



Fifth Session- Thirty-Sixth Legislature

of the

Legislative Assembly of Manitoba

**DEBATES
and
PROCEEDINGS**

**Official Report
(Hansard)**

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Speaker*



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MANITOBA LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
Thirty-Sixth Legislature

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

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Thursday, April 8, 1999

The House met at 1:30 p.m.

PRAYERS

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

TABLING OF REPORTS

Hon. Harry Enns (Minister of Agriculture): Madam Speaker, I am pleased to table the 1997-98 Annual Report for the Department of Agriculture, copies of which have been previously distributed.

As well, I am pleased to table the 1997-98 Annual Report of the Manitoba Agricultural Credit Corporation, copies of which have also been previously distributed.

As well, I am pleased to table the 1997-98 Annual Report for the Manitoba Farm Mediation Board, copies of which have also been previously distributed.

As well, I am pleased to table the 1997 Annual Report for the Faculty of Agriculture and Food Services, University of Manitoba.

As well, I am pleased to table the Annual Report 1997-98 for the Manitoba Crop Insurance Corporation, copies of which have been previously distributed.

In conclusion, I am also pleased to table the 1998 Annual Report for the Prairie Agricultural Machinery Institute, affectionately known as PAMI.

House Business

Hon. Darren Praznik (Government House Leader): Madam Speaker, I am rising to ask if there would be leave of the House to allow for the first reading today of the Electoral Boundaries Commission legislation.

I would like to table as well at this time a letter that we received today from the Leader of

the Liberal Party requesting that the House deal with this matter and pledging his caucus to seeing that in fact happens.

I only indicate that if members opposite are prepared to give leave today and have first reading, we can distribute the bill this afternoon. I know the Leader of the Opposition (Mr. Doer) is quoted in the media as not having seen the bill. By allowing first reading today, the bill will be distributed this afternoon—it cannot be distributed without first reading—and the member can see the bill. I would ask if there is leave.

Madam Speaker: Order, please. The honourable member for Thompson. Are you on a point of order?

*(1335)

Point of Order

Mr. Steve Ashton (Opposition House Leader): On a point of order, Madam Speaker.

I think the government House leader did far more than just ask for leave, and I am somewhat puzzled because I was contacted by the same government House leader, in fact, before the spring break in which he indicated that it was the government's desire to proceed with the electoral boundaries bill following the throne speech and before the budget. I would like to note for the record that that seemed to have changed on the basis of a matter of privilege moved by the member for The Maples (Mr. Kowalski), and since that time the government House leader seems to have chosen to deal with House business on the floor of the House, which is certainly not the practice followed by previous government House leaders.

I want to indicate that when I spoke to the government House leader I indicated more our willingness to talk to the government to arrange the business of the House, and we want to see fair boundaries which will involve passage of the boundaries act and fair elections which will

involve dealing with the Monnin recommendations. I would suggest that the government House leader might want to take less direction from the Liberal Party on this and follow the processes of the House and his own word that he made to myself that he was willing to schedule this after the throne speech. It was his proposal. I would suggest that he go back and reflect on his desire to now raise the business of the House on the floor of the Legislature.

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Madam Speaker: Order, please. On the point of order raised by the honourable member for Thompson, I would agree to a degree that indeed the government House leader did go beyond the request for asking for unanimous consent, but I also allowed the House leader of the official opposition a lot of latitude in responding to the honourable government House leader. I will now ask the question that the request was made for. Is there unanimous consent of the House to allow the government House leader to introduce Bill 2?

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Madam Speaker: Order, please. I would remind all honourable members that this is not a time for debate. We do have rules and procedures that should be followed. The request was made and asked and leave has been denied.

Introduction of Guests

Madam Speaker: Prior to Oral Questions, I would like to have all honourable members draw their attention to the public gallery where we have a number of guests with us this afternoon. Firstly, in the Speaker's Gallery we have three students who are returning from an exchange in Costa Rica with the operation World Scholarship. They are Beth Bryson, Michele Nychuk, and Niki Ashton from R.D. Parker Collegiate in the constituency of the honourable member for Thompson (Mr. Ashton).

Also seated in the public gallery this afternoon we have twenty-two Grades 7 to 11 students from Maples Collegiate under the direction of Mr. Murray Goldenberg. This

school is located in the constituency of the honourable member for The Maples (Mr. Kowalski), and three Grade 9 students from Nelson McIntyre Collegiate under the direction of Mr. Elliott Drewniak. This school is located in the constituency of St. Boniface.

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

Speaker's Statement

Madam Speaker: Prior to recognizing the Leader of the official opposition, I wish to draw a matter of attention to the House. Yesterday I was troubled by some of the language used, but I did not address it then because I wanted to check with the authorities to review past Manitoba practice. Having reviewed the transcript of yesterday's Question Period and debate under Orders of the Day, at this time for the benefit of all members I would like to make clarification of rules respecting unparliamentary language, particularly quotations from other sources.

Speaker Rocan on October 5, 1989, ruled that quoting words of another person which were unparliamentary is out of order. He also ruled on December 12, 1994, that words may not be used hypothetically or conditionally if they are plainly intended to convey a direct imputation, as did Speaker Phillips on September 2, 1986.

* (1340)

Speaker Graham in a statement on June 30 made reference to the parliamentary authority Erskine May which reads: A member is not allowed to use unparliamentary words by the device of putting them in somebody else's mouth. This quote is also contained in the current edition of Erskine May.

