question specifically to the Minister of Health is, if the government through the regional health authorities has the money today in order to accommodate these debts,

why are they holding out? Why are they trying to force compliance with regional or local health hospitals and so forth that are out in the community? Why not allow for a more natural flow into the regional health board? Why the heavy hand of government?

Mr. Praznik: Madam Speaker, as I said, again, let us keep the objective in mind, and the objective is to get to a regional authority and administration of those dollars so that services can be properly distributed throughout a region and be appropriate to the people that they serve. I know we will get into this debate.

I can show the member many, many numbers today that show us inappropriate use of services, lack of services, et cetera, because we have an institutional organizational model. Regionalization gives us a very good tool to reverse that trend. I would also point out to the member that for those boards that have a constituency today, whether they be municipalities or particular organizations, if they wish to retain their corporate identity and make decisions to run their institutions, with that also comes the responsibility for any financial loss or deficit. You cannot have it both ways, Madam Speaker.

* (1400)

Mr. Lamoureux: Madam Speaker, that is in fact what is happening over at the Dauphin regional hospital—

Madam Speaker: Order, please. I would remind the honourable member for Inkster he was recognized for a final supplementary question, and this is not a time for debate. Would the honourable member please pose his question now.

Mr. Lamoureux: Madam Speaker, my question to the Minister of Health is, why, then, does he feel the government, if it has the money, has to take away the opportunity of some of these boards that are volunteer based in being able to have more of a natural flow into the regional health authority? Why does it have to happen tomorrow? Why can there not be more of a natural flow so we are not upsetting and getting people upset over the way in which this government is trying to manage health care reform in this province? Can you not consult, can you not work with people?

Mr. Praznik: Madam Speaker, I can assure the member that I do lots of consultation and lots of travel. Last night I was in Carman for the annual meeting of the central health authority board, 275 people there, lots of questions and suggestions, but not one who opposed regionalization, not one individual.

Madam Speaker, in the case of Dauphin, it is a very difficult situation, as I know the member for Dauphin (Mr. Struthers) is probably very much aware. That hospital has a very significant deficit, I think somewhere in the neighbourhood of a million dollars if memory serves me correctly. They are not a municipally backed hospital; they have a group of founders there, and they are the major hospital in that part of their particular region. When one analyzes the numbers, a lot of their difficulties as to why in fact they have a deficit I think can be corrected and fixed as they move into a regional model. It is very important that their regional health authority be able to put those kinds of steps into place that will solve many of the health care problems in the Dauphin region. I am sure the member for Dauphin, the member for Swan River (Ms. Wowchuk) want to see improved and better health care in their region, and they are entitled to that.

Elk Ranching Regulations—Poaching

Ms. Rosann Wowchuk (Swan River): Madam Speaker, Manitobans across the province were furious when they learned of the regulations this government put forward to regulate the elk industry, particularly when they found out that the regulations would legalize poaching and help friends of government.

The minister has admitted that there was a mistake in these regulations. Can the minister now tell us what he has done to address this unfair situation and whether new regulations have been put in place to close the loopholes that legalized poaching?

Hon. Harry Enns (Minister of Agriculture): Madam Speaker, I am pleased to have this opportunity to indicate to you and to the House that, as the regulations call for, a very specific process of identification which involves a DNA process is currently taking place properly identifying all those animals that had been reported to the department for registration into the

agricultural domestic elk farming program. That process will take a while because it involves the individual handling of each animal, a blood sample having to be withdrawn from that animal. Once the status of those animals that had been reported during that period of time from February 1 to 14 has been established, the future registration of potential elk farming will take place.

I want to indicate very clearly, Madam Speaker, to the honourable member for Swan River that this involves a fairly onerous job. It involves going back into the records when her brother was Minister of Natural Resources and permitted a number of elk to be held in captivity in this province and my commitment to the Manitoba Elk Association that met with me that all will be treated equitably with respect to registration in this program.

Ms. Wowchuk: Since the minister wants to talk about relatives, maybe he should talk about some of his friends who call him Uncle Harry.

Madam Speaker, I want to ask this government how they can be so hypocritical to press charges against two people who poached bear but are letting friends of the minister's, friends of government who took elk illegally, letting them hold those elk and not pressing charges of poaching against those people. Does it matter who your friends are and whose chain you can pull?

Mr. Enns: Madam Speaker, I am further pleased to report to the House and to the member that not a single animal that has been reported to the Department of Agriculture for registration has been acquired in the manner that she describes, by poaching. The so-called friends of the government will be the last to be given any favourite treatment by this minister, by this government.

Ms. Wowchuk: I would like to ask the Minister of Natural Resources whether those people who took elk illegally will be charged with poaching and have those elk repossessed, and will they be charged with poaching just as the people that the Department of Natural Resources charged for poaching bear? Will the minister enforce the law and charge the people who took elk illegally?

Hon. Glen Cummings (Minister of Natural Resources): I would welcome any information that the member has regarding poaching of elk.

Elk Ranching Capture

Mr. Stan Struthers (Dauphin): My question is for the Minister of Natural Resources.

Your government passed legislation last fall to capture and ranch elk solely to benefit your friends. It has been a disaster. Last year, the capture was stopped at the end of February because cow elk were aborting their calves. Wild elk today are being lured out of our parks and you are the minister responsible. This is already March 5, so why are you allowing this capture to continue right through calving season?

Hon. Glen Cummings (Minister of Natural Resources): Madam Speaker, we are accepting the best advice of biologists and experts as to the timing, and as a matter of fact, the capture is just about over.

Mr. Struthers: Will the minister confirm that of 80 elk captured, only 16 were taken from crop depredation areas, and the rest were lured out of our provincial parks?

Mr. Cummings: Madam Speaker, if the member can tell me which elk are the resident elk and which elk are the ones that are nonresident in the valley, I would be more than prepared to deal with the question.

Mr. Struthers: Somebody across the way ought to know what is going on with these elk. Neither of these ministers do.

How can you and your department contract two individuals to capture elk from our parks on the one hand when your mandate is to protect this province's wildlife?

Point of Order

Hon. James McCrae (Government House Leader): Just over the past year or so I have noticed a practice, quite unintentional I am sure on the part of members perhaps on all sides of the House, tending toward using

pronouns instead of addressing their questions through the Chair, as we are all supposed to do, or making our answers through the Chair. I wanted to bring that to the attention of the House.

One of the things a new House leader gets to do is perhaps mention something that has been on his mind for a long time.

Mr. Steve Ashton (Opposition House Leader): On the same point of order, Madam Speaker, I am sure what the member for Dauphin meant to do was, through you, ask why no one on the government side knew what was happening with elk.

Madam Speaker: On the point of order raised by the honourable government House leader, I thank him for refreshing all of our memories that indeed the questions being posed should be put through the Chair.

* * *

* (1410)

Mr. Cummings: Madam Speaker, the member, through innuendo and the choice of his words, is implying that there have been large numbers of elk that have been poached. I suggest that he should provide some names and some information if he believes that. If he chooses not to believe that, or if he is convinced that that is the case, then he is saying that those who have declared that they have elk on their property, as required by the Department of Agriculture under the program, you are suggesting that those 80 elk and not 900, which was apparently the rumour that the members of the opposition were circulating, that those 80 elk—if he has word of any others out there, then I would please ask him to put it on the record.

Legislative Building Royal Doulton Product Promotion

Mr. Jim Maloway (Elmwood): My question is to the Minister of Government Services. I would like to take this opportunity to congratulate him on his recent appointment.

Now everyone knows that this is a pro-business government. Recently the Speaker turned her office into a private store and yesterday Royal Doulton, a private company, held a product launch of dishes downstairs in this building.

I would like to ask the minister whether we can expect to see more examples of this occurring at the Legislature and whether other product lines such as vacuum cleaner sales companies are now free to start operating out of the Legislative Building.

Hon. Frank Pitura (Minister of Government Services): I thank the honourable member for that question, and I am afraid I do not have an answer for you. I will take that question as notice.

Mr. Maloway: Madam Speaker, while this is not the first time that this has happened, I would like to ask the minister, would he put a stop to this practice and acknowledge that the Legislature is an important public institution and not a building to be used to sell dishes or vacuum cleaners or to be turned into a shrine to Tory ideology?

Mr. Pitura: Again I thank the honourable member, but I understand that a lot of the areas that fall within the area of the Legislative Assembly come under the Legislative Assembly Management committee, and so a lot of those decisions are made at that committee level.

Mr. Maloway: My final supplementary to the same minister then: Is he saying then that this is the responsibility of the Speaker, that it is the Speaker who is allowing this practice to occur in this business?

An Honourable Member: That is what he said.

Mr. Maloway: That is what he said.

Mr. Pitura: I would just advise the honourable member that the Legislative Assembly Management committee is a committee of the House and as such is not the responsibility—the Speaker is the Chair of that committee, but it is a committee of the House.

Again, I will take most of the question as notice and get back to the member.

Northern Affairs Office Closure—The Pas

Mr. Oscar Lathlin (The Pas): I would like to ask the Minister of Northern Affairs a question, and that has to

do with the office of the Department of Northern Affairs that has been closed in The Pas putting three people out of work. I know the promise was made to the workers to relocate to Thompson. I understand one is willing to go and two, for family reasons and being from The Pas, are unable to move.

I would like to ask the minister what rationale he has that would have prompted him to make the decision to close the office in The Pas.

Hon. David Newman (Minister responsible for Northern Affairs): The Pas regional office closes March 31 with the expiration of the lease. This is part of an evolving program towards the empowerment of the 53 northern communities. The whole direction of the legislation is designed to encourage self-sustainable independence. This is a step in that direction, a step that has been progressive and is designed to recognize the pioneering spirit and independence of people in the community.

You should also know that the people being transferred, three of them were offered the opportunity to move to Thompson into that office. The fourth individual was offered the opportunity for training as an entrepreneur, so that person could then provide the services, formerly provided as an employee, to the communities that are being empowered in that fashion.

It is very interesting. The mayor of Cormorant expressed support I believe for this kind of direction because they are very proud of their self-sufficiency.

Madam Speaker: Time for Oral Questions has expired

ORDERS OF THE DAY

THRONE SPEECH DEBATE (Second Day of Debate)

Madam Speaker: To resume adjourned debate on the proposed motion of the honourable member for Turtle Mountain who has 16 minutes remaining.

Mr. Mervin Tweed (Turtle Mountain): Thank you again, Madam Speaker, to allow me to finish my remarks in regard to the throne speech presented in the

last day. Recognizing that all Manitobans have a stake in the well-being of our children, our government will co-operate with other governments including the federal government to deliver a new national child benefit. All children must be given every opportunity to grow and develop mentally, physically and emotionally. Our government welcomes this co-operative spirit which is sure to assist all our children and especially children of most need.

A recent public review of The Child and Family Services Act by the member for River Heights (Mr. Radcliffe) will soon result in changes to the act to modernize the system and ensure children remain secure. The safety and security of the individual, our families and our communities is vital to the quality of our life, and to that end our government shall continue its policy of zero tolerance in reference to violence against women, and initiatives such as early intervention urban youth sports camps will also assist youth and families.

The urban sports camp is a recreation program that would provide prevention and intervention efforts for youth. The long-term goal of this program is to promote leisure-time activity as an alternative to negative behaviour with the desire to create safe and productive environments, and early intervention for families at risk will be developed.

Addressing criminal activity is **more than** simply a matter of providing police, courts and jails. Crime prevention is a key link in this chain. A **Public Safety Branch** responsible for crime prevention initiatives **and** victims programming has been established. The unit will be responsible for all victim and crime prevention programming, policy development and planning. The unit will include Victim/Witness Assistance, Women's Advocacy/Child Witness Support, crime prevention and other victim programming.

* (1420)

Seniors comprise a large segment of our population and their safety is paramount. To that end, life safety programs will be enhanced. The program has already been a success in revitalizing capital infrastructure such as green spaces and lighting in older Winnipeg neighbourhoods. The throne speech committed our government to the continuation of this program for a

further six years. Through Manitoba's Seniors Directorate and the Winnipeg Development Agreement, we will be working towards enhancing the safety and security of seniors while they enjoy their lives in their own homes.

Madam Speaker, I began talking about potential. The underlying theme from the Speech from the Throne was potential. The people of Manitoba recognize the potential of our government to combine fiscal responsibility with the maintenance of services important to all Manitobans, that being health, education, family services and justice. The economy of Manitoba has always had tremendous potential which the previous government long neglected. Through strong management practices and a vision, much of this potential has been realized. The economic potential has been approached through rural economic development, export diversification, support of projects such as Winnipeg and infrastructure investment among others.

The educational potential has been achieved through the adoption of world-class standards and uniform testing throughout the province to help assure success for our youth, continuation of the implementation of curricula emphasizing English, maths and science, the involvement of parents in their children's education, and the continuation of education as the second highest spending priority of this government.

Our health potential has been addressed through the modernizing of the health care system through innovations such as rural health authorities, a mobile health clinic, a provincial children's asthma education program, an expanded role for nursing, and the continuation of health as the single greatest budget expenditure of the province.

The potential of our First Nations is being enhanced through the fulfilment of obligations under the Northern Flood Agreements and finalizing treaty land entitlements ensuring First Nations Manitobans are fully included in the benefits of a national initiative against child poverty and ensuring the education and training system is more responsive to the needs of aboriginal people.

The potential of low-income families will be addressed through the building on the success of

programs such as Taking Charge! which will see 600 single parents into the workforce, the continuation to work with other provinces and the federal government to develop a new national child benefit program and the introduction of pilot programs aimed at providing early intervention for children and families at risk.

The role of government is to provide the foundation necessary to permit a society to successfully adapt to changing circumstances. Success in narrow economic terms is not enough. We must also succeed in broader human and social terms. Our key concern is to build a Manitoba where each generation can live as healthy and productive citizens.

Manitobans have expectations of their economy and of their society. We expect the economy to generate jobs and to provide fair opportunity for all Manitobans to participate in the building of a strong Manitoba. We also expect our economy to generate the resources to provide a safety net for those who are unable to provide for themselves.

The throne speech was about qualities that can be developed, possibilities that can be achieved and capabilities to which we all aspire. Together, through co-operation and vision, we can continue to develop all of our potential. We all have a role to play in that economic and social fabric of Manitoba, and I ask all Manitobans for that co-operation.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Mr. Edward Helwer (Gimli): I am honoured to be able to stand before all the members of this House today to second the government's throne speech. We are beginning the Third Session of the Thirty-sixth Manitoba Legislature with an already impressive list of accomplishments. Together with Manitobans, we have built a province that stands as a symbol of success, and as the new session gets underway, I look forward to working with my colleagues, my constituents and indeed all Manitobans to build upon those successes and make our province stronger than ever.

Before I begin, Madam Speaker, I would first like to express my complete support and confidence in your ability to perform your role as Speaker, and I look forward to another session in this Chamber where I know we shall all be guided with the benefit of your

wisdom and your judgment. I have the highest respect for you and the dignity and decorum you have shown in this House, and as the session continues I am confident that fairness and wisdom will accompany your decisions.

Madam Speaker, I am pleased today to rise and second the throne speech, and I am honoured that the Premier (Mr. Filmon) has allowed me this opportunity, and I want to thank him for that.

On Monday, our government put forward its vision for a successful, prosperous Manitoba, a vision that contains the key commitment of continued job creation and economic growth in our province, a vision of commitment to modernizing our health care system, to aboriginal people and to our youth who are the very future of Manitoba. The throne speech was the 10th that we have delivered since we came to office, and since the very beginning we have been committed to keeping our focus on the priorities of Manitobans.

More importantly, we continue to consult with Manitobans on all fronts. After all, as they say, there is no "I" in team, and our government cannot achieve what needs to be accomplished without the valued knowledge and input of the people of this province. Together, the partnership of our government and Manitobans have made our province truly the best place to live, work and invest and raise a family.

As this new session of the Manitoba Legislature progresses, let me assure all Manitobans that our government will continue to work towards upholding our ranking as a leader in Canada in terms of job creation. In fact, since the beginning of 1996, there were an additional 23,900 net new jobs created in Manitoba, which is the strongest performance among all the provinces.

Madam Speaker, our government understands the importance of spending smarter and holding down taxes, setting priorities and eliminating debts and deficits. We realize the urgency in taking care of what we have today in order to ensure a positive tomorrow for our children and generations to come.

In fact, that is what our balanced budget law is all about. Our legislation ensures that Manitobans will

continue to have access to the most vital services now and in the years ahead. To date, Manitoba has recorded two consecutive balanced budgets with a third on the way. With this, we have also accumulated a surplus of over \$210 million, and this surplus is in the province's Fiscal Stabilization Fund which will be used to ensure a stable financial future for the province and for all Manitobans.

In addition, we will be among the first provinces to begin paying down its debt. By ensuring that our surplus funds are used for this purpose, we will be ensuring a prosperous future for our children, and we continue to spend over \$500 million in interest payments each year. However, once those interest payments are gone, think of where those dollars could go. Imagine having those additional funds to put forward towards health, education and for vital services. So our government believes that that is where our money is best spent, and we are on the right path to get us there.

* (1430)

Madam Speaker, for nine consecutive years, we have kept our commitment to Manitobans through strong fiscal management. We have not raised any major taxes, be it personal income tax, corporate tax, capital tax or the sales tax, and this continues to be the longest tax freeze in Canada. In fact, the personal income and small business corporate tax rates have been reduced, and our government has created a tax system that is fair to all and is competitive.