Mr. Ashton: I am wondering, Madam Speaker, was that some advice or was that a ruling. I do not believe a point of order was raised on that, and I would specifically like to know whether your ruling is suggesting that we cannot quote page 16 of the Monnin inquiry which stated "In all my years on the Bench I never encountered as many liars in one proceeding as I did during this inquiry."—statements that were attributed towards the

Filmon team, I suppose, the eight individuals that lied repeatedly before the commission. Can I receive your advice on whether that is a ruling? Because, in terms of unparliamentary language, I would raise the question as to whether you are now saying that we cannot say what Judge Monnin said, and that is that significant Conservative Party members lied. If that is the case on the ruling, we may indeed challenge it, but I would like some clarification because I am not sure indeed whether that was merely advice to the House or whether indeed it was an official ruling.

Madam Speaker: That, indeed, was advice to the House, to all members of the Chamber. I did, as I indicated, review all yesterday's transcripts and also in the heckling back and forth I heard words used that if they were on the record would be clearly unparliamentary by all members on both sides of the House. I stated this simply for clarification. I have been advised that it is past Manitoba practice, but I was not aware if all members knew what past Manitoba practice was.

ORAL QUESTION PERIOD

Education System Funding

Mr. Gary Doer (Leader of the Opposition): Madam Speaker, over the last number of years there has almost been a tale of two cities dealing with education funding and its reality in the classroom. We hear stories of the pressure on kids, the amount of students in classrooms, the loss of staff, the loss of teacher's aides and its impact on special education, and many other results of what people believe to be funding cuts.

The Tories of course, the members opposite, extoll their own virtues. But, Madam Speaker, I have looked over the FRAME reports from the early '90s which have a section dealing with actual funding to public schools and would note that the reality the people are facing in the classrooms appears to be the true reality, that the amount of money has gone down indeed from \$732 million to public schools in one report to 1998-99—and the one report being '92-93—down to some \$709 million.

I would like to ask this Premier what has been the impact of those cuts at the classroom level, performed by his government, on the lack of opportunity for kids and their future in Manitoba educational facilities in public education.

Hon. James McCrae (Minister of Education and Training): Madam Speaker, the government of Manitoba has been very active in working with the education system to ensure that our children receive the best education we as a society can provide for them. Indeed, international commentators have made the point that Manitobans are the most advanced of any to be found anywhere in the world, and that is thanks to a quality system of public education that we have in our province. In order to keep on that track, new directions were entered upon some five years ago, and that has been moving along towards full implementation, which is providing Manitobans with a system of education that is relevant to today, which sets curriculum requirements that are relevant to today and tests to those requirements to ensure that we are meeting the objectives that have been set out for us.

With respect to the funding of this system of education, this past year we saw a funding increase of 2.2 percent, this year 2.3 percent and a commitment of no less than 2 percent next year.

* (1345)

Mr. Doer: Madam Speaker, if that money is going into the bureaucracy of the minister's department and not going to kids in classrooms, that is the issue that parents and parent advisory councils, kids and municipal councils have been raising.

Madam Speaker, the shift on taxation from the early '90s from the provincial government to the property taxpayers through their education taxes levied by the school divisions has gone from \$208 million to \$377 million, and with increases such as the one in Brandon of 9 percent announced this year, it will even go greater. This is the equivalent of over seven points on income tax. Will this tax priority be a priority for this government in this budget to

give the much needed relief onto property taxpayers by funding education in a way that really gets the money to the classroom and stops offloading to the property taxpayers of Manitoba?

Mr. McCrae: It should be noted that under this administration, education funding as a proportion of the total budgetary spending of government has risen from 17.7 percent in 1997-98 to 19.3 percent in 1998-99. In contrast to that, under the previous NDP administration funding for education dropped from 21 percent of their budget in 1981-82 to 17.7 percent in 1987-88. I ask you, Madam Speaker, compare priorities and I am happy to do so.

Mr. Doer: Madam Speaker, the minister never contradicted the numbers in his own FRAME documents that show a cut in money. Of course, we know that—[interjection] Well, if the Premier (Mr. Filmon) wants to answer the questions, you know, I would love him to stand up and answer one of these questions one of these days. I guess he does not know, or nobody told him about the education cuts. Nobody told me about the cuts in education. I did not get briefed. I did not know.

Madam Speaker, many municipal officials, many trustees, many mayors, including the mayor in the city of Winnipeg and others mayors in this province, have commented on the massive shift of the education tax burden to the property taxpayers of Manitoba. Of course, this government also clawed back property tax credits in the early '90s when the deficit was at a record-high level, and this has put another portion of the taxes onto the property taxpayers.

I would like to ask this government, this Minister of Finance: will he make property taxes, education funding and property tax credits the No. 1 priority for tax relief for the citizens of this province in this upcoming budget?

* (1350)

Hon. Harold Gilleshammer (Minister of Finance): Madam Speaker, I am pleased to see that the Leader of the Opposition is interested in tax reductions. It is certainly a stance he never took when he was in government.

We will be bringing down a budget in the not-too-distant future, and we will just have to ask him to wait.

Education System Funding

Ms. Jean Friesen (Wolseley): Madam Speaker, parents have told us that this government's cuts to Manitoba public schools have been so severe that not only have their property taxes increased, but they must also sell chocolates for basic classroom resources. The minister, the new minister in true Tory style at first denied this. Then he met some parents, for which I commend him, and he discovered it was true, and in true Tory style he then blamed the trustees.

I would like to ask the minister today to bring some fresh air to his portfolio and to acknowledge and confirm that the real cause of diminishing classroom resources is the systematic cuts to public schools by his government recorded year by year in the FRAME document.

Hon. James McCrae (Minister of Education and Training): Madam Speaker, I have been pleased in these early months of this ministry to spend time with something over 600 parents of the children in our school system in Manitoba, and I am glad to hear the honourable member's comments in that respect. We have had some very good discussions, and I can tell the honourable member that they have not been focused only and exclusively on issues of the kind the honourable member is raising here today.