In the throne speech, our government highlighted its commitment to two immediate national priorities, job creation and children in need. In the weeks and months ahead, we will work with our partners developing and implementing new initiatives to address those two very important priorities.

Going back to job creation, our government expects in the very near future to enter into a one-year agreement with the federal government to top up the current Canada-Manitoba Infrastructure program. The first infrastructure program signed back in January 1994 was valued at \$204 million, and once all the projects are completed there will have been more than 3,300 jobs created in more than 395 different projects

around the province. In the Gimli area, residents benefit from several infrastructure projects, as an example drainage construction in the R.M. of Armstrong when it received some infrastructure funding and a drainage program in the Village of Dunottar, and after a lengthy wait, the much anticipated twinning of Brookside Boulevard received infrastructure funding in November of this last year.

This \$8.2-million project will improve safety on the roads and will create some 150 jobs and will greatly improve Winnipeg's ability to accommodate the flow of cargo to and from the Winnipeg International Airport, and truckers will gain a direct four-lane route from the airport all the way to the north Perimeter and from there to the major highways fanning out from the city.

This project was a very important part of the effort to make Winnipeg an international transportation and distribution hub. In addition, with so many of my constituents using Brookside Boulevard as a main travel route to and from work, I know this addition will be a welcome item for commuters. As the lanes of Brookside widen, so, too, will the job and business opportunities in Manitoba.

Our government has always maintained that another program equal in dollars was necessary and we have lobbied Ottawa on that front. In fact, during last year's annual Premiers' Conference in Alberta, our Premier, the Honourable Gary Filmon, along with all Canadian premiers agreed to negotiate a new program with the federal government. It was emphasized that a new program needs to have a value comparable to the current program and that it should focus on strategic infrastructure which would enhance competitiveness and long-term employment growth and stability, and we hope that the new one-year top-up will bridge a path to this kind of program.

The federal Liberal government continues to offload on the provinces. Combining last year and this current year Ottawa will again have cut transfer payments to Manitoba by some \$220 million. That translates into \$220 million less for the priority items such as health, education and social services.

Across the country, unilaterally, federal cuts in transfers to health, higher education and other programs

is now in the range of some \$7 billion. Despite this federal offloading our government, in consultation with all Manitobans, has found new and innovative ways of doing things, and we are spending our dollars more wisely and managing our money more responsibly than any governments past.

While our province and all Manitobans have much to be proud of, it is not yet time to rest. We have to continue to look for ways to spend even smarter and use our resources more wisely. Manitobans have made it clear that there is an urgent need to upgrade our roads. Just last month our government announced nearly \$100 million in improvements and construction projects that have been approved for the '97-98 highway construction program. That brings our government's commitment in this area to some \$186 million over the next two years. In the Gimli constituency six projects at over \$9 million will benefit Manitobans.

Of that funding just over \$3 million will go towards a pavement project over a 16-kilometre section of PTH 8; a 20-kilometre section of PTH 9 from 101, a little bit of the road will be improved at a cost of some \$150,000; a 10-kilometre section of River Road from PTH 9 to 44 will receive a \$2.4-million upgrade; a new bridge will be constructed along PTH 9 at Willow Creek just south of Gimli to make way for the widening of that stretch of road; and a 17-kilometre section of PR 325 will go through a \$3.2-million upgrade.

These are all very important highway improvement projects, and we are really pleased to be able to see these roads improved. These projects and many others which will take place across the province will mean job creation and safer roads for all Manitobans.

While our government is committed to a national highways program, we cannot proceed without the co-operation of the federal government. Our rural highways continue to face increasingly heavy truck traffic due largely in part to Ottawa's policies, including changes to the Canadian Transportation Act which have resulted in some rail line abandonment and the end of the Crow rate. It is that additional traffic which is putting additional pressures on our rural road system and leaving us faced with an urgent need to upgrade.

Due to the urgency of this issue, we will continue with efforts to convince the federal government to commit to this essential program and work together with the provinces to benefit all Canadians. The time to act is now and the way to act is together. In the past our government has built successful productive partnerships with all levels of government, and we will continue in that same direction.

As mentioned in the throne speech, our government expects to sign a major new agreement with the provinces and federal government on labour, market development and training, and this agreement will increase Manitoba's ability to ensure that key training initiatives reflect the particular needs and circumstances of Manitobans.

Madam Speaker, we will also further that co-operation by working with the federal government and the provinces on the design of a new national child benefit system. These benefits can serve as a model for a more positive, co-operative approach to social policy renewal. The proposed benefit would enrich the existing federal child tax benefit and would allow provinces to introduce or enhance complementary programs to address child poverty. The benefit would go to all low-income families receiving welfare or earned income.

(Mr. Ben Sveinson, Acting Speaker, in the Chair)

Just recently our Minister of Family Services, the Honourable Bonnie Mitchelson, attended a meeting of Social Services ministers in Toronto where she outlined our government's position on the national program. We are pleased that the federal government is willing to work with the provinces in the fight against child poverty, and I look forward to the time when we can make the national child benefit a reality for the good of all Manitobans and indeed all of Canada.

Manitoba's youth are the future of this province, and our government's ChildrenFirst strategy is paving the way to a brighter future for young Manitobans. Our strategy focuses on redirecting funding towards prevention, early intervention and to provide services directly to children and to families. Through the Winnipeg Development Agreement we will invest some \$4.5 million in innovative and preventive child and

family services. Pilot projects will focus on the prenatal nutrition, early development, childhood development, adolescent parents and aboriginal mothers.

* (1440)

Mr. Acting Speaker, our commitment to families and to children is clear. We now spend over \$100 million annually on child and family support alone. However, our world has changed, as our needs. In order for the Manitoba Family Services Department to be more responsive to the needs of Manitobans, our government is committed to a reorganization. That reorganization has been completed and will make the system more accessible, more relevant and accountable to families in the community.

Just recently my colleague the MLA for River Heights (Mr. Radcliffe) held a review of child and family services. He conducted a provincial tour to listen to Manitobans and to get their comments and suggestions on possible improvements or changes that are needed in the system. From that tour, using the input at Manitobans, our government will be introducing legislative amendments during the 1997 session. Our government believes that all Manitobans, and indeed all Canadians, are concerned about our children growing up in a safe environment with true prospects for growth and a quality life.

To help ensure that this is the case in our province, this government continues to develop new initiatives and programs that help Manitobans acquire the skills that they need to compete in today's world. We are working to help Manitobans become and remain self-sufficient. After all, is not the best form of welfare a job? Our government believes it is, and to that end we have introduced an Employment First welfare reform project that ties welfare support to training, to advanced education, and to employment.

We are helping Manitobans achieve the tools to find work. In fact, during the last legislative session we passed the Employment and Income Assistance program. It has a new focus of making employment the No. 1 priority for clients who are able to work. As this new session continues, we will continue our work in this area to help Manitobans achieve self-sufficiency.

Creating employment opportunities is a key priority right across this country, and our government is committed to continuing to provide an environment in this province that provides job creation and ensures that all Manitobans benefit from the success of a strong, stable economy.

Mr. Acting Speaker, 1996 was a great year for Manitobans, and all indications are that we are headed for another successful year ahead. Current economic indicators place Manitoba right at the top of the performance scale. For instance, for the 11 months to November 1996, Manitoba retail sales were up 6.4 percent above the 1995 total for the same period. That is over two and a half times larger than Canada's 2.5 percent growth.

Housing starts in rural Manitoba rose 43.7 percent last year compared to 1995. In fact, in the Interlake area, the whole area has excelled in new home, cottage and commercial building construction. This is a strong indicator of how successful local residents have been in creating an attractive environment for investors and for newcomers.

In the manufacturing sector, for the 11 months to November '96, Manitoba shipments were up \$605 million during the same period in the previous year, and this was the second highest growth rate of any province and three times Canada's gain of only 2.6 percent. Since 1992 Manitoba has created a total of 8,600 manufacturing jobs. Also, new manufacturing investment in Manitoba is now expected to reach \$458 million for 1996, which is \$138 million higher than the initial forecast.

Currently six of the seven major provincial forecasts show economic growth in our province is performing above the national average in 1996. As for job growth, Manitoba is a leader among the provinces. As I said, from January '96 to January '97 we added some 23,900 jobs. This is a 4.6 percent gain, about 4.5 times Canada's 1 percent growth rate and the strongest performance amongst the provinces. Statistics Canada notes that continued employment growth in Manitoba is anticipated in the year ahead.

Our youth employment rate was 13.6 percent in January of this year and that is the second lowest among all the provinces. In addition, Manitoba is one

of the only four provinces recording a decline in the jobless rate in January.

Our export performance also tops the charts. For the 11 months to November '96, our exports to the United States were up 13.3 percent compared with the same period of the previous year. This is nearly twice Canada's gain of 7 percent. Between 1990 and 1995, our exports to the U.S. more than doubled, growing by \$2.2 billion or 123 percent, and this was the strongest growth in the entire country.

To assist Manitoba businesses with continued success in this area, our government has committed to full implementation of the 1994 Agreement on Internal Trade and to increased trade with other provinces and ensuring that Manitobans have complete access to the full Canadian market.

Manitoba businesses have enjoyed great success exporting their products to Mexico and the United States under the North American Free Trade Agreement. In January our government signed federal-provincial agreements that allow our full participation in NAFTA on labour and the environment. During this session we will be introducing legislation to provide for the implementation of these agreements in Manitoba, ensuring the protection of our exports through effective enforcement of labour and environmental laws.

Manitoba trade missions are opening up doors for opportunities for Manitobans. Last year two local businesses from my constituency went on a successful trade mission to South America. As a result of the mission, both International Beef Genetics and Prairie Farm and Ranch Supply expect to do business in South America in the near future. These trade missions helped to promote Manitoba and to put Manitoba on the global map as an ideal location to do business. By bringing established Manitoba business representatives to these lands we have the opportunity to promote our province and all it has to offer, and we are able to prove that Manitoba is indeed an ideal place to invest. Whether it is Ukraine, Asia or South America, Manitoba trade missions are opening the doors to new opportunities, job creation and success.

Back at home in Manitoba, our government has passed changes to The Labour Relations Act that are

intended to increase and protect the rights of workers. This includes having access to information through regular reporting by unions to their membership, and it is about ensuring there is a democracy in the workplace. If unionization is to be a democratic process, the voice of the workers must be heard, and our legislative changes allow that to happen. It puts employees in a better position to exercise their rights and participate in the collective bargaining process.

* (1450)

Mr. Acting Speaker, all Manitobans deserve the best possible life now and in the future, and we are living in a rapidly advancing world that waits for no one. Globalization is a reality that has major implications for our future economic prosperity and for its quality of life. Rapid increase in technology has created demand for new and constantly improving skills. In today's world, computer literacy is no longer a luxury. It is a necessity. If we want to continue being able to compete and succeed in today's global marketplace, we must be willing and able to adapt to change. Computers are now a way of life for us.

(Madam Speaker in the Chair)

As stated in the throne speech, our government will continue with the modernization of our health care system. We have paved the way for innovations that will help Manitobans achieve the best possible services by wise management of resources. Our announcement of 10 rural and northern health authorities, along with the Brandon health authority and two Winnipeg authorities, will allow our health care specialists to look at the system as a whole. This new way of doing things allows us to take the qualities from each health facility and use them throughout the province for the benefit of all Manitobans.

We are basically bringing the health care decisions closer to the communities that each health authority serves by allowing those individuals who live in a certain region to determine what services are required and the best way in which to deliver them. Our government is confident that we will be able to provide the best possible health care system to the people of this province.

Further strengthening and developing of community-based health care services continues to be an essential part of modernizing the system, and we can no longer look at traditional ways of health care as the only option. Strong community-based services are key to health care. No longer should the traditional view of a hospital bed and physician be the limit because quality care can be provided at home or on an outpatient basis by a wide range of health professionals.

Using resources more effectively will not only save us money, but it will allow patients the benefit of spending less time in that hospital and more time in the comfort of their own home. The creation of these authorities allows us to make the best use of the expertise and the talents of Manitoba's health professionals. By putting their knowledge to work on a province-wide basis, we will share our knowledge about what works best and solve problems more quickly and effectively.

In February, our government announced it was using a portion of the proceeds from the public share offering of the Manitoba Telephone System to pay down \$150 million of existing hospital and personal care home debt, and we realize there is need for a capital program in health to ensure our facilities meet the health care needs of Manitobans. By using some of these fund proceeds in this way, we will allow ourselves some additional flexibility to meet those needs.

Currently Manitoba Health is working with the various Manitoba health facilities to try to develop a workable program that addresses the needs of Manitobans while balancing what the province can afford. Our government is confident that by working to reduce our debt costs we will be able to deliver a new capital program which achieves that end.

Madam Speaker, the health care professionals in this province are the most dedicated, caring and talented in the country. In fact, there is a great team working at the newly constructed Stonewall Hospital, which opened its doors in April of '95, and in just a few weeks the newly renovated Rosewood Lodge personal care home will have a grand opening to celebrate the culmination of three years of construction which started back in December of '93. Apart from the renovations, the new Rosewood Lodge has a 20-bed addition bringing the

total bed count there to 50, and I would like to thank everyone who has been a part of this special project. Your efforts will certainly improve health care services provided in this area.

Some of the highlights in the throne speech focused on that same priority of continued improvement to our health care system. Health initiatives in the speech: to provide services closer to home, such as post-surgical cardiac rehabilitation, dialysis, chemical dependency programs, mental health programs, an expanded home intravenous program, a mobile child health clinic, a provincial children's asthma education program, and an expanded role for nurses. By investing in health and spending smarter, we in turn will also prevent illness and protect health and promote wellness.

Our government continues to make education a major priority. In fact, our funding level in this area is second only to health as a percentage of our total budget. Our children are the future of Manitoba and as this world continues to change, we must change with it. As our government strives for excellence in the school system, we will continue with initiatives that help us accomplish our goals. As highlighted in the throne speech, we will continue the implementation of the curricula emphasizing English, math and science, and we will further the adoption of world-class standards and uniform testing throughout the province to help assure success for our youth. These test results enable teachers, administrators, and parents to see where we need to develop new approaches, and, importantly, our government will continue to help ensure parents are involved in the education of our children.

In the recent public school funding announcement, our government maintained funding support for schools in an effort to assist them with future planning. We have also committed to providing this same base funding level for next year, and it is all about using our resources as wisely as possible. All of us need to be constantly looking for new and improved ways of doing things. School divisions have found increased efficiencies in the areas of administration and operation, and they will also be able to use those savings for redirection into the classroom. In this way, everyone benefits from the taxpayer to the teacher to the children, and it is absolutely necessary that Manitoba's youth have the skills necessary to find

employment. Our government will also be developing stronger partnerships and collaboration with the post-secondary education system and improving the linkages with the business community. In addition, we will also be revitalizing the Apprenticeship Program to provide exciting career opportunities.

When it comes to law and order in this province, our government continues to be guided by four principles in our approach to crime. First, criminals must be held accountable and pay the consequences for their criminal acts. Second, the rights of victims are of paramount consideration. Third, the justice system must continue to be fair and accountable to the people of Manitoba, and finally, Manitoba families and communities have a role and responsibility to help make this province a safer and better place to live.

During the last session, our government passed parental responsibility legislation which makes parents responsible in appropriate circumstances for restitution to victims where a child has deliberately damaged property.

In the throne speech, among other things, our government announced it will continue efforts to emphasize child protection and development and to redesign youth emergency services, to implement an urban sports camp, and to bring in innovative pilot programs aimed at providing early intervention for children and families at risk.

Our government's approach to crime is working. While the problems of crime cannot be solved overnight, we have been seeing some encouraging signs that the policies of our government are bringing positive results. For instance, in 1995, Manitoba's overall crime rate decreased by 6 percent; that was the largest decrease in Canada. That same year our property crime rate declined 8 percent; again the largest decrease in Canada.

In addition, our province had a 33 percent decrease in the rate of homicides, a 20 percent reduction in the rate of sexual assaults, a 7 percent decrease in the rate of assaults, and 19 percent decrease in the rate of break-and-enters, 1 percent increase in the rate of auto theft, and a 4 percent decrease in the rate of impaired driving offences.

* (1500)

Madam Speaker, although crime rates are dropping, there have been some highly publicized cases in the media that have left Manitobans expressing concern about their safety. To help deal with this, our government has established a Public Safety Branch responsible for crime prevention initiatives and victims programming. We will continue working with Manitobans to develop initiatives and programs to assist Manitobans and further reduce the criminal activity in this province.

Agriculture in Manitoba continues to be a major part of our economy. As we look to new opportunities, this area has the potential to create many new jobs in Manitoba. Last year our Working for Value Task Force wrapped up province-wide meetings, addressing the need for Manitobans to build a stronger provincial and rural economy, especially through greater value-added activity, broader diversification and job creation.

Our government has set a target to expand the range of our value-added exports by \$1 billion over the next decade. Together we must find innovative and creative approaches for creating new investment incentives for funding local value-added ventures in rural Manitoba. Participants in the rural task force meetings have made it clear that they are ready to make the necessary changes to thrive in the economy that is becoming more market driven, diversified, value added, sustainable and competitive.