In fact, over and over again we have been told that the curriculum being placed before the school system in Manitoba is excellent. That is not my word; that is the word of teachers and of parents in the system, that we are working towards an excellent curriculum and that clearly to change to new curriculum will require effort and some strains and stresses. These are things that the department and parents and teachers in schools can and should work together to overcome, because we all agree on the objectives and that is to have a quality education for our children.

Ms. Friesen: Madam Speaker, I am not surprised the minister does not want to talk about the money.

I would like to ask the minister to explain why students must still use social studies texts from the 1970s, which take no account of the immigration which changed Canada in the '70s, the '80s and the '90s, which has no account of the new place of the North and no sense of the new global society into which these children are entering.

Mr. McCrae: Madam Speaker, the honourable member is very familiar with the New Directions and that new curriculum are being developed province-wide and also across the western part of this country. For years, parents—I, myself—have complained that, you know, people should be able to move about in Canada and hope that their children can have some kind of consistent education opportunities, and this is what is happening in the development of science and social studies curriculum to follow things like math and language arts curriculum.

The honourable member made reference to funding for basics. Before she does that, she should check some of the statistics out there about what dollars are available for these things. I know that the whole issue of textbooks was raised, and yet in the city of Winnipeg I find that the textbook account for the Winnipeg No. 1 School Division is in a surplus position, \$398,978. So I say that, Madam Speaker, to remind the honourable member that the education of our children is still a shared responsibility between the government of Manitoba and the school divisions.

Funding—School Curriculum

Ms. Jean Friesen (Wolseley): Could the Minister of Education—who is clearly and, to me, shockingly unable to assure Manitobans today that our students are equipped with up-to-date texts and resources sufficient for their classes—tell the House what his plan is? He is responsible for education in Manitoba. What is his plan to bring our schools to where they have relevant and current curriculum and resources?

Hon. James McCrae (Minister of Education and Training): Madam Speaker, I would never imply that there is never going to be a challenge again in our school system, because that would not be consistent with the changing reality of our world. We ought always to be challenged to be as up to date and give the best education we can for our kids, because they are going to need that as they face a changing reality in the new millennium.

But just for the honourable member's edification, I read an article in the Winnipeg Free Press today written by Kathy Mallett and Leslie Spillett. I suggest the honourable member should have a look at that because there are some very good statements made. Among them, the obsession with the inadequate funding debate serves to mask and divert attention away from other important structural issues that the public school system must face. Madam Speaker, that is exactly what New Directions has been labouring away at doing, with the partnership of the school divisions and the school teachers and the parents. All I can say, in the past two months of meeting with all of these people, is I am very impressed with the level of commitment I am seeing from teachers, parents, principals and school trustees across this province, and I would encourage that to continue.

* (1355)

Cardiac Care Program St. Boniface Hospital

Mr. Dave Chomiak (Kildonan): Je voudrais poser une question au premier ministre ou au ministre de la Santé (M. Stefanson). Madame la présidente, nous avons parlé avec beaucoup de médecins, de patients et d'infirmières au Manitoba, et particulièrement à l'Hôpital Saint-Boniface. Nous avons beaucoup d'études ici au Manitoba qui recommandent que la chirurgie cardiaque reste à l'Hôpital Saint-Boniface.

Je voudrais demander au premier ministre ou au ministre de la Santé: est-ce qu'il va changer la décision et dire aujourd'hui que le gouvernement va garder la chirurgie cardiaque à l'Hôpital Saint-Boniface?

[Translation]

I would like to ask a question of the First Minister or the Minister of Health (Mr. Stefanson). Madam Speaker, we have spoken with many physicians, patients, and nurses in Manitoba, and particularly at St. Boniface Hospital. We have many studies here in Manitoba that recommend that cardiac surgery remain at St. Boniface Hospital.

I would like to ask the First Minister or the Minister of Health: is he going to reverse the decision and state today that the government will maintain cardiac surgery at St. Boniface Hospital?

Hon. Eric Stefanson (Minister of Health): I thank the member for Kildonan for that question. I think he knows very well that the whole issue of the shifting of programs throughout our health care system in Winnipeg has been a very comprehensive one. It has included a number of individuals—health care providers, doctors, nurses, other people in the system—in terms of prioritizing, where we should be providing our programs. The overall objective is a basic but very important one, Madam Speaker, to make the absolute best use of our physical assets, our buildings, best use of our technology, our equipment, and the best use of our people. The recommendation from that very comprehensive program that has been also recommended by the Winnipeg Hospital Authority has been to ultimately shift that program to the Health Sciences Centre. Today we currently have one program running with two sites. That obviously is going to continue for a period of time while this whole issue of the transition to one site ultimately is worked on.

Mr. Chomiak: Le ministre peut-il décider aujourd'hui de garder, pour tous les gens dans le système—et j'ai parlé avec beaucoup de gens dans le système—le ministre peut-il aujourd'hui dire que nous avons le rapport Bell-Wade qui recommande deux programmes, plutôt un programme et deux sites? Le ministre peut-il aujourd'hui dire que c'est quelque chose de très important pour les gens ici au Manitoba que le programme cardiaque reste à Saint-Boniface en même temps qu'au Centre des sciences de la

santé, au bénéfice de tous les gens ici au Manitoba?

[Translation]

Can the minister decide today to keep, for all the people in the system—and I have talked to many people in the system—will the minister today say that we have the Bell-Wade Report which recommends two programs, or rather one program and two sites? Can the minister indicate today that this is something that is very important for the people of Manitoba, that the cardiac program stay at St. Boniface as well as at the Health Sciences Centre for the benefit of all the people of Manitoba?