In the Interlake area there were two successful productive meetings held, one in Teulon and one in Arborg. Participants in the Teulon meeting know that the people of this region and their attitudes are critical to its future prosperity. They said it was imperative that they be prepared to take the initiative to create the thriving regional economy. Participants at the Arborg meeting noted that the community already has an established base of some value added, including Gilbert Foods, a company manufacturing steel bins, and the company there that manufactures and exports the carpet racks, but they said there is still room to grow. Of particular interest to participants was the opportunity for value-added agriculture and production of livestock, forages, honey and leaf-cutter bees. It was also indicated that communities need to promote themselves

and to prepare themselves for attracting investments to their own respective areas.

Madam Speaker, by showcasing Manitoba to the world, we will be able to enhance trade and investment and increase tourism in our province. Some of the major events that will over the next few years that will help us in this effort include the 1997 Canadian summer games which are going to be held in Brandon in August. This event alone will involve some 4,000 athletes, coaches, officials and thousands of visitors and volunteers. It is anticipated that the games could have an economic impact of as much as \$60 million, create up to 800 jobs and provide accelerated community and sport development.

Then in November of this year Brandon will also be hosting the Canadian Olympic Curling trials, and the best curlers in Canada will be playing for the opportunity to represent Canada in the 1998 Winter Olympic Games in Japan. My constituency of Gimli will be the proud host of the 1998 Winter Games. These games will have an operating budget of some \$450,000, which is great news for Gimli and surrounding communities in terms of economic spin-offs. That combined with the tourism dollars that will be generated will greatly benefit the entire region.

Finally, in 1999 Manitoba will play host to the Pan American Games, the largest celebration of sport and culture ever staged in Canada. Our government has been and continues to work closely with Pan Am organizers to take full advantage of the economic and community development benefits of staging these games. The event will give our province incredible exposure to new opportunities and to expand both our economic and cultural relationships in the Americas. It will lead to enhanced trade and investment, tourist development, community development and also cultural industry expansion.

Madam Speaker, our government, together with all Manitobans, will continue taking up the challenge of change. We will continue building new opportunities and creating more jobs. Our government will continue to spend smarter and provide those services needed by Manitobans. Together with Manitobans our government will continue making our province the best place to live and to work and to raise a family.

I fully support our government's throne speech and all the initiatives within it. I look forward to this upcoming session. Manitobans have much to be proud of, and we cannot slow down yet, for there is still much work to be done. Together I am confident we will keep Manitoba strong and make it even stronger in the months and years ahead.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Mr. Gary Doer (Leader of the Opposition): Madam Speaker, in speaking to the Speech from the Throne, the words "Divine Providence" guiding your deliberations is the last sentence of the Speech from the Throne. I wanted to talk about one of his quotes in a minute.

I might say that I know that all Manitobans want divine providence in terms of the flood situation here in the province of Manitoba and the potential floods in many of our communities, many of our farms and homes and agricultural concerns. So I want to start my words today by wishing and hoping that we have the best possible weather conditions to allow us to have the least amount of flooding that is presently forecast. I know all of us join in that hope as we start this session because we know a lot of people are very concerned about it, and we share with them their concerns.

I thought it was appropriate and interesting, Madam Speaker, that the Premier (Mr. Filmon) has chosen to use the words from a Shakespearean play in his media scrum to describe the so-called action plan of the provincial government. I wanted to refer, get references to where that came from, because I thought it was a familiar passage, and it appears that the Premier used the words out of the play, the Shakespearean play, *The Merchant of Venice*, when he talked about when I am cut—and I paraphrase the play because the Premier did—when I am cut, I bleed, you hurt me, et cetera, and I thought it was appropriate because he did not go on to finish the famous words. I also thought it was rather ironic that he would choose a passage from Shylock in *The Merchant of Venice* because at the same time that he chose that we were debating issues of democracy and the Speaker and past rulings on racism.

As I recall the passage, the poignant passage from Shakespeare, with the words of Shylock, it was dealing

with racism and anti-Semitism, and I wanted to refer back to that passage because at the same time he was using those words to describe that he was like everybody else, he was using the words of Shylock to describe and to fight back against racism. Almost coincidentally to the time he was using those terms, we were fighting back against decisions in this Legislature that disallowed us from fighting back against racist policies with our motion of nonconfidence in the Speaker.

I guess it really speaks to the true issue we are dealing with, with the Speech from the Throne, because words are easy; it is deeds that matter. *Facta non verba* is the term that the Romans used to describe deeds not words, and so when the Premier uses his words in the press conference, we would like him to use his muscle in his caucus to expunge racism policies and the disuse in this Chamber. Instead of using the whip from the provincial western Premiers' meeting in Saskatchewan a short period of time ago in Yorkton to disallow that description, he used the whip with his Tory caucus to do the opposite.

* (1510)

Words not deed would come to mind when you look at the total Speech from the Throne. If the Shakespearean quote was to go on further, it talks about revenge, and perhaps that may be more appropriate for the people of the province during the election campaign for the government action, if you are wrong we shall revenge, in the same passage. But the passage could be used in more modern terms right in this building. If you take away my job and take away my dignity, I will cry. Because those of us on this side of the Chamber saw the true heartlessness of this government and this Premier, and we had to—not had to—when we were talking with the cleaning staff in this Legislative Building who have been laid off by this Premier and this government, the people who clean our offices, the people who empty our wastebaskets, the people who clean the toilets in the Legislative Building, and were making \$12,000 a year, were laid off by this heartless government, and we feel their pain and it is not just words, Madam Speaker.

Those are the people we fight for every day and the Premier forgets every day in this Chamber. So he can

try to do a U-turn; he can try to do a U-turn on the rhetoric; he can try to do a U-turn on the words, but he cannot do a U-turn on the mean, extreme ideology that we see every day placed against the people who are the more vulnerable in our province whether they live in the North, whether they live in the rural communities, whether they live in the inner city or whether they work right in this building. For the Premier himself, words cannot change the heartless actions of this government and members opposite. Shakespearean quotes cannot change the reality that Manitobans feel.

Of course, last year I started off talking about some of the same things in the Speech from the Throne. This is the government that cut the food allowances for babies by 24 percent, children under the age of one year, 24 percent with their provincial application of social assistance—24 percent. Did I see a reinstatement of the babies' funds in this Speech from the Throne? Did we see some real action for kids and babies who are most vulnerable in our communities? We all know from all the studies that this is the most important period of time for our children, for babies. Did we see anything in the Speech from the Throne to reverse the most negative decision I have ever seen implemented by any government in this Chamber? It makes Sterling Lyon look like Mother Teresa in terms of what they did. No, we did not see that reversal.

We did not see real action in a real Speech from the Throne. We saw words from a government that the people now have got a measure of. They know you are heartless. They know that you are mean and extreme, and you can put all the kinder, gentler words in your Speech from the Throne and in your press conferences if you so choose, but travelling across this province, people know what you are and know what you stand for, and to finish the Shylock quote in the Shakespearean play the Merchant of Venice, the revenge will be the people of Manitoba, and it cannot come soon enough, Madam Speaker.

Now the Tories opposite and the Premier (Mr. Filmon) opposite cannot change their fundamental philosophy and ideology. They believe in the race to the bottom. They see the whole world in this global race to the bottom. Today you compete with South Dakota. Tomorrow you compete with Nebraska. The day after that you compete with Alabama. The day

after that you compete with and lower your standards and your programs and your incomes to that of Mexico, and the year after that you go to South Korea or Indonesia or some of these other places the Premier frequents on a regular basis. That is the vision. That is the philosophy. That is the ideology. That is your belief system.

Madam Speaker, we absolutely reject the race to the bottom that is being implemented by the Tories, and we will replace it with a system and vision and values that believe in people and put people first, not this corporate mentality first in Manitoba.

Every day this vision is implemented with the maximum amount of cronyism. Cronyism is growing in the Conservative government. Every day you see examples of this cronyistic approach by the Tories. A couple of weeks ago, we learned the Filmon team, the Conservative team, the Premier's Office in Manitoba has been debased to such a level that the Premier's staff write phony and fraudulent letters to the editor and get other people to sign them. That is the kind of moral decay that we see opposite. It should not surprise us.

Madam Speaker, I talked about the letters that are being written for other people to sign. Of course, it should not surprise us because we all recall the phone calls coming out of the Premier's Office during a by-election campaign a few years ago. Maybe they want to deny those comments—Ron Arnst phoning and saying I am just a citizen of Crescentwood, and even though you cannot recognize my voice, I am just appalled by the other candidates from other parties. Other members of the Premier's staff, obviously on instructions from the Premier (Mr. Filmon) himself—Mr. Highroads, Mr. Highroad Premier, Mr. Decorum—ordering his staff in a cronyistic way to phone open-line radio shows and then deny it after. Remember the Deputy Premier (Mr. Downey) denying it? Oh, I do not recognize that voice; I do not recognize that voice. I only listened to him on Brandon radio for 10 years, but I do not recognize that voice.

The contracts to the Premier's former staff—cronyism, cronyism, cronyism. Health care, the telephone system. It goes on and on and on. The appointments to some of the boards and commissions, people who gave themselves contracts in the telephone system, as board

members in the Manitoba Telephone System, are now rewarded with promotions in other Tory-appointed boards of directors. It is rotten, Madam Speaker. It is becoming more rotten every day, and the people have got the measure of this.

We have, Madam Speaker, the Lotteries Commission now, the new, independent Lotteries Commission. Did we turn a page and start all over? Did we take a look at some people who were truly independent in establishing the independent commission dealing with lotteries? No. The Premier (Mr. Filmon) chose to go back to the past, to go back to a patronage system, to appoint people to that Lotteries Board on the basis of their promotions to the Conservative Party rather than their merit to deal with the social and economic consequences of gambling here in the province of Manitoba. Old think, the kind of think we have from the Premier opposite in his actions.

* (1520)

Madam Speaker, look at the Atlanta Olympics last year. The Premier said on the radio, the Premier stated on the radio, I am being paid for by the Pan Am Games Society; I am being paid for by the Pan Am Games group. When the question was asked, who is paying for it, the Premier said it was the Pan Am Games Society, and only after Frank, his good friend, his good friend Frank McKenna, blew the whistle and said, oh, both Premier Filmon and I are being paid for by IBM, our hotels and our tickets and our meals are being paid for by IBM, did the Premier then have to admit that he did not tell the truth when he was on the radio, and he said that he was being paid for by somebody else. You know, the old saying is if you do not tell the truth about the little things, how can we expect you to tell the truth about the big things? Of course, that brings us to the Manitoba Telephone System. [interjection]

You can go back and give us your quote about Ron Arnst. That is a standard we would expect from the Deputy Premier (Mr. Downey). If the Deputy Premier wants to interrupt for a moment, let us refresh everybody's memory of last year. Yes, the Pan Am Games Society—now this Pan Am Games Society has become a real nice deal for members opposite, has it not? Oh, the Pan Am Games Society asked my wife to

come along to South America. Well, when officials from the Pan Am Games Society were contacted today, they said no, Mr. Downey's office asked us to ask Mrs. Downey to come. Now, whom are we going to believe? Are we going to believe the Pan Am Games Society volunteers, or are we going to believe the Deputy Premier? You know what? We are going to believe the Pan Am Games Society. We are not going to believe the Deputy Premier.

Madam Speaker, if the IBM Olympic hotel truth or lack of truth was the small issue of telling the truth, then the Manitoba Telephone System is the big issue of not telling the truth and the kind of value system that this Premier (Mr. Filmon) and this government have. During the election campaign, I will not sell Manitoba Telephone System if I am re-elected. If we are re-elected, we will not sell the Manitoba Telephone System.

Well, we know the studies to privatize the phone system took place even before the election campaign. We know that the Premier's chief henchman working for the Minister of Finance (Mr. Stefanson) was working away, working away with his brokerage friends, stirring—we could use other Shakespearean quotes to talk about twice and once the hedge pot boiled, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker, we could go on all day with Shakespeare with members opposite. We could start with the member for Charleswood (Mr. Ernst) and start with the Premier, and say, et tu, Brute, et tu.

The government did not tell the truth on the Manitoba Telephone System. As the member for Thompson (Mr. Ashton) pointed out today, it was clear that the brokers, their fees and the greed that was prominent, became the special interest group that guided the Tory decision not only to break their election promise, but break their bond to the people of Manitoba to fulfill a promise that only made a few people rich and disappointed thousands of other Manitobans in terms of owning their telephone system.

We could go on all day long about the Manitoba Telephone System. We believe—

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Madam Speaker: Order, please.

Mr. Doer: We have been around the province for the last number of months. [interjection]

Madam Speaker: Order, please. The honourable Leader of the official opposition.

Mr. Doer: Thank you, Madam Speaker. [interjection] Anybody that makes a statement like that that has been contradicted the way he was.

Madam Speaker, across this province, there is one thing that people are saying about this government that is positive. They talk about the cronyism; they talk about the heartlessness; they talk about the cynicism; they talk about the broken promises. They talk about one thing that is positive about the government, I want to say that today. They talk about the fact that they are happy that the books are balanced, but they know that there are massive surpluses coming into this provincial government because of the VLT revenues and the revenues generated by gambling. They know that those massive revenues to balance the books are coming out of their communities. So the surplus on the one hand is positive, but they see very little results from those surpluses in terms of investing in their future and in their community and taking this massive amount of gambling money and reinvesting it in the province.

There is a growing concern on the damage of VLT machines across this province, the social damage of VLTs across this province, and a growing concern about the social cost of these VLT machines. I suggest to the government strongly that they must implement the recommendation of the Desjardins report at minimum and have referendums and plebiscites in communities across Manitoba and let the people speak out about these massive amounts of revenue and the social costs.

Madam Speaker, the people do not believe the government on another boast. They do not believe that their taxes have not been raised. They know that sales tax has been spread. They know that user fees have been introduced and introduced and introduced again, and they know that property taxes have gone up radically because of the change in the property tax credit and in other changes in terms of offloading onto

municipalities and school boards here in the province of Manitoba.

They want a positive alternative to this government. They want a government that respects people. They want a government that takes a co-operative approach to our problems and our challenges. They want an alternative view, Madam Speaker, and we have an alternative view to this global kind of race to the bottom. We believe that there is another way to go. There is a different way to proceed with this province, that we can compete in a global economy, but we must compete on the quality of life, on the quality of programs, on the quality of services, on the quality of what we can do together rather than just leave people behind with this kind of Darwinian, heartless approach that we see from Conservatives in this province and we see from Conservatives across this world.

* (1530)

People want programs that make a difference to their lives. They want to look at the quality of programs. They understand that programs that are vital from the provincial government provide a positive life and a positive quality in their communities. If you just go to the community of Gimli, and the member for Gimli (Mr. Helwer) just seconded the Speech from the Throne, people in Gimli understand that there is a connection between a quality health care system in their community and the economic challenges that they have, that you cannot have a growing retirement community with less of a health care system, a predictable health care system in your community. They understand that you cannot have a growing tourism business if you have a declining health care resource in your community.

They make the connection, Madam Speaker, between investing in health care and investing in the way in which we can compete in a quality way across this province. There is an alternative way to go, and they understand it, and members opposite do not understand it. They see everything in terms of cost. We see everything in terms of cost and benefit for all of Manitoba. That is the fundamental difference.

Madam Speaker, they see the connection between an education strategy and an economic strategy. We have

a government today that is taking away training and apprenticeship and programs for people in education. That is not the way to develop and compete into the 21st Century. If we do not have an economic strategy that includes an education strategy, we will not have a vision, an alternative vision, of how Manitoba can compete in a changing society and in a changing world.

They also see, Madam Speaker, that our infrastructure is human and our infrastructure is physical, and they see the connection between programs and Crown corporations that provide us with a competitive advantage in the world, as opposed to the Tories, who want to sell off our assets and sell off our competitive advantages. Let me give you a couple of examples why we are so fundamentally different than the Tories on these fundamental issues.

Madam Speaker, we did debate the telephone system in this Chamber. We debated it on the basis of rates. We debated it on the basis of jobs. We debated it on the basis of debt. We debated it on the basis of tax provisions. We debated it on the basis of a number of other factors, but the real issue here is, who will control the telecommunications and the information highway into Manitoba's future? Will it be people that the Tories support, the brokers, the shareholders, the people on Bay Street who only are going to be concerned about a return on their investment in a private corporation, or will it be the people of Manitoba, who will have a Crown corporation that prepares us for the future technology and the future assets in an information highway?

We believe that we should control those decisions, Madam Speaker. We believe that part of a competitive and global economy is having some control of the infrastructure that is so important to the people, having the control in our hands, in the people's hands rather than having it in the brokers' hands in Bay Street or New York or somewhere else. That is a fundamental difference between your view of how we can race to the bottom in a global economy and our view of how we can maintain quality services.

Let me give you an example. The only two telecom systems that have eliminated party lines in Canada have been the province of Saskatchewan and the province of Manitoba. The Devine government in Saskatchewan,

we started it and you carried it out here in Manitoba, were the only two corporations to eliminate party lines in rural and northern communities. There is a total reality to why those decisions were made here in our jurisdictions. They were owned by the people. They were owned by the public. You cannot have a rural economic development strategy if you have so many people on farms and on northern remote communities having party lines. They cannot hook up to the Internet. You cannot hook up to the health emergency equipment. You cannot hook up to the new technological systems, fax machines, and other systems that are going to be rapidly available to consumers and individuals.

In the province of British Columbia, where they have higher densities of population and growing densities of population, they have 60,000 people still on party lines in rural British Columbia. In Ontario, Bell Telephone has thousands and hundreds of thousands of party lines in those provinces. Madam Speaker, that is why we have to maintain control of those decisions in our own hands. That is why the Tories were wrong to give the control of our telephone system to the brokers. That is why the Tories were wrong to break their word that they made in the last election campaign. Brokers drive Jaguars and senior citizens get a \$2-a-month increase from that government opposite. I say to you that nobody, nobody in this province believes you when you say you will not sell the Manitoba Hydro system. That is why they are not going to re-elect you in the next election campaign. The only way to save Hydro is to vote for a party that believes, believes in public ownership to balance off the ownership of others in our market system.

Madam Speaker, we proposed a number of positive alternatives coming into this session. Many more ideas, many more plans of action, many more specific proposals than we have seen from this government for the last nine years. This government is tired. It has no energy. It has no heart, and it has no ideas left. No gas left in the gas tank. People can see that.

Three years ago we proposed a Healthy Child program, and we again propose it as we move into this Legislature and this session this week. We called on the government to bring in programs to deal with hungry children. Did you hear the answers from the

Minister of Education (Mrs. McIntosh) over the last two days? That is the real Filmon agenda for hungry children. Put something in the Speech from the Throne and let hungry children be dealt with by wealthy immigrants from Asia to be attracted to our school division. What an absolute disgrace, and that is why the people can see through the heartless government of members opposite.

The minister says, well, that money should not come from the Education budget. It should come from corporate fundraising like they have had in Fort Garry. Is that not nice? Is that the Fort Garry that has Ravenscourt? That corporate fundraising?

You know, hungry children cannot learn. Hungry children need a helping hand. Hungry children need a society and a community that cares. Hungry children need a government on their side, and it is not these members opposite, Madam Speaker.

We called on the government—[interjection] Nobody on this side cut babies' food by 24 percent like the member for Tuxedo (Mr. Filmon). How he had the gall to go out and pack up food packages after he cut out 24 percent of babies' food over the last twelve months, it is absolutely the height of cynicism and the height of hypocrisy from this hypocritical Premier, Madam Speaker, and the public are starting to see through this.

We have proposed a prenatal program in targeted populations. We have proposed a number of proposals to have nurses in our schools. We have put forward ideas to have a family life component. We have proposed ideas to expand and combat fetal alcohol syndrome. We have proposed that we expand physical education in our schools, not subtract the number of hours and programs available to our children. We want to look at schools as part of the solution for our children.

The assessment programs in audiology, the hearing programs, Madam Speaker, the speech programs that have been cut by this government, lineups are longer and longer and longer, and what is this government doing? It cuts and it cuts and it cuts. That is why we have positive ideas. We were delighted when we saw the Healthy Child report from Dr. Postl. It looked very

close to the programs we had been suggesting but, of course, all of these programs make a lot of sense.

If you spend money on a prenatal program for targeted populations, it costs you about \$800 per child but, Madam Speaker, if you have an underweight baby, it costs approximately \$200,000 to our health care system. It makes sense to provide the dignity of decent programs. It makes sense to put resources into children at the earliest possible moment, including a program for mothers. To have a couple of pilot projects cynically announced by the members opposite, we expected more, and we are absolutely underwhelmed by the words in the Speech from the Throne. We are not surprised by the lack of any political will to put a heart back into programs for children by a heartless government that we see opposite.

Madam Speaker, we have a number of proposals on our Healthy Child program which I have articulated. We have had a number of other proposals on health care, alternatives on health care, nurse practitioners. It is in the Speech from the Throne again, is it not? Every year it is in the Speech from the Throne, and every year the government does nothing. Every year they do nothing on nurse practitioners. Do they have a strategy to deal with rural and northern doctor shortages? No, they do not. Do they have a strategy that would take three or four doctors' positions and look at putting more nurse practitioners as approved for medical services in those regions?

We talked to one region that had three doctors positions approved. We suggested that they have two doctors and three nurse practitioners for the same amount of money. Good idea. The whole community wanted it. But the government would not provide the backup to have that kind of balance which would provide the services to the public and provide the backup for doctors in their communities.

We have proposed solutions to the private, profit labs, but this government is only going to deal with the nonprofit labs, will not deal with their friends that are making money with privately held labs. They will only deal with one part of the equation.

We have proposed positive alternatives to deal with regional health. Again, the government does not want

democratically elected regional health boards. It does not want the public involved in the needs assessments. They want to proceed in their way of saying either you do this or we will do that, a kind of cronyism again. If you do not do this in terms of the 4 percent cut, we will not deal with the deficits. It is our way or the highway. That is not working in partnership with communities. It is a form of public policy blackmail, Madam Speaker, that has no place in the health care delivery of our citizens here in the province of Manitoba.

* (1540)

We have proposed a personal care home, a nursing home bill of rights. Where is the government's action on personal nursing homes? Perhaps the Premier is so embarrassed because last year he said the NDP was fearmongering when we raised the Holiday Haven nursing home. We want a public inquiry to look at the inaction and the scandal of the Premier's Office in dealing with our personal care homes, Madam Speaker. We will not settle for anything short. We have had inquests. We have had reports. We have had studies. We want to know who is responsible. Through three ministers of Health, we believe the member for Tuxedo (Mr. Filmon) is the one that is responsible for inaction and scandal in our nursing homes under the Tory government of the day.

We have further proposed that there be legislation to disallow profit in home care. We do not want people to get access to their health care services on the basis of the size of their wallet or the size of their purse, and we have proposed a nonprofit system. We believe in a health care system that is accessible and nonprofit for everybody. We will continue to work at positive legislation to do that. We believe the majority of citizens of Manitoba are opposed to the privatization of home care services and other health care services in Manitoba, and we want to vote on a positive alternative to have nonprofit home care and health care in the province of Manitoba.

Madam Speaker, we have further proposed, in dealing with the privacy of our citizens, a bill to deal with access to confidential information, but it is a scandal again that the government did not have privacy legislation in place before they gave our health care records to the Royal Bank through the SmartHealth

subsidiary. This Minister of Health (Mr. Praznik) has inherited not a Cadillac system; it has inherited a Rolls Royce system, a more expensive information system, an experimental system, than any other province on a per capita basis in Canada. The legislation should have been passed in this Chamber before that contract was let, not two years after. It is a disgrace again that the government did not see fit to follow through on these positive ideas.

The government, I guess, has been meeting with the business community which is quite worried about their lack of action with Canada's First Nations people and aboriginal people here in Manitoba. People know intuitively that we have to work in partnership with First Nations people, and I guess it took about 10 meetings with the business community instead of the plight of people in their communities for these people to put something in the Speech from the Throne.

Madam Speaker, you can put words in a Speech from the Throne, but we know the Premier's (Mr. Filmon) view of First Nations people when we heard his words to the member for The Pas (Mr. Lathlin) in the last session of the Legislature. We all heard the way he treated the member for The Pas and his words and the kind of baiting that he performed in this Legislature to our First Nations member Oscar Lathlin or the member for The Pas. We know that the member for The Pas has done more to bring the people of northern Manitoba together, to bring the First Nations community together with the non-First Nations people in northern Manitoba in The Pas constituency than all members opposite can even dream about.

We are absolutely proud of the work he did when he was Chief of his band, bringing together the Chief and the band and the people with The Pas First Nations and The Pas community, Madam Speaker. We are absolutely proud of the partnership by the member for The Pas, and we are absolutely proud of the fact that he is in our caucus to fight for First Nations people and all other people of The Pas. He obviously knows the kind of real agenda of the Tories opposite for First Nations people.

We are proud of the work from the member for Rupertsland (Mr. Robinson), working for justice for First Nations people, dealing with the whole issue of

the Betty Osborne case and people who were going to get paroled too early without reconciliation with the community and the victims. We are absolutely proud to have First Nations people in our caucus fighting on behalf of their constituents.

We are proud of the fact that our member for Point Douglas (Mr. Hickes), another First Nations person, is again part of the NDP team, the New Democratic team, in our caucus, a person who went through the New Careers Program, Madam Speaker, a person who has been on the front lines of fighting for dignity and integrity of programs for First Nations people. It is an absolute shame that members of the government, soon to be opposition, would cut programs like New Careers that allowed our member George Hickes to become a prominent member of this Legislature. They cut the programs that provided hope and opportunity for other people, and then they stand up in their phony way with the Speech from the Throne and talk about what they are going to do, and First Nations people.

Madam Speaker, did we see a reversal of some of the negative decisions on New Careers, on Access, on the MKO, on the Assembly of First Nations? Did we see a reversal in some of the terrible decisions that have been made on First Nations people in past budgets made by this Premier? The Indian and Metis Friendship Centres have been cut by this provincial government dramatically. Programs to give First Nations people jobs and recreation at those friendship centres have been cut by this Premier. He is no friend of the friendship centres, and First Nations people know that. That is why we would reinstate the funding to those friendship centres immediately and start putting people back into the communities at those friendship centres in an opposite way to the Tories.

Madam Speaker, the AJI report, the Aboriginal Justice report, this Premier (Mr. Filmon) has not even implemented recommendation No. 1, to establish a joint commission with the Assembly of Chiefs to establish a justice strategy here in the province of Manitoba. Recommendation No. 1, to have a joint commission, was not implemented by this Premier, and do you know what they do instead of implementing those good recommendations that Ted Hughes talked about again when he was dealing with the mess created by the former Minister of Justice?

They say that we reject a separate justice system. They create the recommendation that they are going to be opposed to as a political strategy, as a cynical political strategy not to join in partnership on the Aboriginal Justice Inquiry. It is a cheap political trick to say you are not going to do something that was not even recommended in the AJI report. It is the nice way to get the headline to say, we are not going to do this, instead of saying to the people of Manitoba why you could not implement the first recommendation of the Aboriginal Justice Inquiry.

If this government has any integrity at all, they will dust off the AJI and start implementing the recommendations that have been before their cabinet for the last five or six years. They have no credibility when it comes to First Nations people, when it comes to us, because they have done nothing except cut back the programs for our people.

Madam Speaker, I have mentioned New Careers and I have mentioned access. I would wish the government well on the treaty land entitlement agreement. We understand that the Prime Minister is going to be in town soon, sometime in March we understand, to talk and announce a framework agreement. We are pleased that they are announcing a framework agreement, but that is not a real treaty land entitlement.

I would point out to members opposite that in 1985 and '86 there was a full treaty land agreement between the provincial government and all the First Nations affected by that treaty land entitlement here in the province of Manitoba, and it was rejected by the federal Progressive Conservative Party of Canada. Brian Mulroney rejected the agreement that was made here, and I hope that we can carry through and finally have a treaty land entitlement as articulated in the Speech from the Throne. It is 10 years out of date in terms of what we could have done. We could have been 10 years further ahead if the federal Progressive Conservative Party had been fair to First Nations people rather than being disdainful, as they were in government.

Madam Speaker, we have proposed a number of proposals on youth justice. We have had a much more comprehensive set of alternatives than we see from members opposite. The member for St. Johns (Mr. Mackintosh) and our whole caucus worked together last

year to provide not just the consequences in the justice system, but hope and opportunity that must be there for our young people to keep them out of gangs and keep them out of offending under the Young Offenders Act.

* (1550)

Madam Speaker, we had the opportunity to attend the Indian and Metis Friendship Centre where young people from across our communities were there to present their ideas to the politicians, from all political stripes and from all jurisdictions, and, of course, the Minister of Justice did not show up at the forum. In fact, they got into a dispute about whether her invitation was issued long enough before for her to get there. We had the invitation 30 days ahead. The Liberals had the invitation 30 days ahead. They say the former Minister of Justice had the invitation 30 days ahead. We believe Nelson Sanderson. We do not believe the member for Fort Garry (Mrs. Vodrey) in terms of when that invitation came to the Justice minister.

But those people had excellent ideas, excellent proposals. The government or the Premier (Mr. Filmon) should have gone down to the friendship centre. You know, you can travel around the world, but you cannot travel around the corner to listen to people who have good ideas in our friendship centres to solve youth crime. They had ideas on recreation; they had ideas on jobs; they had ideas on opportunity. I was proud of the fact that many of the ideas that we had worked on last summer were articulated by the young people themselves in the presentations they made to all of us.

Give us hope. Give us opportunity. Give us a chance, and we will say no to crime and yes to our communities. That is the message we got from young people. Did we see that kind of hope and opportunity from this government? You know, in the very same friendship centre where these ideas came forward the government cut eight community workers with the cuts at the Indian-Metis friendship centres. You see, they do not get it. They do not get it. They do not understand that when the Tories cut programs they are breeding crime in our communities. The Tories are the cause of this increased crime in our communities, and hope and opportunity are part of the solution.

This is a government that breeds crime. It does not provide opportunity for our young people. Many of us have been volunteers in the Boys & Girls Clubs and other organizations. I was the first president of the Boys & Girls Club 20 years ago or maybe even longer—I am dating myself. You have to provide opportunities. You have to provide those chances for kids to hang out in a more positive environment rather than the cuts and despair that we see from members opposite.

Oh, yes, they have a few lines sprinkled in the Speech from the Throne, but if I saw the proposals made by young people, they were much more articulate, much bolder than the members opposite. If that was in the Speech from the Throne, I would have been standing up on Monday and doing the hallelujah chorus for that part of the Speech from the Throne. There is nothing here to provide hope and opportunity for our young people in our inner cities and other areas of Manitoba, and I think it is a disgrace in terms of the kind of positive alternatives that we have put forward.

Steal our ideas. Xerox them. Coin them for yourselves just like in the Healthy Child program. We do not mind. We put them forward in an early point so that you would steal them, so that you would take them, because we do not want to wait till the election campaign on these ideas. We want young people to have hope and opportunity now, and that is what disappoints us with the members opposite.

Madam Speaker, the young people at those forums and young people that we have listened to across this province and at The Maples Collegiate just recently, and everywhere we go, talk about their schools. Everybody knows that the family is the best and first place to deal with giving kids hope and opportunity, but every young person also knows that some kids do not get that support at home. They also know that that may be the first line of opportunity to deal with our kids, whether it is in their churches or in their schools.

Young people again at the friendship centre this year were saying that school cutbacks, cutbacks in teachers and special ed supports and program supports and physical education, like cutting back on the hours that schools are open and cutting back on the recreational opportunities and putting pressure on extracurricular

activity and just treating the teachers with disrespect—that, in turn, will provide an unhealthy environment for kids in their schools to have safe schools.

There are many ideas from young people. They are not very complicated in terms of their proposals. It makes a lot of sense, some of the old-fashioned logic that used to take place in this province, and that is why it is part of our youth crime proposal. We suggested literacy programs. The member for Fort Garry (Mrs. Vodrey) had great ideas on literacy and school dropouts and the connection with school dropouts and crime, and we believed she had good recommendations, recommendation 9 and recommendation 10 of the Literacy Task Force that was made to the Premier (Mr. Filmon) in 1989—just another one of these task forces—and that should be implemented immediately. An NDP alternative would be to implement the recommendations of the Literacy Task Force immediately, and it should have been announced in the Speech from the Throne here this week.

We believe in working in partnership with our educators. I think the fight that you people have with the existing educational professionals is an absolute disgrace. I think the Premier going to community meetings and saying that teachers are overpaid by 20 percent and underworked is an absolute disgrace. I think that he should be treating teachers that work in our education system with respect, with professional respect. I cannot understand the kind of disrespect that comes from the Premier's lips and then flows through with many other members across the way. I think that is an absolute disgrace in terms of the people that are teaching our children on a daily basis. I cannot believe the Premier is taking this kind of low-road approach to our educational people.

Madam Speaker, the kids know too that we have to connect the education system with the future economy.

Point of Order

Hon. Gary Filmon (Premier): Madam Speaker, on a point of order, I have never said that the teachers of Manitoba are overpaid by 20 percent, and I would ask the Leader of the Opposition to withdraw that remark. I have never said that.

Madam Speaker: I will take the point of order under advisement, so I can review the Hansard transcript.

Mr. Doer: Madam Speaker, on a point of order, then. You could rule the point of order out of order because it is a dispute over the facts.

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

Mr. Filmon: Madam Speaker, if a member of the Legislature rises to indicate that a matter that has been said by a member opposite is untrue, the member is to be taken at his word.

Mr. Doer: On the same point of order, Madam Speaker, I do not take the Premier's word when he said he could save the Jets for \$10 million. I do not take the Premier's word when he said he could save the Manitoba Telephone System. I do not take the Premier's word when he says he is not going to cut back on children. I do not take the Premier at his word on anything because I have learned differently.

Madam Speaker: As I indicated previously, I will take the point of order raised by the honourable First Minister under advisement and will report back to the House.

* * *

Mr. Doer: Madam Speaker, I will obtain the letter from a parent who was at the forum and it definitely said that I believe the teachers are overpaid. We will get a copy of that and we will bring it forward. But certainly we can judge the Premier by his Bill 72 and other matters that he has brought forward. We know from where he comes and the teachers know from where he comes, and he can try to reverse that, too. He could try to do a U-turn on that reputation, but, you know, how many U-turns can a Premier do in the next year and be credible?

The school kids know that you cannot have a future economic strategy by having a curriculum developed that is haphazard and ad hoc. They asked the question to us in schoolrooms we go to, how can you be cutting industrial arts if you are going to have an apprenticeship and training program for the 82 percent of us who are not going to university? I do not know

whether the Minister of Education and Training (Mrs. McIntosh) has figured this out. Many other decisions that are being made by the Department of Education have to be made in partnership with the teachers and other educators. We would have an alternative way of dealing with curriculum changes to work with teachers to provide the curriculums of the future, rather than against teachers as the member opposite.