Mr. Stefanson: The review process, again I remind the member, and he is very aware of it, was an extremely comprehensive one in terms of looking at not only this program but all of the programs, all of the services that are provided through our hospital facilities in the city of Winnipeg. The recommendation is to consolidate the cardiology in the Health Sciences Centre. Today we continue to have the one program with the two sites while we are working through that transition, which will take a period of time. But that is a recommendation that has been made after extensive review, extensive consultation, extensive analysis.

Again, I remind the member, in terms of I would hope it is an objective that he shares with all of the needs in health care, not only in Manitoba, right across Canada, the fundamental objective of making the best use of our buildings, the best use of our technology, the best use of our people. The experts in the field have gone through this analysis, and they have made this recommendation. But at this point in time, while we are going through the transition, we will continue operating out of two sites.

Surgery Reduction

Mr. Dave Chomiak (Kildonan): Quand le gouvernement a consolidé les chirurgies et les programmes pour les enfants à l'hôpital des enfants, il a réduit les programmes qu'il offrait aux enfants du Manitoba. Et, en même temps, aujourd'hui l'OHW veut réduire le nombre de chirurgies cardiaques pour l'année prochaine. Pour moi c'est quelque chose de grave pour les gens ici au Manitoba, parce qu'on fait attendre

beaucoup de gens pendant longtemps pour les chirurgies cardiaques.

Le ministre peut-il aujourd'hui annuler le plan de l'OHW de réduire le nombre de chirurgies cardiaques ici au Manitoba?

[Translation]

When the government consolidated surgery and programs for children at Children's Hospital, it reduced the programs that it was providing to the children of Manitoba. Today the WHA wants to reduce the number of cardiac surgeries for the next year. In my opinion, this is a serious matter for people here in Manitoba because many people have to wait a long time for cardiac surgery.

Can the minister today cancel the plans of the WHA to reduce the number of cardiac surgeries here in Manitoba?

Hon. Eric Stefanson (Minister of Health): Again, Madam Speaker, I think the member for Kildonan knows that there was an awful lot more to this whole analysis than the shift of the one program from St. Boniface to Health Sciences Centre, that there are also programs coming into St. Boniface that will be introduced there in terms of services that they were being provided.

So, again, I just remind the member that this is a decision that has been made with extensive consultation, extensive input. The people involved in these particular fields have been involved as part of this analysis, a part of this recommendation, with the total objective of getting the best service to the public in the most efficient and effective way. So it is not an issue of providing less service. It is an issue of providing the ability to provide more service, to making better use of all of our people, all of our technology, all of our buildings. That is the overall objective. I think that is a very wise objective that we certainly support, and I am bewildered why members opposite do not support that fundamental objective.

* (1400)

**Troy Baird
Bail Hearing**

Mr. Gord Mackintosh (St. Johns): My question is to the Minister of Justice. Troy Baird was apprehended, I understand, last night or today following charges laid this weekend that he had sexually assaulted his wife causing bodily harm while he was out on bail facing charges of attempted murder, uttering threats, forceable confinement, suicide aiding. He was released last week, Madam Speaker, by Judge Newcombe, the same judge by the way that had released Roy Lavoie the second time, which of course in no small way was a factor that led to the Lavoie tragedy in 1995, a commission of inquiry and recommendations as to how to better deal with bail in domestic violence cases.

My question to the minister is: since that bail hearing before Judge Newcombe was heard in the general Provincial Court, why was the bail hearing not held in the Family Violence Court, as the Lavoie commission of inquiry told this government to do if it indeed wanted to reduce the risk of the judicial attitude shown in Lavoie ever showing its head again in domestic violence bail cases?

Hon. Vic Toews (Minister of Justice and Attorney General): I certainly appreciate the opportunity to respond to that particular question.

I might say that the Crown handling the case at bail was a family violence prosecutor, a highly experienced prosecutor dealing with specifically domestic violence cases. The prosecutor in that case requested a remand to obtain a complete report. The complainant was referred to Women's Advocacy and had a personal meeting with the Crown attorney in her office before the bail application continued. The victim stated that she did not fear for her safety. The Crown and Women's Advocacy were involved in safety planning for the victim, and they advised her to go to a shelter. That advice was not followed.

I might also indicate that before the judge, the Crown called a Linda Wilcox, an ex women's advocacy worker who is presently working in Family Conciliation Services. She teaches courses in domestic violence at Red

River Community College and in fact testified specifically as to the issues that Lavoie inquiry identified. So I might say that the Crown, insofar as its jurisdiction goes, did absolutely everything to ensure that the full facts of the case were on the record.

Mr. Mackintosh: I asked the minister to answer the question. I asked the minister if he would review the transcript of the proceeding before Judge Newcombe, a proceeding by the way on which an order of—a ban on publication exists but within which contains very, very disturbing views. I asked the minister to look at that transcript and get back to me on his views and tell this House now: Why was the bail hearing not held in the Family Violence Court as Mr. Justice Schulman said it should be in the Lavoie commission of inquiry report?

Mr. Toews: The member well knows the answer to that question. The Crown does not run the courts. That is a matter for the judges to determine, where these matters will be heard. The Crown and our department specifically have made specific recommendations about where these matters should be held. This was the position of the judges, and we are in fact following the recommendations of the judge in the Lavoie commission. We have to also understand that when a judge makes recommendations in a report, while the government might be fully committed to implementing those recommendations, sometimes these issues are also in the hands of independent judges who do not answer to me, who do not answer to Crown attorneys, but who make decisions as they see appropriate. Having said that, Madam Speaker, I will certainly review the transcript to ensure that everything that possibly could be done was done.