* (1600)

Madam Speaker, we would respect Canadian history. I mean the Americans teach American history every year. This Premier obviously does not respect Canadian history, and every year we have to fight rear-guard action to keep Canadian history as part of the basic and mandatory courses in senior high school. We also believe that you have to invest in our children's future. How can you have a system where you have the Minister of Finance bragging about how good the economy is in the morning and getting all these extra revenues in the morning, and in the afternoon cut public education? Forty-three million dollars has been cut out of public education. That is an absolute disgrace. Our alternative is to invest in our children, the growth of the economy, in our education funding. We believe the kids need a support.

You know you cannot have an education system that is going to allow our children to compete with other children in the so-called global economy when our kids have textbooks that are now eight and nine years out of date. The kids are taking courses backwards because they do not have the right textbooks in terms of sequence of events, and this government is starving the public education system and creating chaos and conflict when they should be creating partnership and a co-operative approach.

I mentioned training and we have proposed that training fit in with the future economy. We have talked about apprenticeship programs of the future. We have talked about enhancing apprenticeship and training, not cutting it back, and we also believe that we should work together on our economic future. We have proposed an economic co-operative council that would work together on vital economic issues. Repap should be debated and discussed by everybody in this Chamber

to take a future approach of who is going to buy the Repap corporation. We have had five different deals from this government, and we still have insecurity in terms of the people in The Pas and surrounding communities.

Sugar beets, Madam Speaker, sugar beets. We have the growers. We have the workers. Why are we not working together on this issue? Why are we not working together, all members of this Legislature, an all-party committee? Bristol, the workers of Bristol are worried about who is going to buy them and what it will mean for their employment. Why are we not working together before something happens that could be negative? Why do we not work together in a co-operative way? Why does the Deputy Premier (Mr. Downey) only call us together when we are dealing with the Air Command headquarters before a provincial election? Why are we not doing this after provincial elections? Why are we not doing it on a daily basis. I mean, I did not agree with what the federal Liberals did on the Air Command, but I think we should be working together on a daily basis on economic co-operation.

Where is the GRIP money going to go, Madam Speaker? We have proposed, the member for Swan River (Ms. Wowchuk) has proposed that we go into research and development in the agricultural sector. I think that GRIP surplus fund going to research and development in terms of agriculture is a good idea. Why is Saskatchewan spending six times more on agricultural research than Manitoba? Why are all the jobs in the biotechnical area going to Saskatoon, or a lot of the jobs going to Saskatoon? Why are we not attracting those jobs. Why are we not investing in research in agriculture? Why are we not using the success of past researches that developed crops like canola and other crops that are very, very positive? Why can we not do that together? We have farmers on our side, you have a few on your side, we all care about the agricultural value-added economy. Why can we not work together on agricultural research and development and embrace the idea from the member for Swan River?

Why can we not look at working together on immigration? Why do we not say collectively that the head tax is wrong? It is wrong for the future of Manitoba, and members of the Liberal Party agree with that. I know they agree with it.

An Honourable Member: They do not call it a head tax.

Mr. Doer: I know they do not. Do you know why they do not call it a head tax, Madam Speaker? Because the head tax only applied to Chinese immigrants. Well, a tax is a tax is a tax; a head is a head is a head; a head tax is a head tax is a head tax. It is racist, and it is wrong, and we should all join together and oppose it. [interjection] I would leave it alone. Why are we not working together in that area? I wrote the Premier on that issue.

Why are we not looking to the whole Sustainable Development Act and look at very crucial industries. Let us look at hogs, let us look at Interlake. Is there a plan in Interlake to look at tourism and fishing and hog production? Are we going to have the Hatfields and the McCoys fighting in every little regional municipal section of the province? Is there a long-term plan? People are worried about tourism in that area. The Premier (Mr. Filmon) who has a summer camp, I think two summer camps around there--

An Honourable Member: A third one coming.

Mr. Doer: Well, two, one or two, and it is a beautiful community. Gimli is a beautiful part of our province, and that whole area is gorgeous.

But, Madam Speaker, there is no plan on hog production and tying it in in a sustainable way with other industries. We do not want liquid manure in Willow Creek. We do not want liquid manure in the Icelandic River. We do not want it in Washow Bay. We do not want it in Lake Winnipeg.

We have to have a plan. This Premier (Mr. Filmon) and this government has no idea of what all this accumulation of hog production is going to do for some of our vital areas, and that is why we should be working together. Instead of us asking a question about sustainability, what do we get from the members opposite? Are you for or against hogs, are you for or against 10,000 jobs? Are you for it or against it?

Well, Madam Speaker, I am not for polluting Lake Winnipeg any more than it is already polluted. And I am not for ruining the tourism industry for the sake of something else. I would like to know that ahead of

time rather than after the fact when it is too late. That is why we should have this economic committee that can work together on behalf of all Manitobans. That is why we are proposing the joint committee.

The economy has had some improvements. And I understand the dollar just went down a little bit more yesterday and today. And you know what? When we listen to business people in the manufacturing sector, they tell us that is good for their business. I remember when we were in government the dollar was at 88 cents and the interest rates were about five times greater than they are today. Of course, we had a federal Conservative government who had John Crow as head of the Bank of Canada.

You remember the members opposite that supported Kim Campbell and John Crow? They had a high dollar, high interest rate, low inflation policy that killed jobs here in Manitoba, and I am glad to say that Paul Martin Jr. did one good thing. He fired John Crow and interest rates--[interjection] That is a good thing. That has had positive results in our economy.

Many of us have been saying for 15 years or 10 years that we should have a low dollar, low interest rate national economic policy. We have been saying that and, you know, it has been the Progressive Conservative ideology to strangle inflation nationally into the ground that gave us those high interest rates, a high dollar and a lot less jobs, so we are pleased that the national economy has had one good change with the firing of John Crow and less of a slavish approach to inflation in terms of the national economy.

I hope that we can work together because, if the dollar stays low, our exports will continue to do better than they would if the dollar was higher. I think members all know that. But I have also talked to business people that tell me and tell us that the 80 cent dollar could kill their business. Most business people tell us that the 73 cent dollar has been the big advantage. Free trade has not meant a bit of difference at all, because they always exported to the United States, and when they did it with an 88 cent dollar they had different realities.

Madam Speaker, we have to work together. When I talk about how good the economy is in some sectors,

we have to worry about other sectors. There are too many jobs and head offices leaving this province; Canadian Pacific and the Weston Shops; the CN situation going to Edmonton; Richardsons going to Toronto. There are big decisions being made in this province that are affecting long-term industries, and we are totally disappointed that this government is doing less than it should in terms of those industries.

We have also suggested as a positive alternative plant closure legislation. In the United States they have the eminent domain legislation. We do not believe that companies should be able to leave our communities and leave our workers and leave our growers and just leave our province without leaving something back for the community and for the workers. We reject the approach that allows Labatt or Rogers Sugar to just bulldoze down our plants and our jobs and our community. The NDP would balance off the corporate concerns with the community concerns.

Well, the member from Great-West Life does not care about it, but we will bring in plant closure legislation.

* (1610)

Point of Order

Hon. Vic Toews (Minister of Justice and Attorney General): On a point of order, Madam Speaker, what I was, in fact, saying is that I do care about it, but I certainly did not want to see the types of policies that in the 1970s his government drove business out of this province and business that we have been trying to get back ever since.

Madam Speaker: Order, please. The honourable Minister of Labour does not have a point of order. [interjection] The honourable Minister of Labour did not have a point of order. It is a dispute over the facts.

* * *

Mr. Doer: Madam Speaker, even in the United States, many states have eminent domain legislation. You know, it may be a complicated principle for our Minister of Industry, Trade and Tourism (Mr. Downey), but it is possible for governments to protect workers in

communities by not confiscating the assets of a company but by having the legal right to purchase those assets of profitable corporations so workers and communities can keep the jobs. We do not find that a difficult concept at all. I do not agree with a scorched-earth policy that allows companies to scorch the jobs in Manitoba without the public having any rights at all and that is why we have a different vision than members opposite. They do not give a damn in terms of workers whether they are Labatt's, Molson's, CP, CN, Rogers Sugar, et cetera.

In conclusion, this government has no heart. This government is being controlled by the narrowest, and narrowest of special interest groups, in the province of Manitoba. It is being controlled by about 50 or 60 brokers in the province of Manitoba. They talk about special interest groups. They are absolutely subservient to the special interest groups, one special interest group in this province, Madam Speaker, a Tory group of brokers, and we believe the people of this province want a change. They want to compete on quality of living, quality of health care, quality of education, quality of community, quality of co-operation, quality of life, rather than having this never-ending race to the bottom with their Darwinian members opposite. There is another path to take. There is another road for Manitobans. It is a positive road; it respects people; it respects your neighbours. It does not try to develop fights between people; it tries to bring people together. That is the NDP option. We need to approach the next century treating people with decency and integrity, not treating them with meanness and heartlessness that we see from the member for Tuxedo (Mr. Filmon) and his right-hand person in the deputy premiership of this province.

Therefore, I move, seconded by the member for Wolseley (Ms. Friesen),

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

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

(a) implementing plans for the regionalization of health care without heeding the demands of Manitoba communities to have elections to the new regional

boards and to receive full information on the impacts of the new structure on health services; and

(b) failing to respond to Manitobans' concerns over the safeguarding of standards in personal care homes; and

(c) failing to implement the key recommendations of its own report on the health of Manitoba children; and

(d) failing to adequately fund an education system that will meet the needs of our future citizens and workforce; and

(e) failing to implement the recommendations of the AJI, while cutting funding to friendship centres and to the ACCESS and BUNTEP programs; and

(f) failing to provide an effective, co-ordinated response to plant closings and threats of plant closings in key Manitoba industries; and

(g) failing to implement an effective strategy to address the growing problem of criminal gang activity, by offering hope and opportunities for youth who are being lured into gangs, accompanied by an effective justice system response to gang crime; and

(h) failing to implement effective Workplace Safety measures; and

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

Motion presented.

Hon. Glen Cummings (Minister of Natural Resources): Well, Madam Speaker, thank goodness we got through that hour and a half.

An Honourable Member: An hour and five minutes.

Mr. Cummings: Well, it seemed like an hour and a half. It just seemed like an hour and a half.

Madam Speaker, when I rise to speak to the throne speech, I always remind myself rather humbly of the responsibility that we have when we come to this Chamber. I suppose, given the rancour of the debate

that we have occasionally engaged in over the last day or two and previously at the end of the last House, the last session, that I feel somewhat compelled to repeat myself again, and that is to remind myself and, I hope, point to responsibility that we all have. That is, to be elected to represent our constituents in this Chamber is both an honour and a privilege. Sometimes we forget the difference between the two because, in fact, it is a privilege to serve our constituents and we should indeed them honourably.

Well, we have a responsibility, and I think clearly spoken from time to time by the opposition about putting contrary views on the table. I am only going to take a couple of minutes, but I think that we should remind ourselves that in the end the public will judge all of us collectively, not individually, as much as some of the members across the way might want to believe. They will judge us collectively as to whether or not this Chamber is serving the public for the purposes for which they elected us.

I would think that the members across the way—and there are some members across the way whom I am very proud to be associated with in terms of representing their constituents in this Chamber. They know who they are and—

An Honourable Member: Come on, name them.

Mr. Cummings: We will keep it a mystery, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker, one of the concerns that we have to address when we stand in this Chamber and when we debate the issues that we are responsible for providing leadership is whether or not the people of this province are being well served, whether or not the future generations of this province are being well served, and, in fact, whether or not we are planning and putting forward legislation and monetary policies that will support the future generations in the way that we have been supported and the lifestyle in which this province has grown up. I would remind all of us that we will be judged in the end by the success of our constituents, not just by the success of our rhetoric in this House.

I take considerable pride—and throne speeches are always criticized for whether or not there are enough

specifics in the throne speech—but I take considerable pride that, when you put this throne speech alongside the others that this government has presented over the years, there is a continuity and a direction and a thrust that in the long run will enforce what we believe are the positive values and opportunities that are available to the constituents which we represent, not just the ones in the ridings represented on this side of the House, but for all Manitobans and the value that they place on the province of Manitoba, the place that they call home and the place that we should all be proud of in terms of representing and putting forward our best thoughts as to how to get the job done.

(Mr. Ben Sveinson, Acting Speaker, in the Chair)

I know there are a couple of members across the way who will want to wait with bated breath to hear me make some comments about elk ranching and where there is—as a couple of them have already joked, whether or not we have some elk hidden on the back 40. Mr. Acting Speaker, I will, in fact, talk about that in a moment, but I want to address the fundamentals of what I believe my colleagues and I on this side have a responsibility to do. I take some exception to the Leader of the Opposition (Mr. Doer) and the comments that he made about there is another way. He was implying that the way he would point was superior to the direction that this government has been leading and has been moving this province.

* (1620)

The fact is that you need an opportunity to have pride in your community, part of that being your family, your heritage. A lot of that comes from your ability to make a living, to be part of the community that you are in and to provide opportunities for your family and for your colleagues in the community and make sure that they all have the opportunities for which this province is so well known. I think that we have to go right back to the basic responsibilities, and that is that the value of government is very often diminished if the government makes decisions, very often monetary ones, that build up a debt load that can be easily explained at the time but never easily dealt with when the debt finally comes due.

I believe that there is nothing more fundamental than the situation that I have apprised my constituents of

from time to time, and that was the realization that shortly after we became responsible for the governance of this province in 1988, realized that through a series of events whereby the previous administration had borrowed money, and I will not comment on the wisdom of what they were doing but, nevertheless, the money that they borrowed, because it was borrowed in foreign currency and had not been hedged against more stable currencies, this government, this province, the taxpayers of this province were faced with paying roughly what was the equivalent of 28 percent to get out of that debt. Now, that is a figure that no private or public organization nor any private individual can suffer through.

In fact, that is the type of burden that if we do not make good collective decisions in this Chamber that can haunt us and haunt those who would follow and haunt our communities as they try to get out from under that debt load. You only need to look at the situation that the federal government is wrestling with, and you can probably draw similar examples. I think there are myriad examples of where those past excesses are now coming back to haunt us, partly because of the federal responsibility as well.

The fact is that as we face the devolution of \$200-million worth of health and post-secondary education transfers as a direct result of the federal government attempting to get its house in order—and I, in fact, hope they do get their house in order, but it is creating some debt reaction in terms of hardship that individuals across this country and ultimately governments which we are part of are going to have to deal with those decisions that were made 20 years ago that are now still haunting us as we try to make sure that we keep our economy, keep our opportunities for our business people and our individual entrepreneurs, if you will, ultimately our labour force, all of the people who are dependent on an income that is directly affected by our ability to trade in the international market. Those people all have to react and be able to be in a position to provide the jobs and opportunity that are so necessary to a successful situation in our communities.

Mr. Acting Speaker, coming from a rural area of this province, there is nothing that has had a greater impact and will continue to have a greater impact than the changes that the federal government and the

agricultural community as a whole have been either alternately anticipating or dreading, and that is the Crow rate changes. We have argued many times in this House that there are significant spin-off effects, but there is tremendous adjustment going on at the same time.

The size and the nature of the agricultural operations in this province are not so much being influenced by the day-to-day decisions of this government or the federal government as much as they are being influenced by the changes that are happening internationally and access for international markets that are so impacted by the cost of freight out of this particular part of the continent.

We can point to a number of areas within this province where I believe, as were referenced in the throne speech, we have sought out, and we still have an extreme number of opportunities in front of us as opposed to simply looking at this as a problem that will continue to haunt those in the rural areas of this province and ultimately in the city of Winnipeg for many years to come.

Frankly, we have seen tremendous development of value-added industries in the rural areas, and in order to attract those types of businesses into this part of the continent you have to have a community, ultimately the provincial responsibility for an environment whereby those who are prepared to invest and want to put their hard earned cash to work can feel there will be some comfort and some continuity in what will happen as their business investment begins to mature.

That is the one singular most important aspect that I believe that we as government and as outlined again in the throne speech have been able to deliver on behalf of the people in this province, and that is some continuity, some predictability to the tax situation that businesses will find when they come here, some predictability to the tremendous assets in the workforce, the well-trained, highly competent and efficient workforce that Manitoba has a significant reputation for.

Everyone in this province can take some credit for the fact that this is one area where companies do look at the capabilities of our workforce, and they want to

work with them and harness that energy for the benefit of everyone involved.

So government has a significant, behind-the-scenes responsibility in creating the environment that will allow those businesses to feel that this is a good place to bring their investment dollars and ultimately the investment dollars that are right in this province. There are millions and millions of dollars that individuals in this province are prepared to invest in opportunity if those opportunities, in fact, are pointed out to them or become apparent as they look through opportunities that they want to pursue and follow.

Quite simply, one small part of that and one area that I am looking forward to continued responsibility for is the natural resources of this province. I certainly do not come to this portfolio professing any expertise, but there have been a few things that have been said, and said on the record, that I believe need to be corrected and should be addressed up front because frankly there is a group of Natural Resources officers in this province who have a very good reputation, who are very competent and well known for their capabilities, who by inference in some case in direct accusation have been offended at the thought that they for some reason have not been responsible and not done an appropriate job of following through on their responsibilities of enforcement and protection of the natural resources of this province.

I can tell you in my short period in this area and my experience in fire association with the Natural Resources officers, and I want to put it on the record clearly, that there has been no evidence come to my knowledge. Certainly nothing has lowered my confidence in the work that these officers have done and will continue to do, and I will challenge anyone to prove otherwise.

That leads directly into the question of whether or not in this House, and in other forums, each of us have a responsibility to make sure that if we criticize or if we have a better idea, we put it forward in a manner that is responsible and supportive of getting the job done, if you will.

The fact is that when we look at elk ranching and some of the questions and some of the comments that

have been raised, I want to share a situation with the House which might I hope bring you a chuckle but at the same time points out some of the difficulties that occur when, if not fear and innuendo, certainly coffee-shop talk that has gone wild can cause people an awful lot of grief. I do not think there is anyone in this Chamber on either side that would disagree with the fact that coffee-shop talk that is malicious, unbridled and perhaps intended to be offensive, if not responded to, can do a great deal of harm to individuals and to some very good people, whether they are in public service or otherwise.

* (1630)

There was a situation north of the Riding Mountain in the Parkland Region where coffee-shop conversation had it for sure that this family was harbouring elk, and that they were fleecing the elk, they were poaching them out of the mountain, all sorts of things. They were, in fact, staked out by Natural Resources. They were, in fact, under observation for quite some time. Finally the officers decided, well, we had better go in and do an examination of this site. The person in question was somewhat flabbergasted when two uniformed NR officers showed up at his door. They asked if they could look in his barns and his corrals. He said, well, by all means, but why? Well, they said, we have reason to believe that you may have some elk here.

They went and checked out his facilities, and they were about to leave. He said, not so fast, boys. I want you to check every shed, every granary, every bush on this farm, and I want you to make darn good and sure there is not any elk here, because he said—

An Honourable Member: He said darn?

Mr. Cummings: Well, pardon me for my language, but I think he used stronger language, to tell you the truth, but there is a simple example of an individual who was maligned. Too often we come very close in this Chamber of maligning other people without necessarily knowing fully what the situation is, and I am certainly going to advise myself, and I think we all should take the care, particularly in this debate and some others, that we do not inadvertently damage the reputation of some honourable citizens out there.

No one would deny that this is a touchy and explosive and controversial issue, but it needs to be dealt with on the basis of facts, at least to be dealt with with some sensitivity when one of the most critical elements, and I am somewhat critical of the opposition when they talk about our lack of sensitivity towards the aboriginal community. The fact is that one of the most critical elements of the future of elk ranching in this province is likely going to be co-operation and working with the aboriginal community, which the Minister of Agriculture, myself and this government as a whole have stated and will continue to state that we want to work with them and make sure that they have the equal opportunity and they are given reasonable opportunity to be part of that industry.

It is a natural for many of them, and I think that we want to make that clearly known, that we want to extend an opportunity to work with them in this area but, again, whether it is in this Chamber or other places, the rumour mill is running rampant. There are stories running amok out there, and most of them are based on what appears to be fears or innuendo and, unfortunately, many of our aboriginal communities may well get caught up in the middle of this, and I think we need to clearly state right now and up front in this debate that we should all with some restraint deal with those issues when they are brought forward, because these communities have certainly indicated to me and to my colleagues that they want to be in this business and they want to be in a way that is profitable, in a way that is compatible with their way of life, certainly compatible in many respects with their location, if nothing else, in this province, the type of land and resources they have available to them.

I said earlier that there are members across the way for whom I have some respect for the positions that they put forward from time to time in this House, and I would clearly want to indicate that the member for Rupertsland (Mr. Robinson) has always maintained an honourable position on behalf of the communities that he represents, and I am sure that when we go forward and look at the other elements within the throne speech, when we look at the fact that the Northern Flood Agreement is now just about complete, that we are on the verge of completing the Northern Flood, I take considerable umbrage at criticism across the way about whether or not this government has made a

conscientious effort to right a wrong that was done 30 years ago, 40 years ago, a lot longer than that if you want to trace the whole history, but the fact is, it is this administration that has brought conclusion to negotiations that have gone on far too long.

I do not think anybody on this side needs to apologize for the fact that this has been a difficult period of time for all at the table, but that progress has been made and good will has been demonstrated all the way around. It behooves this House, all members of this House, to remember what caused the Northern Flood and how we benefit from it and remember that this could have been settled years ago, but nobody wanted to acknowledge the responsibility.

I get righteously indignant when the members across the way talk about the heart and soul of this government and whether or not people care on this side of the House, and all you need to do is look at that one area alone and you will know that there are more caring individuals on this side than you are likely to find anywhere else in one spot in this province.

Mr. Acting Speaker, the fact is that there are a number of issues that are going to come up through Natural Resources because of the responsibility. Where there is a large aboriginal component, there are rights, historic and long-term rights, that come into conflict from time to time with the society that we run today, where we regulate, supervise, compensate and overcompensate, arrest and do all sorts of things.

What will be the most important aspect of continuing success in the area of natural resources, and the management of them for the benefit of all of our communities, will be working co-operatively. That is what I think is so important that we put on the record, that we have and we will continue to work co-operatively with all nature of groups who want to help and assist in the management of natural resources in this province, and that includes the aboriginal communities.

There is a tremendous value out there that I am now beginning to appreciate even more, I suppose, than I did when I looked at it from the point of view of simply the environment issues. There are far more complex issues

out there, as well, that need to be dealt with in the area of our natural resources.

There is a philosophical argument that is probably developing, not only in this House, but in other places in the province about the difference between whether or not there is a value to natural resources, or whether they are there to be kept as they are today, and whether or not there is a concept of putting the resources to work on behalf of those who need the support, who need the opportunity.

I have said many times before, there is no getting away from the fact that the province of Manitoba depends heavily upon its natural resources. That includes its agricultural resources. It also includes the water, the timber, and all of the other associated assets that we have in terms of this province, an enormous part of which is not what we would refer to as populated.

When the members across the way look at the concept of sustainable development, and talk about whether or not this government believes in planning and supporting the concept of sustainable development, I find it absolutely intriguing that when the concept of sustainable development was first raised in this province, there were a lot of people, including some across the way, who could not bring themselves to say the words. They could not bring themselves to say the words or use the term "sustainable development."

So I guess I have to congratulate the official opposition. I believe they now have come to the realization that sustainable development is real, that the people of this province want long-term opportunity that will be supported by sustainable development.

When we talk about the Interlake as a specific area where there is a concern, where there are issues that have been raised about conflict between intensive agricultural development, tourist development, the quality of life, some people have raised that issue and have raised it very strongly.

What it comes down to is we need continuing and ongoing local input into those decisions. I would have to criticize the Leader of the Opposition (Mr. Doer) when he talks about bringing in more protection,

bringing in a stronger plan into these areas. The government needs to and has a responsibility to be there, to work with the communities and provide the standards. They also need to have input from the communities at the local level. That is the very essence of sustainable development, so that those who want to be heard have an opportunity to be heard clearly, have an opportunity to have input that is meaningful in planning how their community should develop. The fact is that is not simply a top-down process. That is a community-built process, and one that my colleague, the Minister of Rural Development (Mr. Derkach), has nurtured enormously.

When you look at the fact that Manitoba has more local community round tables, as an example, and having input into how they want their communities to unfold—and I have been criticized for saying this—the fact is, Manitoba has bragging rights in that type of process. What it means is very simply that the people who are advising the community leaders are people who might not normally have been at the table.

How often do you see a committee of council or a local community development group who also has, perhaps, a representative of the students? Perhaps a local wildlife enthusiast. Those types of people historically did not get to the table to have their input in how they wanted their community to develop. They should be heard and they should have the opportunity. With the process that I believe and I think this government has demonstrated that it supports, they will continue to have that opportunity.

* (1640)

We have an excellent working relationship with the municipalities, one that we consciously nurture and value, and the fact is that the municipalities are taking the next step into what they believe is sustainable development for their communities. They are prepared to make sure that the input within their communities is fair and that it reflects what is possible, at the same time, creating some opportunities within their community.

I want to make a passing comment about the protection that we are prepared to extend to additional areas in this province. We have come a long way under the direction of my predecessor in bringing forward a

parcs plan, bringing forward the guidelines and have, I think, reacted very strongly to the standards and the goal posts that were put forward by the World Wildlife Fund. The fact is that there is again another example as we move forward into the next stage of protection of lowlands, for example, that we need to have the input of the people in the community that will be affected by this, not to give them a sales job, but to give them some real opportunity to design and influence what should be set aside as protected lands.

I find it quite critical that there be a better understanding by all of us and by the general public as to the standards that are to be met in our various parks regions. Because very often on the federal level, and the critics of myself and others in this government very often are willing to point out that the national federal parks standards are so exclusive that all uses are restricted, as an example, in certain parks.

Riding Mountain National Park, not far from my home, close to the member for Dauphin (Mr. Struthers), as well, we cannot go in there and cut very many flowers, can we? We cannot go in there and haul out any burnt timber. Everybody says the generation today thinks there was no logging ever to occur in Riding Mountain National Park. You sure cannot go in there and log now, but big chunks of that park was logged over. Parts of my barn came out of Riding Mountain National Park.

I mean what we need is a better understanding in the community of how we evolved into the park systems that we have today. That understanding is part of the thinking that has to go into the development of the parks protection systems that we have in this province and other parts of the country for that matter, not based on a nonintervention responsibility in every case, but reflect in the reality of what is out there. That is something that I believe that this government and my predecessor were unfairly abused over when it comes to terms of multiple uses in parks. I expect I am going to get a lot of input from various users of the parks over the next few weeks, but something that astounds me, when I look at the history of how we got to where we are with some of our parks, in fact some of the cottaging that has occurred.

Manitoba is the capital of cottaging, I think. We have all of the right areas and we have great enthusiasm on

the part of our population and other surrounding areas. I know people who fly in here from B.C. to spend the summer in Manitoba's parks and cottage country, and the fact is that some of those first cottagers were opened up as a result of logging going into the area and the roads were built. I mean that is the kind of history that is behind a number of the areas that are now being set aside and protected.

I would encourage the critics across the way and others to make sure that when we look at the protected areas existing, the ones proposed and future opportunities, that we work using the opportunity for consultation and input to reflect not only the needs for protection but also the reality of the areas in which we are working.

I want to give my predecessors enormous credit for the amount of work that has gone into the consultation process to get us where we are in reacting to the World Wildlife standards that we are now very close to increasing, I believe, the reflection of World Wildlife Fund and the standards that they are working to put in place across the country, that we are now very much in a position to be able to respond and have responded very favourably to the things that they have put forward, because this province was the first province, I believe, in this country to acknowledge and step up to the plate and say that they were prepared to meet the standards and the numbers of areas set aside for future generations.

Mr. Acting Speaker, when I said earlier that I am not sure that the members of the opposition could even utter the word "sustainable development" a few years ago, I am equally sure that when we look at the opportunities for development in rural Manitoba in agriculture that we are going to have ever increasing conflict over uses of land, water, soil and other resources, but particularly land and water, as we have all been to what I consider world-class opportunity in Manitoba to compete and sell products at an increased value, products that because of the cleanliness of our waters and our soils we have the primary and the prime product no matter where we go in the world.

In fact, it is old news, I know, but there were investors from around the world who considered that if

they could be assured they could get the quantity of pork, for example, from this part of the world that they would have the cleanest and the best quality of product from a pollution and from a high food standard that they could get anywhere in the world. That was their reason for looking in this part of the continent, right here in Manitoba. To want to invest, and those opportunities were there, they are still there, and they are going to increase.

The response to that has to be a cross-sectoral approach to making sure that the resources are there for future generations, at the same time providing that opportunity that I just talked about. The fact is that when you look at the water resources in this province that we are downstream from just about everybody else, but we also have two, well, maybe three of the best aquifers that are available—three, maybe four, I should say—of the best aquifers that are available to support agriculture, to support industry and to support all of the other uses for which high-quality water is in great demand. I am not sure if the Leader of the Opposition (Mr. Doer) was thinking about water and malt when we talked about water quality, but, in fact, that is the kind of thing that our very high-quality water will always be held in great demand for.

One of the aspects of development in rural Manitoba, and I am speaking primarily of areas such as my own and other very rural areas, is that we have to make sure that we have actually looked at not only the quantity and the quality of the product that is available to us but whether or not it is something that can adequately be reflected in the jobs and the opportunities within the local community.

If a half a dozen years ago someone from Manitoba had been challenged about future opportunity in the wood industry or wood products industry, I am sure Manitoba was not considered to be a threat to B.C. forests or maybe Alberta forests for that matter, but the fact is that we now have a burgeoning industry, and it goes back to the OSB plant at Louisiana, it goes back to the basic operations that have been in Swan River, and it goes right back to Repap and the expansion and the opportunities that have flowed from that operation.

* (1650)

I want to address that directly, because the Leader of the Opposition (Mr. Doer) talked about let us get together and talk about the future of Repap. The fact is, it is known to be a good wood base, a good source. It is known to be an efficient plant. It is known to have a good workforce. It is known to be putting out a product that is in demand. It is a valuable plant and commodity, and it will do very well.

The company that presently owns it has said that there is an opportunity there for others who want to become involved in that business, which it is not their business. In fact, it is not their primary interest to be part of that industry. The plant is, and has, over the years, been one of the more profitable assets of Repap. I think the members across the way for political purposes from time to time have overlooked the quality of a very important asset in this province. They have overlooked the opportunity that is there, not just down where the plant is located, but down in areas right down into the Swan River Valley, into other parts of the province where there is a need for jobs and opportunity.

There is nothing wrong with the industry working within the communities to harvest what is an available resource for this plant and for the OSB plant and for others. In fact, one of the things that has caused more activity in my constituency office than almost anything else over the last six months is people searching out opportunity to be involved in the supply of raw product to the OSB plant in Swan River, to Louisiana Pacific. We happen, on the fringes of my constituency, to have some unharvested areas that, in fact, are ready to be harvested. They will be old, and they will be not useful to anybody in another 10 years. They are, in fact, an asset that a few years ago was only dealt with by a bulldozer. People saw this as a problem.

The poplar growing on Crown lands that was attempting to be pastured, a lot of people wanted to get rid of it. Today they see that as a whole different light. It is putting money in the pockets of people who live in Silver Ridge, live in Bacon Ridge. I would like to remind people about Kinostota and some of the less well-known names in my constituency. But those people now have opportunity that they never dreamed of, opportunity to earn a living to a standard that equals almost anyone else in the community.

It used to be that the only well-paid people in those communities might have been the police officer or the schoolteacher, and everybody else made their living out of what was sometimes not-so-productive land. There were some successful ranchers, but there were not a lot of other opportunities. Now those opportunities are being expanded. Not only is there opportunity to actually manage and deal with the resource, but now they have the opportunity to put in place service opportunities for the trucks that are operating in their area, put in place the sales for gas, the opportunity to employ people.

I have got a constituent who is working five, sometimes six, seven days a week in this business, who used to spend probably nine months of the year unemployed, did a bit of fishing. I mean, these are the kinds of success stories that have a real meaning when you get out into the rural areas of this province. We forget too often that we have not looked at the opportunity there in terms of managing our resources.

The question too often in this House, and in other forums, is, well, if you are going to harvest it, you are going to destroy it. I have learned, and I defended this many times over the last few years, but when I had the opportunity to tour an area that had been burned over and then looked at an area that had been logged over, I will tell you, if I had a choice, I would a lot sooner that it was logged over because that particular fire was in one of those years that we all can remember when it was extremely dry. It was not a fire that went over the top. It was a fire that went down, cleaned out the bogs and burned the moss out of the cracks in the rocks. You cannot reforest that type of a burn very easily. Yet you know what will cause it to burn the most readily? I think the member for Dauphin (Mr. Struthers) knows. What will cause it to burn most readily is if, in fact, it is not harvested, there becomes a lot of deadfall, you get a lot of old wood in the area, and, in fact, that is when you will have a real fire that you cannot control.

So harvesting of these natural resources, while it has to be done correctly, it is not always to the detriment of the resource. In fact, there are lots of arguments whereby we could show that the management of a resource will improve its longevity and its opportunities for the future.

Mr. Acting Speaker, I think that I would close with one thought. That is that I believe the policies that we have put forward, the long-term financial management, the long-term responsibility of managing our resources for the benefit of the future of our communities is the right one, and I support the Speech from the Throne.

Mr. Dave Chomiak (Kildonan): My job is made simpler by two points in addressing this Speech from the Throne, Mr. Acting Speaker. Firstly, by the very eloquent and accurate comments of my Leader, who preceded me from this side of the House, in analyzing the deficiencies of the throne speech and the deficiencies of the government; and secondly, frankly, in the lack of anything concrete contained within the throne speech document.

I had intended to do a wide-ranging speech, Mr. Acting Speaker, on aspects of the government, but I am going to confine the majority of my remarks towards the people of Holiday Haven, people who have not had the opportunity to be heard and people who have not had the opportunity of having their story told in this Legislature. I think they deserve that. But prior to doing that, I want to make some general comments with respect to the government and with respect to some of the recent goings on in the Legislature.