Domestic Violence Court Bail Hearings

Mr. Gord Mackintosh (St. Johns): When the minister reviews the transcript I want him to get back to this House and to me specifically on what the contents of this transcript reveal. But explain now to the House why, after almost two years of having the Lavoie report, this minister has not shown the leadership, this government has not shown the leadership to ensure that bail

for domestic violence cases is heard in the Family Violence Court. It is this Legislature that has The Provincial Court Act in its jurisdiction. What action has the minister taken? Why is there not bail in domestic violence court?

Hon. Vic Toews (Minister of Justice and Attorney General): Madam Speaker, these bail hearings are held in the Provincial Court. The Crown attorneys assigned to these specific cases are in fact experts and well experienced in this area. We have implemented the Lavoie commission report not only in terms of personnel but actual dollars that contribute to programs right across Manitoba. Our government put in an additional \$2 million on an annual basis to ensure that the tragedies that occurred in Lavoie do not occur again. We are committed to taking every reasonable step to ensure, within the limits of the law, that women in this province are protected in whatever case, and indeed not only women, we are also concerned about the personal safety of every man, woman and child in this province.

Electoral Boundaries Revision Legislation

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Inkster): Madam Speaker, my question is for the Deputy Premier.

Yesterday I was at an all-party panel on CBC, and the member for Arthur-Virden (Mr. Downey) was there and the member for St. James (Ms. Mihychuk) was there. I am getting a lot of confused messages. Yesterday after the camera went out, there was discussion that all we want to see, “we” being the New Democrats, is the legislation and then we will pass the legislation in two days. The member for Arthur-Virden, I am sure, can recall that comment. I then turned to the member for Arthur-Virden and challenged him to present, through leave, that bill today.

My question, given the response from the New Democrats today: will the Deputy Premier commit that the province will not or this government will not call an election based on the old boundaries?

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Madam Speaker: Order, please.

* (1410)

Hon. Eric Stefanson (Deputy Premier): I thank the member for Inkster for that question. He knows that we have committed to get the bill for the electoral boundary changes to this House as quickly as we can. Our House leader tried to get leave today to introduce that legislation. That was denied. We are certainly committed to get the legislation forward to deal with it as expeditiously as possible. We realize at the end of the day, and this member for Inkster knows parliamentary process, that it ultimately takes the co-operation of everybody here to pass bills. We are prepared to introduce it; we are prepared to pass it immediately. I gather the members of the Liberals are prepared to do it. I think he has some work to do, not on us, in terms of moving that process quickly. He should talk to the Leader of the Opposition (Mr. Doer) and the House leader of the opposition and get their co-operation to introduce that bill and pass that bill immediately.

Mr. Lamoureux: Madam Speaker, again to the Deputy Premier: will the Deputy Premier recognize that both the NDP and the Conservatives are mocking Manitobans and the whole democratic principles? What we are specifically asking the government is to make a commitment that they will not call an election on the old boundaries. Both parties are being highly irresponsible and mocking democracy in the province of Manitoba.

Mr. Stefanson: Madam Speaker, with all due respect to my friend the member for Inkster, I think this must be his fall-back position because really, really the best thing we can do is introduce the bill as quickly as possible, deal with the bill and pass it. We are prepared to do that; we understand you are prepared to do that. The members opposite, the members of the opposition, the New Democratic Party, are not prepared to do that. They are the ones whose co-operation we need to deal with it. We fundamentally believe in the issue of representation by population. We are prepared to introduce the legislation. We are prepared to deal with it immediately and pass it. Let us get

the co-operation of the NDP to do exactly what we all believe in doing.

Mr. Lamoureux: Madam Speaker, my final supp goes to the government House leader. The question—if the government House leader can provide for each caucus a copy of the legislation that the government will have access to as of two o'clock, and again, appeal to the government to request leave after Question Period to try and get this bill through, much in the same fashion that they have treated high-priority legislation in the past.

Hon. Darren Praznik (Government House Leader): Madam Speaker, the reason in fact of seeking leave of the House for first reading today, by having first reading we were not intending to ask for leave for second reading. We know the Leader of the Opposition (Mr. Doer), it is his day to speak, but if they had granted leave for first reading, we could have then distributed the bill under the rules of our House. Every member would have had—[interjection] Yes, I read the quotes in the paper of the Leader of the Opposition saying: we have not seen the bill yet. So today we offer to provide the bill to all members of the House in a proper fashion, and members of the press are here. They have seen unanimous consent provided many, many times. The real question is: what are they afraid of?

Jules Benson Employment Termination

Mr. Steve Ashton (Thompson): Madam Speaker, my question is to the Deputy Premier, the former head of Treasury Board, and it is in regard to the conduct of the former secretary to the Treasury Board, Jules Benson, who as we have learned from the Monnin inquiry, engaged in what Judge Monnin called improper behaviour in the 1995 Tory election campaign in which he negotiated with advertisers and prepared over 100 cheques during the campaign. Now the Premier (Mr. Filmon) has claimed that he did everything in his power to take responsibility for the behaviour of his top aides.

I would like to ask the Deputy Premier then why this top civil servant who violated his oath

as a civil servant was allowed to remain in his position until December of last year. The same individual who negotiated the sale of MTS was a major player in finance. Why did they not fire him in 1995 for his improper behaviour?

Hon. Eric Stefanson (Deputy Premier): Madam Speaker, the member for Thompson knows full well that that information that came out during the Monnin inquiry was obviously not available back in 1995. In terms of the role that Mr. Benson ultimately outlined that he performed, the member for Thompson knows that Mr. Benson himself ultimately issued his resignation from that position.

Madam Speaker: The honourable member for Thompson, with a supplementary question.