There is no doubt I believe that a certain amount of respect has been lost in this Chamber, and I am not going to further exasperate the situation by pointing to one side or the other, Mr. Acting Speaker. But it is clear that one of the problems in this Chamber now is a lack of respect amongst all members, and I will return to that in terms of my discussion with Holiday Haven because I think that was one of the problems with respect to the Holiday Haven issue. But just in general and with respect to the government, I think we have two fundamental problems. Firstly, I think, after now going on nine years of government, this government has run out of its natural string, its natural time.

(Madam Speaker in the Chair)

Generally in Canadian politics, governments get two terms. This government is beyond its natural time lines. If there had not been a minority government, we would be going to the polls, we would have gone to the polls last year or this year, Madam Speaker, and I think

the result would have been obvious. This government's string, this government's time has run out, and I think it quite apparent from the actions of the government. It is apparent from the defensive bunker mentality that seems to dominate on that side of the House. I say that with a great deal of regret, but I believe it is true. I believe it is true because the reaction to issues raised by anyone, be it the teachers, be it members of the Legislature, be it the general public is a defensive response and a response of blaming. The response is not one of listening; the response is not one of accepting, contrary.

I listened very carefully to the Minister of Natural Resources' (Mr. Cummings) comments, and I agree with some of his comments, but the response by members opposite to criticism, not just from this side of the House but any criticism, is one of defence and denial. I think that is representative of a government that is tired and a government that has run out of its natural string of governing. I think it is apparent that this is a far different government than was elected in 1988 that was in a minority situation than we are seeing now, a far different government. I think it is recognized by members of the public.

The second is the attitude and the approach to government that has been adopted. Members on that side of the House were elected to govern, not to operate the province like the Premier is a CEO. You know, the style of this government is that the Premier is a CEO, the cabinet ministers are members of the board, and the rest of us in this Chamber are mere diversions. Time limits are what they are in a board room. Let us get this policy through. It does not matter if you break the rules of the Legislature. It does not matter if you have to throw out hundreds of years of parliamentary tradition. Get it through.

* (1700)

I heard comments by various members, by the Minister of Education (Mrs. McIntosh) saying to the Legislature, we are wasting time in the Legislature, by the member for Riel (Mr. Newman), who somehow equated time spent in the Legislature debate with a waste of time. Somehow by virtue of our talking about issues he equated that with money and with time. That is illustrative of an attitude that somehow these people

are CEOs, and they govern and the Premier (Mr. Filmon) runs this province like a CEO. You see that in the decisions. The Premier does not govern the province. The Premier acts like the manager of a large corporation.

What does that mean? That means if jobs have to go, jobs have to go. Like the member for Riel said earlier today, you know, if four jobs go in The Pas, that is progress, and that is a pioneering spirit. There is a sense of, downsizing is fine, bottom line is the only answer. Time limits in the Legislature, they are only mere hindrances—does not happen in the board room. The member for Roblin (Mr. Derkach) says, no one cares. I think that is illustrative of the attitude. No one cares, Madam Speaker.

I have to tell you that by regular door knocking, I was struck by the fact—

Point of Order

Hon. Leonard Derkach (Minister of Rural Development): On a point of order, Madam Speaker, if the member for Kildonan is going to make remarks attributed to members on this side of the House, I would wish that he would make them accurately instead of fabricate them.

Madam Speaker: The honourable Minister of Rural Development does not have a point of order. It is a dispute over the facts.

* * *

Mr. Chomiak: Someone on that side of the House said, no one cares. I am sorry if I attributed it to the Minister of Rural Development. It does not matter in the context of what I am saying, because it is apparent from attitudes that is reflective of.

When I go door knocking now, it is almost astounding that the No. 1 issue people talk to me about—it used to be health care—but it is about the House and MTS still and about the way the government conducted itself and the way the government rammed through legislation despite the fact that they had a majority. That is illustrative, I think, of what the public is thinking. They can poll, Madam Speaker. I know

the government polls regularly. I think you should be very wary of your polling because, if your polling is telling you that what you are doing is being viewed positively by Manitobans, I think it is wrong.

It is wrong as your polling was in 1993 when you called five by-elections, and you were forced in the middle of the by-elections to replace your Minister of Health because Manitobans were totally against your Health policies, Madam Speaker. So I agree. I can tell you from my door knocking, from my contacts that the view of the public towards this government is, your time has run out; your time has run out and it is time for change. You might say, well, some of you have been here a lot longer than I, and that is true as an elected member, but I have been involved in politics for 25 years.

I have watched a lot of governments come, and I have watched a lot of governments go. I watched the Schreyer government go in 1977, and basically they had run out of time. I worked for them. I watched the Blakeney government go because they ran out of time. Their time was up, and the same thing happened with the Weir government and the Devine government.

Madam Speaker, that has happened with this government. You have failed to renew, you have failed to—the natural course of events I think will show that this government's time has run out.

I am actually being relatively objective on this, Madam Speaker, and I sat back and I analyzed it, but it is also confirmed by my door knocking and by my contacts with the public. I will admit to being relatively objective. It is hard in this Chamber.

I had not planned this, Madam Speaker, but I think I owe it to the people of Holiday Haven and to some of the issues that have swirled around that. I think I owe it to them to talk about that issue during the course of my—and I can easily justify it in terms of this throne speech because I had hoped that in the throne speech we would have seen some action towards personal care homes similar to what we saw in 1990 when the government promised to enforce standards.

I want to return to the issue of respect, because when we raised the issue in this Legislature, we did so in

good conscience, after much discussion in our caucus and much soul searching as to how we should deal with this issue, and it was not an easy issue. You can criticize a lot that we have done, but we have not brought issues of that kind of nature, of personal deaths and anguishes to this Chamber. That has not been our style. It is a style in some jurisdictions, but it has been something that we have not followed.

With respect to Holiday Haven, it was a difficult decision, and we determined the best way. We talked about a press conference, but we thought that was not fair to the government. We talked about writing confidentially to the Minister of Health (Mr. Praznik), and that was very close, but we thought that our experience in that was not positive, and we would not get the kind of action—I know the minister responds, but we would not get the kind of action that was necessary in this instance, so we decided to raise it in the Chamber.

Madam Speaker, after we raised it in the Chamber, I was informed that the Premier (Mr. Filmon) went out and said that we were fearmongering, or words to that effect, and that is very, very disconcerting because I think that is part of the problem, because in dismissing our criticism the government caused itself a good deal of difficulty, and, more importantly, the government caused a good deal of additional problems at Holiday Haven and other personal care homes.

Madam Speaker, because of a defensive response and a defensive reaction, this government failed to act in a means and a manner appropriate to deal with the issue, and that is one of the reasons why we have what amounts to a crisis swirling about, about Holiday Haven and about other personal care homes, because the government fails to listen. The government fails to objectively assess the information they receive. Because they are old and tired, they dismiss our criticism, they attack personally, and the result is we are into a human tragedy at Holiday Haven that should not have happened.

Now, Madam Speaker, I am not saying and I have never said the government is responsible for the death that occurred in February at Holiday Haven. I have said publicly that that death could have occurred anywhere, but the fact that that death occurred at a

nursing home that was under a cloud, at a nursing home where you received three letters from the Health critic saying change the management because that place is in crisis makes the issue and makes it very difficult for us to understand why the government did not listen to our pleas.

Madam Speaker, Holiday Haven first came to my attention several years ago. I wrote a letter to the then minister, I believe it was Don Orchard, about a very serious problem. In the summer of 1996, I was approached by someone with concerns about Holiday Haven Nursing Home. The claims were so disturbing that I did not know whether to believe them or not, and I waited until I got confirmation from another individual and then from another individual and then from another individual, and then we realized that we had a major problem, and we had to determine how we could best help these people and how we could best deal with the problem.

So, as I indicated earlier, we raised it in the House, and the Minister of Health indicated he recognized that there was a major problem, the government would move to deal with management, that a report would be forthcoming back by November 20, and the problems would be dealt with. I promised to the minister that I would forward to him a list of many of my concerns.

* (1710)

Now the problem, Madam Speaker, with Holiday Haven was that every time someone complained or raised an issue, they were threatened with a lawsuit or they were intimidated by the management. There were examples of employees going into the manager's office and having the complaint torn up in front of the employee and thrown in the garbage. That was by management. There was a complaint against the very manager of Holiday Haven about patient abuse. That complaint went to the Department of Health, and there was no response. There were complaints from the Public Trustee. There were complaints from other institutions about Holiday Haven in the system, within the health system. As I indicated in my letter, every time you raised the issue of Holiday Haven, people would be concerned. Everyone in the system knew that there were problems at Holiday Haven. The question was, why were those problems not being solved?

Madam Speaker, there was a death at a nursing home in 1992. There was an inquest. There were three recommendations from that inquest. One of those recommendations dealt with staffing problems at personal care homes. Following receipt of that inquest report and following an exposé by one of the news networks, the government announced a departmental committee that would review personal care homes, and promised that matters would be dealt with. In this Chamber, we stated to the Department of Health to immediately move on some of the recommendations that came out of the inquest and some of the obvious recommendations: that staffing was a problem at personal care homes; that security was a problem; that special needs patients were a problem. We were told, do not worry; when this report comes out, we will solve it.

Well, subsequent to that there was a provincial election. Then the report came out and there were 39 recommendations. The government had a press conference and said, oh, we are working on these recommendations, and today in the Legislature, two years later, the Minister of Health (Mr. Praznik) says we are working on the recommendations. That is not acceptable when everyone in the system knows there are major problems with issues of staffing, with issues of special needs patients, not just at Holiday Haven, but at all personal care homes. Most personal care homes are doing an excellent job, but they are barely holding together. I had a long discussion with the Minister of Health about these very issues, and he assured me they were working on the solutions.

So Holiday Haven came up in the fall of last year, and I, true to my discussions and our discussions with the minister, we forwarded to the minister a copy of complaints, Madam Speaker. What surprised me was when I heard the associate deputy minister say that these were sort of pro forma, trivial matters, and when I subsequently hear the Minister of Health say that these issues that we raised were not sufficient to take drastic steps. I want to read in some of that information. I want to read into the record what those concerns were because I think it is necessary that the public record document this.

I wrote to the Minister of Health on November 22 about the former director of nursing of Holiday Haven

citing patient abuse, doctoring of documentation and poor management, this from the former director of nursing of Holiday Haven who quit her position because of the abuses that she saw at Holiday Haven.

I wrote about another nurse who complained about the management of Holiday Haven verbally abusing and threatening a patient and writing to the Department of Health and there being no follow-up. I wrote about a letter from a nurse to the director of nursing at Holiday Haven talking about patient care, poor nutrition, and major nursing problems. I wrote a letter to the minister from another family that was sent to the minister about their mother's treatment at Holiday Haven, for which they are still considering suing, for which the Ombudsman's office has been involved, the College of Physicians and Surgeons have been involved. Does it not sound familiar? The patient had unexplained bruises. The patient had unexplained injuries and broken bones. The patient apparently broke bones even though the patient was bedridden.

I wrote about another family, about a broken nose and arm sustained by a patient. I wrote about another patient who mysteriously sustained a fall, and there was no follow-up. I wrote another letter about the supplying of liquor to a patient. I wrote another letter that went concerning threats made to employees should they complain to anyone about Holiday Haven. I talked about a patient, Madam Speaker, who was transferred from Holiday Haven to another nursing home whose bedsores were so bad that that other nursing home photographed the sores. I wrote that in the letter to the minister. That patient subsequently died, as I understand it, from infection. I wrote that to the minister. Were these trivial complaints?

I personally saw documentation that said there were 112 falls in three months at Holiday Haven and that three-quarters of the residents have lost significant pounds in the last month, significant weight in the past month. I phoned other nursing homes. I am only the opposition critic. I phoned other nursing homes and asked them about these kinds of statistics. The people I talked to were appalled. That was in writing.

I know that the Deer Lodge psychogeriatric program complained to the Department of Health about the

treatment of patients at Holiday Haven. In 1993 or '94 when a family complained, they were told by the Department of Health that the psychogeriatric team from Deer Lodge would be going into Holiday Haven to improve the situation there. The psychogeriatric team that went in there to Holiday Haven to improve the situation wrote letters of complaint to the Department of Health. Was that serious, Madam Speaker?

I wrote about several other patients who were planning to sue. I wrote that the home dental program from the University of Manitoba threatened to withdraw their service from Holiday Haven because of poor dental hygiene practice. I wrote that I am led to believe—like, I do not have access to the Grace Hospital file—that Grace Hospital had numerous matters on file concerning patient treatment at Holiday Haven. I asked the minister to follow-up.

I wrote an additional several letters from patients' families of complaint to Holiday Haven. I forwarded those to the minister. I outlined to the minister that I would provide him the phone numbers of other individuals who had complained to me about treatment at Holiday Haven.

Madam Speaker, do these concerns about a particular nursing home sound trivial? Do they not—and this is where I am somewhat surprised by the words of the Minister of Health (Mr. Praznik) to say that these kind of complaints did not warrant the kind of action that we called for. What action did happen? A report was prepared by the Nursing Home Association, a group of private personal care home operators. They went in there and they did a report. They recommended that management change, and I knew that.

I wrote to the minister saying they have recommended that management change. The new minister wrote back three weeks later saying he would not comment on the management practices, but two weeks after that, after a patient died, he moved to change the management, and I welcome that finally.

* (1720)

The question was, why did it take October, November, December, January, February and a death

for the government to actually move to do something that was self-evident, Madam Speaker, from the very beginning?

Surely someone in the Department of Health would have and should have recognized that these concerns and these complaints were more than just of a trivial nature and were more than just the run-of-the-mill complaints but that these complaints illustrated a very, very serious problem and ought to have been acted upon immediately.

You know, Madam Speaker, subsequent to the matter going before the Legislature in the fall, I received calls from patients who said, is it safe to have our family at Holiday Haven? I said, frankly, if it were my parents I would not want them to be at Holiday Haven but, frankly, given what the government is committed to and given the public scrutiny Holiday Haven is under, I think they are probably safe. I regret those remarks. I took it on the good will of the government that something would be done.

Nothing was done for five months, and that is why we have called for in this Chamber a public inquiry into what happened at Holiday Haven, because what happened at Holiday Haven could happen somewhere else. If 19 complaints of the kind that we raise in the Legislature are not enough to justify action, what does it take to raise the red flags at the Department of Health.

You know, there are dozens and dozens of human stories surrounding Holiday Haven that I could go into, how many employees I have talked to who are no longer in health care provision of services, they are so jaded by their experience at Holiday Haven, people that I have talked to.

Madam Speaker, on the day that I heard about the death at Holiday Haven, I wanted to confirm it; sadly, I wanted to confirm it. So I phoned all of my sources. Everybody knew about it, and you know what the general response was? It is tragic, but so what. Nothing changes at Holiday Haven. At that point, I found it very difficult to carry on my activities or even talk to people when people who work with the system said even at that point nothing will be done.

I want, we need a public inquiry, Madam Speaker, to see why the Department of Health, who knew about this, failed to take action. This is not a witch hunt. This is dealing with life and death. This is not just an esoteric debate. We are expected by the people of Manitoba—they put their loved ones in personal care homes. They pay extraordinary amounts of money to do that, hoping and praying that their loved ones are well looked after and, if we fail to do that, then we better know why and we better ensure that does not happen again. We have to find out what went wrong at the Department of Health. We have to find out what went wrong at Holiday Haven, and we have to make sure that it never happens again.

We have recommendations that, if implemented, I think, in my experience would go a long way to solving problems in our personal care homes. We have 39 recommendations from the government report, some excellent recommendations but, if they are not implemented, if the Department of Health does not recognize there is a problem, then we are not going to get anywhere, and that is why we need a public inquiry. We need to understand why that happened, and we need to make sure that it never happens again.

We need to know why information is withheld from Holiday Haven to the Department of Health. I think the Minister of Health (Mr. Praznik) wants to know that. I want to know that. We need to have a debate. We need to investigate whether private, for-profit nursing homes should indeed be allowed to expand in this jurisdiction. This was a for-profit, privately run home, and there is much surrounding this death that I know that I hope comes out, and if it does not come out, I will ensure that it comes out. There is much that I know surrounding this, but we need to know why this private, for-profit home was allowed to continue, is allowed to continue, and may be allowed to continue in the future making good money, and delivering a service, I think, that all would agree was unacceptable, and using as an excuse their lack of funding.

I do not take any great comfort in dealing with this issue. I would much rather deal with a thousand other issues than this issue. We on this side of the House would much rather deal with dozens of other issues, and heavens knows there are enough, and I would much rather in this speech deal with our gang action

approach, our Healthy Child plan, our positive solutions put forward by our Leader, but somebody failed the people of Holiday Haven.

We do not suggest there be a witch hunt. We simply suggest this ought never to happen again in Manitoba. This happens, and you see this on 60 Minutes and on 20/20. You see it, on the U.S. networks, happening in the States. Again, when I was first approached on Holiday Haven, I could not believe it; but, every time we pored over this and every time we reviewed the documentation and every time I talked to someone, we found out more and more and more. Madam Speaker, we have to determine why it is we allow people who run profit institutions to manage those institutions. They make a profit at it, and to manage it and to be concerned that their means of earning a living is being interfered with by an inquiry—it says manifestly that there ought to be no profit in health care. Health care is not an area where people ought to be allowed to make money at the expense of people and their health, fundamentally, and in this case we had a family running a personal care home who owned it and operated it, and there are a myriad of questions as to how they operated it. One thing is clear, they ought never to be allowed to operate a personal care home again.

The government ought to seriously rethink its policy in going headlong into privatization, not just in personal care homes, because the majority of personal care home beds constructed have been private, for-profit, but in all areas of health care, the centralization of the food services, the home care equipment move that is clearly the next step is going to be privatization, the privatization of home care, the effective privatization of many of our services outside of Winnipeg, once the government's ill-conceived regionalization plan is put into place.

So, Madam Speaker, I hope I have made clear some of the reasons as to why we are so concerned about the Holiday Haven incident, and I reiterate, I do not take any satisfaction in having to deliver a speech of this kind, but I think we owe it. This is not a political issue. We owe it to the people that are in our personal care homes, that work in our personal care homes, that are involved in the system to do a thorough review of what went wrong and to ensure that it never happens again. The minister says we are human and mistakes happen.

I fully recognize that, and if mistakes happen, that is fine. Let us learn from our mistakes. We are not talking about a witch hunt. We are talking about finding where those mistakes were and learning from them.

I suspect the government will call an inquest. That is not enough. Inquests have been called before, and recommendations made before, and recommendations have not been followed. We need a much broader review than that of an inquest.

* (1730)

I said earlier there are things that I have heard, that I have seen, and I know about Holiday Haven, that are even more incredible and more disconcerting. I await the opportunity to provide that information to whatever forum or whatever inquiry the government will agree to.

I want to touch briefly, Madam Speaker, on the whole issue of regionalization, and a warning that was made to members of the House at the committee hearings for regional on the Bill 49. The warning came from Evelyn Shapiro from the Centre for Health Policy and Evaluation. She came to committee hearings and stated that many jurisdictions were regionalizing, but the data coming back in, the analysis of regionalization coming back in was not favourable towards regionalization. She said that we, in Manitoba, had an opportunity to review that data and study it and prevent Manitobans from making the same mistakes that were made in other jurisdictions.

I know that the government regionalization plan is basically based on the New Zealand model. If you look at the analysis of New Zealand, the plan that is put forward is based on the New Zealand model, hand in glove. No confirmation needs to be known better than the fact that civil servants were sent down to New Zealand to study their program. The Manitoba plan is the New Zealand plan. The returns in on New Zealand are not favourable. Costs have gone up; waiting lists have increased. Boards have resigned en masse.

The government has an opportunity. It is not too late to take another look at the regionalization plan. It is interesting. I have taken a book out of the library on

regionalization, and I notice many officials from the Department of Health have taken the book out both prior and subsequent to my reviewing that book, so I hope the message comes through, because the book is a very accurate analysis of regionalization, and some of the pitfalls and difficulties that occurred in New Zealand as a result of the New Zealand experience.

On the regionalization issue, it is not politics as much as it is analysis and logic. We have a chance in Manitoba not to make the same mistakes that were made in other jurisdictions. Why are we proceeding to do so?

I have recently read about the plan to regionalize Winnipeg. Really interesting. A lot different than what we have been led to believe. What we are going to have are regional boards in Winnipeg that are going to be charged with getting contracts to institutions. Notice again the private model, the idea of contract. They are going to be able to bid on contracts to provide service. So we are going to have the spectacle of Seven Oaks Hospital bidding against Concordia Hospital, bidding against St. Boniface Hospital for service.

We are going to have the ultimate solution that if you are an elderly person and you have cataracts, or you have a hip problem, or you have some other injury, you are going to be located perhaps in—maybe you live in East Kildonan, so you will be at Concordia Hospital. You cannot get your CAT scan after hours at the Concordia Hospital, so they will move you to Health Sciences Centre, then they will move you back at cost. If you need your eyes done, they will shift you over to Misericordia. Then if you need your hip replaced, you will probably move over to either Seven Oaks or Victoria. Does that strike you, Madam Speaker, as a little bit contrary to the concept of having community-based services?

My time, I see, is running out. I had really hoped to touch on a whole series of issues in health and a whole series of issues with respect to the throne speech, but I thought it was necessary to lay out, at this point, some of the issues surrounding the Holiday Haven crisis. I sincerely hope that we can actually resolve this issue, that we do not have to keep coming to this House and asking for an inquiry, that the issue can be solved, we can get on with improving conditions in our personal

care homes and that we can have an actual debate. I will even accept a debate on privatization. At least we can have a discussion about the government's privatization plan in health care so at least the public has an opportunity for an input.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Mr. Peter Dyck (Pembina): Madam Speaker, it is a pleasure and an honour to respond to the Speech from the Throne. When I was asked to run as a member of the Legislative Assembly for the Pembina constituency, I needed to know the direction our government was taking in terms of health, education, economic growth, job creation, family services, agriculture, justice, taxation, trade, among others. After doing a thorough examination, I was satisfied that our government and our Premier (Mr. Filmon) knew the direction we were heading, and I fully support these initiatives.

In my response today, I want to develop the theme of using a road map. We know where we are heading, what our destination is. The question we continue to address is, how do we get there and still remain true to our commitment? Our travels underpin some very important cornerstones, the major one being a balanced budget. In my opinion, government must also live within its means, with a goal of a minimal 5 percent of our budget in reserves. As we proceed, we must be sensitive to the needs of all sectors in our society. That is why it is clearly defined, and that is why a clearly defined and well-planned direction is needed. Together with the people in Manitoba, we embark on this journey.

We are committed to two immediate national priorities, job creation and children in need. As we proceed on to our destination, certain impediments are thrown in our path. The most significant impediment is the reduction of federal transfer payments for health care, education and family services.

While we encourage Ottawa to get their fiscal house in order, I feel strongly that it should not be done on the backs of the provinces. Some partnerships with the federal government have proved a success in the past. The national infrastructure program and its one-year renewal, the numerous Team Canada trade missions are

examples of some of the accomplishments that have benefited all Canadians.

However, the federal government has not always held the partnership principle as a paramount objective of their government. The combined \$7-billion decrease in Canada Health and Social Transfer is something that all of us can relate to directly. If the federal government is going to decrease the transfer payments, it must give the provinces more latitude as to how they deal with these decreases.

My time as the representative for Pembina constituency has been a learning experience for both myself and my family. Their love, support and encouragement have helped me adjust to the sometimes difficult life of a political representative. My colleagues in the Legislature have also assisted me in adjusting to my duties. Our government is comprised of 31 dedicated and compassionate individuals. We are bound by a common purpose, to make Manitoba the best place anywhere to work, live, invest and raise a family.

I want to take a moment to acknowledge the assistance I have received from the members for Charleswood (Mr. Ernst), Steinbach (Mr. Driedger) and Portage la Prairie (Mr. Pallister). They are to be commended for their efforts in creating a Manitoba that is booming economically and leading the nation in job growth, almost 24,000 additional jobs created in 1996, a Manitoba whose economic transformation since 1988 is the model to which other governments aspire; a Manitoba dedicated to the well-being of all residents, urban, rural and northern. I know that they will continue to guide our province to the destination we are headed.

* (1740)

In the Legislature, it is incumbent upon me to represent my constituents to the best of my abilities. To that end, I have met with many organizations and individuals to get a sense of their needs and their priorities. I am pleased that their priorities are those of our government's: fiscal responsibility, economic growth, continued support for social services, among others.

It is with pride that I tell people I meet, whether within the province or out, that I come from Pembina, an area of the province with vision, energy and commitment. The constituency of Pembina is a microcosm of our province as a whole. The local economy is booming in part due to entrepreneurial drive and government initiatives and responsibilities. We are laying the groundworks so that businesses and communities can flourish.

The value of construction in the region was up by about \$2 million in 1996, and the value of residential construction is up by \$7.4 million. The region had 308 building permits issued till November of 1996 with a value of \$24.8 million. This is a continuation of the previous year's growth that saw 353 permits issued with a value of \$22.7 million.

Throughout my constituency, you can feel the energy and the optimism. In Winkler, the industrial sector is up from five to 11 permits with a value of \$738,000. Residential construction has remained steady with 95 permits compared to 94 in 1995. The value of this construction activity, however, has doubled from \$5.4 million to \$10.9 million. The development has included one multifamily residence, four duplexes and 33 single housing units. In Morden, industrial permits are at four with a value of \$825,000. Residential construction permits number 51 in 1996 with a value of \$3.9 million. The development has included two multiple housing family residences and 15 single housing units. In the Rural Municipality of Stanley, commercial construction remains stable with five permits. Permits for agricultural development numbered 15 at the value of \$714,000. These housing starts in Pembina are a small sample of the 2,318 housing starts in rural Manitoba in 1996, a gain of 18.1 percent and above Canada's 12.4 percent increase.

The remarkable economic growth in Manitoba will ensure in part with the legacy our government leaves Manitobans—a balanced budget. Despite the opposition's arguments against taxpayer protection, Manitobans deserve and demand responsible government. Our government's balanced budget legislation has been hailed by the Canadian Federation of Independent Business and the Canadian Taxpayers Federation as model legislation that should be adopted by other governments. That is high praise indeed.

The 1995 budget was a milestone for Manitobans, the first balanced budget in 23 years. By balancing our own books and paying down the debt, our government has addressed an issue members opposite continually fail to do.

Briefly looking back at the NDP's record in government, I can understand why they did not support Manitobans in this historic legislation. Members opposite appeared to have developed a zest for imposing taxes on Manitobans. In 1982, personal income tax was increased by 24 percent. In 1983, it was increased by 23 percent. In 1985, it was increased by 11 percent. They increased the insurance premiums tax. They imposed the payroll tax. They imposed higher income tax surtax. The list of taxes goes on and on well beyond even the time allotted to me.

During their arguments against the balanced budget, members opposite questioned Manitobans' ability to understand the issues and situation. Manitobans have certainly understood the issues well enough in the past three elections to know that they did not want a government that did not understand that you cannot spend more than you have. The people of Pembina have understood that by running annual deficits, we were no longer borrowing on their credit but on the credit of their children. In my constituency there was a realization that not only must today's services be protected but, just as importantly, tomorrow's services.

Madam Speaker, recent developments in agribusiness sector, developments that are directly linked to the economic initiatives that this government has implemented, has instilled a new energy in Manitoba. Our government will support needed development and research in all sectors of the agricultural industry and will initiate sustainable development strategies for the province's fisheries and wildlife resources. The speech also said that our government will continue to build partnerships with Manitobans to enhance efforts for growth and to ensure proper training, and educational tools are available and accessible for business entrepreneurs.

As noted in the speech, rural economic growth has been impressive and among the best in the nation. With continued diversification in agriculture and the agrifood sector, such as hog production, potato production and

processing, the future remains bright. Within my constituency I have witnessed growth and expansion at a rate unequalled in years. New endeavours in farm machinery manufacturing and chemical manufacturing have begun. Acrylon Plastics has recently announced an expansion, thanks in part to a \$1.2 million Grow Bond, that will see their operation add 10,000 square feet and approximately 24 new jobs. Metal foundries have also become an important part of the economy in Pembina.

Flax-straw paper products are being produced by Kimberly-Clark and by Ecusta company. The Valley Rehab Centre, a centre that employs mentally challenged individuals to help recycle paper products, adds not only to our economy but to the lifestyles of people with special needs. Pembina is also home to the largest recreational vehicle manufacturing plant in Manitoba and has several trailer and truck-box manufacturing plants.

Madam Speaker, the individuals who established and operate these businesses need more than a good idea to succeed. While ideas are important and will assist in any company's prosperity, the reality is that a government with a solid and proactive fiscal plan is also a major ingredient to any healthy economy. In Manitoba we are fortunate to have a government that looks to its rural citizens for input in furthering its economic growth.

As announced in the speech, the Working for Value Task Force will soon be issuing its report, a report that will assist this government in supporting the efforts of all rural Manitobans by intensifying its efforts to ensure the availability of program support for rural small businesses. Our government established the Working for Value Task Force to find ways to expand the value of Manitoba's exports. More specifically, the task team was asked to hear from rural Manitobans on how to increase the province's exports by \$1 billion within the next 10 years. On February 23, 1996, the people of Pembina constituency had the opportunity to participate in that task force. Those involved identified many strengths and opportunities in this area, food processing, manufacturing, nontraditional crops and hogs were all identified.

There is a strong work ethic among local producers who have accepted change as an opportunity, not as a problem. The participants stated quite clearly that the role of government is to provide potential value-added business with the infrastructure to start and develop businesses within the area. Governments must reduce regulatory constraints that would hinder this business. This reduction of red tape has been aggressively approached by the members for Portage la Prairie with a great deal of success. The success of the task force, as well as other endeavours of this government, will ensure the continued development of strong trade ties with emerging markets of Brazil, Argentina, Chile, South Africa, Ukraine and Asia, as well as our traditional markets.

Our government has long recognized the positive impact increased trade has on Manitobans. Manitoba merchandise exports to the United States were up 13.3 percent in the 11 months to November 1996 compared with the same period last year. This is 5 percent higher than Canada's gain of 7 percent. Manitoba's exports to the U.S. are well into the sixth straight year of steady growth. Between 1990 and 1995, Manitoba exports to the U.S. have more than doubled, growing by \$2.2 billion or by 123 percent.

New markets continue to grow. In 1995 the official figure of Manitoba exports to Mexico total \$66 million. Since 1991, trade between us has increased 325 percent. In fact, a local Pembina firm, Kroeker Farms Limited of Winkler, had the opportunity to participate in the Manitoba trade mission to Mexico in mid-February. Local businesses continue to reap the rewards that a well-managed economy brings. There is no denying that the heart of the economy in Pembina revolves around agriculture.

A simple drive through my constituency is enough for anyone to come to this conclusion. For the first three quarters of 1996, Manitoba farm cash receipts are up by 15 percent. This is the best increase of any province. Mile after mile of farm land surround the highways and towns. Most of the businesses in some way service and derive their income from the greater farming community. There is no doubt that these are changing and uncertain times for our farmers. Federal elimination of the Crow rate is one example of this change in uncertainty. Yet I know from personal

experience that those people who choose to make their living on the farm face certain uncertainty each and every day.

Every year our grain producers face the prospect that one day of uncooperative weather could destroy months of work and preparation. The very nature of farming dictates that one must be willing to adapt to change. All farmers know that it is not a stable occupation. However, I am confident that the farmers of Pembina, and indeed, the farmers of Manitoba, will not only survive change, but will prosper in the face of change. Farmers cannot face this challenge alone. That is why our government has created programs to help farmers through this transition, and develop a strong value-added farming base. Madam Speaker, programs such as rural Grow Bonds and rural economic initiatives are important steps in creating a diversified farm economy.

In my own constituency I have seen the positive effects of the rural Grow Bonds Program, as Pembina has been a leader in their application. Members on this side of the House have recognized that business and government need to work together, and that the gains of one side do not have to come at the expense of the other.

Madam Speaker, my constituents have seen the effects of business and government working together to achieve mutually common goals, and they have been the benefactors of this relationship. Of course, government often needs to take a leading role, and that is why I feel, as do the constituents and businesses of Pembina, that the national infrastructure program is vital to the continued economic health of Manitoba. I am, therefore, pleased that a new one-year agreement to top up the current program is in the works.

Our government knows that Manitobans want to work, and we are creating an environment that will help people become independent. As Manitoba's unemployment rate continues to fall and more Manitobans are working than ever before, our youth have the option of staying in their home province for their future career opportunities.

The speech referenced two programs that have assisted individuals in acquiring employment. Employment First was one of those programs noted. Welfare has been refocused to emphasize employment.

Between May 1, 1996, and January 31, 1997, the provincial caseload has declined by over 1,000 cases.

Major features on Employment First include a shift from entitlement to reciprocal responsibilities; one-stop assessment of financial needs and employability; simplified work incentive; the introduction of a pilot self-employed program; liaison with Education and Training to refocus existing resources to respond to needs of clients, community and employers.

Another successful program noted in the speech was Youth NOW. Youth NOW, or New Opportunities to Work, provides youth 18 to 24 years of age who are receiving municipal income assistance an opportunity to participate in project-based training and employment initiatives that will assist them in securing employment. Youth NOW partners with community nonprofit organizations and private training agencies to deliver training and employment assistance. Currently there are nine projects underway which will serve approximately 461 clients.

Another program, Taking Charge!, will see 600 single parents enter the workforce with new skills as they make the shift to independence.

Madam Speaker, our economic successes are built on a strong educational foundation. Our government will continue to put a strong emphasis on education and training so young people have the skills they need to compete and succeed.

Pembina has always prided itself on the quality of education and training it provides to its young people. In a world that demands higher and higher levels of specialized training our youth require an education that will equip them with the skills to compete today and tomorrow. To that end the speech announced several initiatives: furthering the adoption of world-class standards and uniform testing throughout the province to help assure success for our youth; continuing to ensure parents are involved in the education of their children; continuing the implementation of curricula emphasizing English, math and science; developing stronger partnerships and collaboration within the post-secondary education system and improving linkages with the business community; and revitalizing the Apprenticeship Program.

We have known for years how important the role of parents is in the academic success of their children. Children whose parents are involved in the education of their children perform better in school than those who do not. They are better behaved, more regular in their attendance and have better attitudes towards school and homework. They are also less likely to leave school without completing their education. Parents bring an understanding to their children's strengths, skills, needs,

talents and experiences that can help teachers develop appropriate instruction for them.

Madam Speaker: Order, please. The hour being 6 p.m., when this matter is again before the House, the honourable member for Pembina will have 16 minutes remaining.

This House is now adjourned and stands adjourned until 1:30 p.m. tomorrow (Thursday).

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Wednesday, March 5, 1997

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