Mr. Ashton: A supplementary. I am wondering if the Deputy Premier—once again, who was head of Treasury Board—can explain why Mr. Benson, whose involvement in the vote-splitting scandal was made clear to the Premier (Mr. Filmon) July 30, 1998, was not only not removed at that time—in October the Premier called him a liar—Jules Benson—withdrew that, and in fact we now see in December that he left his position. We have three positions. The Premier said he resigned. The minister himself says that he left the position, and we know now that Don Leitch asked him to resign. Why did it take six months, and what was the real story? Why was he not fired back in July of last year?

Mr. Stefanson: Well, Madam Speaker, again the member for Thompson is doing very much what he did here yesterday. He knows full well that this entire issue has been dealt with by former Chief Justice Monnin in terms of an extensive inquiry, calling a number of witnesses, interviewing a number of other witnesses, examining, cross-examining witnesses. The NDP themselves had a lawyer representing them throughout this entire process.

So they know that it has gone through a very extensive inquiry and a public inquiry process, and they come here to try and continue to perpetuate that inquiry here today. It is only evidence that they have nothing better to deal with in terms of the important issues facing

Manitobans like health care and education and fiscal issues and so on. Again, I think it reflects more on them than anything else.

Older Neighbourhoods Revitalization Programs

Ms. Marianne Cerilli (Radisson): Madam Speaker, after more than 10 years in government, after offloading more than \$170 million onto property taxes, after encouraging urban sprawl and ignoring older neighbourhoods, last night at a meeting at R.B. Russell School on inner city housing, people were saying the government is finally realizing that there is a problem in Winnipeg and older neighbourhoods, a problem that many see they helped create. They have made some sketchy references to a renovation and crime-proofing grant program to revitalize older neighbourhoods in the throne speech, but they neglected to tell us many details.

I want to ask the Minister of Housing: did he learn anything from their last experiment which did not help older neighbourhoods at all, where you had to spend \$5,000 to get back \$1,000? Can he tell us the parameters for this experiment by the Conservative government on renovation in Winnipeg?

Hon. Jack Reimer (Minister of Housing): I, too, was at that meeting that the member for Radisson was at last night.

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Madam Speaker: Order, please. The honourable Minister of Urban Affairs and Housing, to complete his response.

* (1420)

Mr. Reimer: Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. I guess it is the tale of two cities, in a sense, because what the member for Radisson was listening to and what I heard was a lot of different rhetoric. One of the things that was discussed very extensively at the meeting last night was the fact of community ownership and community involvement with the revitalization of the downtown area and the homes area. One of the things that was stressed by quite a few

people—in fact, I even took some notes because I thought that maybe the member would be there. I thought that the member for Radisson might be asking some questions.

The one thing that was quite prevalent was the fact that there were a lot of very, very talented people at that meeting last night. There were a lot of very strong people in the community who are looking for change, and the one thing that they were advocating was not necessarily more government involvement but a concentrated effort of trying to find resolve.

Ms. Cerilli: Madam Speaker, I want to ask the minister the question that he was asked last night, and he missed an opportunity to answer that question. He was asked very directly what is going to be the provincial government's involvement and role in revitalizing the Winnipeg areas that are deeply, deeply troubled. I want to ask the minister to explain what his program is going to do. A number of people said that 50 homes a year is not going to do it. What is the government's program? How many homes a year is your program going to help to renovate?

Mr. Reimer: One of the things that was outlined quite extensively in the throne speech which we just heard the other day was the fact of this province's commitment to the City of Winnipeg in trying to look at resolve in a lot of the programs. One of the initiatives that was introduced was the Take Back the Streets initiative where we will be looking at working with the City of Winnipeg, empowering the neighbourhood associations. In fact, we are looking at neighbourhood renewal committees to look at how we can try to look at capitalizing on the assets of the community, looking at the government in a role that can work in consultation with the City of Winnipeg because there has to be a partnership not only with the community but the City of Winnipeg in trying to get the resolve of some of these problems.

So it is not totally a government initiative and a government directed and a government funding agency that is involved. There is a partnership that is involved with a lot of these things. I think that this came out very, very

evidently in last night's meeting. The public, the constituents out there, the interest groups that were there, they wanted to see a change, and they were looking for government to be there in a catalyst role, not as a totally funding organization.

Ms. Cerilli: Madam Speaker, it is unbelievable that, after 11 years of government, they have no specific plan for a specific number of homes with a specific budget for a revitalization program. I want to ask the minister again: can you give us more than some sketchy rhetoric about your program for revitalizing old neighbourhoods?

Mr. Reimer: One of the things, we are working very closely with the city because we must recognize that there has to be a partnership involved with working with the City of Winnipeg, and we believe that that is the best way to try to get results. We are looking at a joint review of the inner city housing and the housing components of the neighbourhoods, and this is a joint venture between the City of Winnipeg and the province. It will be announced very shortly, the parameters and the direction that it will take. These are some of the things that we feel that we have to get into to get a knowledge of where the money is going to be going. It is not just a matter of throwing money at some of these problems and some of these areas, to think that all of a sudden the problems are gone. There is room to grow with these communities, and this is one of the reasons why we feel that there is that direction.

Madam Speaker: Time for Oral Questions has expired.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

Manitoba Tartan Day

Mr. Gerry McAlpine (Sturgeon Creek): I wanted to rise yesterday with regard to paying tribute to the celebrations for Tartan Day, which is April 6. Tartan Day is normally—and it has been pledged by this government and this province that April 6 of each year would be a celebration for people who respect and honour the tartan.

Madam Speaker, it gives me great pleasure to speak about Manitoba Tartan Day. The Province of Manitoba declared April 6 as Manitoba Tartan Day, recognizing Scotland's freedom from England many years ago. On April 6, 1320, the Scottish Lords assembled in Arbroath Abbey to appeal to Pope John XXII to recognize Scottish independence from the English.

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Madam Speaker: Order, please. I am experiencing great difficulty hearing the honourable member for Sturgeon Creek. I wonder if I might ask that those members having private meetings do so either in the loge or outside the Chamber. Thank you.

Mr. McAlpine: Thank you, Madam Speaker. On April 6, 1320, the Scottish Lords assembled in Arbroath Abbey to appeal to Pope John XXII to recognize Scottish independence from the English and to declare Robert the Bruce their king. This message resulted in a successful truce in 1323, giving Scotland peace after 25 years. Scotland remained separate from England until the Act of Union in 1707. In the year 2000, Scotland will elect their first parliament in 300 years, and they will have control of almost all aspects of their country.

Tartan Day is celebrated all across the world, Madam Speaker, by descendants of Scotland, including my family, the McAlpine clan. Manitoba Tartan Day is a very important day to all members of this House, as I imagine all of us have constituents of Scottish heritage in our ridings. I would like to thank the many people that were going to come here in celebration of Tartan Day on Tuesday at the opening of the House, but fortunately they were able to find some control and to make the decision to cancel this and to respect security's wishes of the House in cancelling the Tartan Day celebration that was, instead of the obvious that happened on April 6 here and—

Madam Speaker: The honourable member's time has expired.

* (1430)

OCN Blizzard

Mr. Oscar Lathlin (The Pas): I am very proud to rise today and announce to this Chamber that the OCN Blizzard, owned and operated by the Opaskwayak Cree Nation in The Pas, won the MJHL championship and the Turnbull trophy. In spite of all our detractors, the story of the OCN Blizzard is truly an incredible one. They have been in the league only three years. In the first year, they went all the way to the league championship final. In the second year, they played in the division final. This year, of course, they went all the way and are now the MJHL champions, and we are very proud of them.

The Blizzard in this season set all kinds of records. They had the most wins in a season. They had the most goals. They had the least goals scored against them, and their goalie is rated No. 1 across Canada. Madam Speaker, they also had the fan attendance in the highest, and they had the most enthusiastic, most supportive, and I believe the noisiest fans in the league.

Besides these remarkable achievements, OCN Blizzard also served to rally the whole community—OCN, the town of The Pas and the R.M. of Kelsey—together. The team has everyone working together.

Finally, I congratulate the Blizzard for winning the championship, the Opaskwayak Cree Nation, the town of The Pas and the R.M. of Kelsey for getting together and supporting the team. I also want to thank the board of directors and management, the coaching staff, and finally the fans who were fantastic all three seasons. Lastly, I want to wish all the success to the Blizzard in the upcoming Anavet Cup, and I hope they go all the way to the Royal Bank Cup. Thank you.

Urban Green Team

Mrs. Myrna Driedger (Charleswood): Madam Speaker, I am pleased to discuss an initiative of this government that benefits not only young Manitobans but our communities overall. The Urban Green Team, a component of the Green Team youth employment program has again received the support of the government

for 1999. Urban Green Team projects have been providing valuable work experience for young Manitobans. The benefits extend beyond the jobs created. Urban Green Teams also improve the urban environment and our communities.

Under the Urban Green Team, youth work for nonprofit organizations and engage in projects such as park and riverbank cleanup, improvement of public facilities, trail enhancement, recycling and conservation education. Up to 750 young Winnipeg residents will gain valuable employment throughout this program this year.

This initiative is consistent with this government's commitment to the development of young people. We are happy to assist our young people in gaining skills and work experience as a component of their education. The Urban Green Team is commendable not only because of the work experience it affords young Winnipeggers but also because of the community benefits. Young people gain the positive experience of contributing something of lasting value to Winnipeg neighbourhoods and community residents can regard their enhanced surroundings with greater pride.

I am proud to be part of a government which believes in its youth and its communities and which takes action to promote the development of both. Thank you.

Poverty—Housing Issues

Ms. Marianne Cerilli (Radisson): I want to draw attention of the House to the national disaster that has been declared in Canada. Housing and homelessness has been declared a national disaster by Canadian mayors. The UN convention on economic, cultural and social rights has cited the federal government and provincial governments on its lack of follow-through on dealing with poverty and housing issues, particularly as they affect aboriginal people in Canada. Madam Speaker, 4,500 units are needed in the North for housing aboriginal people.

We have had a provincial government in Manitoba that has sat back for the last 10 years or so. They have had a number of policies that

have increased the problem of housing in our older neighbourhoods in Manitoba by allowing exurban and urban sprawl. They reduced wages and kept the minimum wage down. They have cut a number of services, funding to community groups like friendship centres. All of these have had an effect, and we heard about this last night at a meeting at R.B. Russell School.

The other thing that was made loud and clear through all of this and that we have realized in Canada for more than 40 years is you cannot make money off of housing low-income people. That is also what has been contributed to by this government with their offloading of property taxes, and we now have a property value problem in downtown areas of Winnipeg. What we have also seen from the last few years is you also cannot have a housing sector run on charity, and a number of the groups last night said that they cannot do it alone and indeed they need leadership and they need the government as a partner. They want a new model. They do not want the old model of social housing which was built and owned by government. They want the community to be involved, but they also want the government to be clear about what it can do. It was very clear last night they want this government to take action on urban sprawl. They want this government to have a renovation and retrofitting program that will meet the scale of the need, and they want to have some assistance on mortgage financing.

Madam Speaker: Order, please. Your time has expired.

Ms. Cerilli: Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Electoral Boundaries Revision

Mr. Gary Kowalski (The Maples): Madam Speaker, I rise to make a statement in regard to a matter that should not be given as much attention as it is, and that is the boundaries. I heard one of the official opposition members comment toward our little caucus: that one-trip pony. Well, if we had as many questions, opportunities and research capabilities as the official opposition, we would be asking questions on agriculture, education and that, but we would still be asking questions about this

because this is what gives us our credibility as legislators, to be able to speak on education. That is, a fair democratic election. And the comment has been made: what is the rush? When tomorrow—I do not know what is happening with the Conservative nominations. Maybe some of their members are going to be mad at their own party. I know it could happen. And what happens if a number of Conservatives vote a nonconfidence vote with the opposition. We could have an instant election tomorrow, and that is why it is important to do this bill as soon as possible.

And there is no controversy here. There is no controversy here whatsoever. The official opposition today declined the opportunity to look at the bill. They declined the opportunity. I am getting to trust none of the other two parties for running a fair and respecting democracy in this province. You know, I have been accused that I am posturing for the benefit of my colleague from Inkster, but, know what? Maybe they are posturing because maybe the member for Broadway (Mr. Santos) and the member for St. James (Ms. Mihychuk) are going to fight it out. Maybe the member for Crescentwood (Mr. Sale) and the member for Osborne (Ms. McGifford) are going to fight it out, and maybe that is why they are doing it. So, Madam Speaker, I think we should pass this bill as soon as possible.

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 St. Norbert (Mr. Laurendeau), standing in the name of the honourable Leader of the official opposition.

Mr. Gary Doer (Leader of the Opposition): Madam Speaker, I have a number of comments, very personal comments today. I was going to talk about the boundary issue and I just will briefly reiterate what I have said since fall, since 10 years ago. I dealt with this issue of boundaries as Leader, as a new Leader—not as new anymore—10 years ago when it was very difficult because we in fact were going from 12

seats to 11, and I have always respected the Independent Boundaries Commission. We had a four-week debate from first to third reading. We co-operated in an all-party way with each other to organize the timing and business of the House. It was a minority government situation. We did not play games of rising on points of order and everything else. We tried to work it out in a co-operative way.

We note that in July of 1998, the government said, and I quote: We are committed to running as soon as possible on the new boundaries. In December of '98, after they saw the proposed map which was not by all independent estimations as, quote, good for them as before, they decided that they would run potentially on old boundaries, potentially on new boundaries and no commitments were given that were given in last July.

Now, we have been burned before by this Premier (Mr. Filmon). The members opposite may not have, but I want them to be reminded of something. I want them to be reminded of something, because I also remember as a rookie Leader the former Leader of the Opposition Senator Carstairs and I were also given public undertakings in a minority government that there would not be an election before three or four years, and he would govern like he had a majority. As soon as he felt he had the political advantage, he called the election. We were ready for it. Mrs. Carstairs was in Minaki and was not ready for it.

So, Madam Speaker, we know that only one person can decide to call this House back. We have urged since December that the House be called back to deal with the boundaries. We are committed to an independent boundary commission whether it helps us or hurts us. I want to put that on the record, because I have dealt with it in difficult times. [interjection] Well, he can do that tomorrow. He can do that today. He can do that anytime.

* (1440)

Madam Speaker, he can call the election tonight. The only person who controls the election is not the members in the Liberal Party, not the New Democratic members, not even the

Conservative members, I might add, only the Premier in a call with the Lieutenant Governor.

Madam Speaker, we believe that two bills must be passed and should be passed to have any integrity for this next election. The Elections Finances bills that arise out of the Monnin report should be and must be passed and the bills dealing with the boundaries.

Now, I might say to the members opposite about boundaries, because there are different forms of boundary bills. In Ottawa, for example, there is a one-year delay. In some bills, it is at the will of the Lieutenant Governor in Council. Other bills, it is upon proclamation of the LG, so when the members opposite said we will pass the bill before they have read it, I come from a different place.

Madam Speaker, we can deal with the Speech from the Throne. We can deal with the boundary law. We can deal with The Elections Finances Act. We can deal with the pre-election budget of the Conservative Party, and we can call an election in the spring. I guarantee members here that we have some speakers on the bill, as we did in 1989. We will co-operate, especially if we are allowed to co-operate with the government, but I have said to the media over and over and over again we are not going to wait a hundred days for this government to bring in the Legislature. We are not going to wait for the government to refuse to bring in the boundary bill as we had recommended before the Speech from the Throne. We are now in a situation where we want to debate the Speech from the Throne as the government House leader had said to our House leader, and we want to deal with it accordingly.

Madam Speaker, let me also deal with one issue that the members opposite raised, and, as I say, I dealt with this in a lot tougher times than this time around. We have been, since December, nominating on both sets of boundaries and not nominating in all seats and having to renominate in a few places where there are major changes. Even under that situation, our election nominations are more advanced under old or new boundaries than I dare say any other party.

So this argument that we are old and new and this and that, quite frankly, it is wrong. I cannot expect members to know what is going on in the internal workings of our party nor can I know what is going on in the internal workings of their party, but I want to say that we have been preparing on the basis of both old and new. There are a lot of similarities between old and new because, quite frankly, the population shifts in the last 10 years have not even been as great as the population shifts in the boundary period previous to that where one seat was lost in northern Manitoba and one seat was lost in rural Manitoba, and the member for Springfield (Mr. Findlay) is an example of a person who left Virden and moved to another seat. There are 57 seats. When people say somebody is going to lose here or there, there are 57 seats.

Madam Speaker, we are prepared to be judged by what we have said we will do, what I have done in the past, and I am not going to be intimidated by these little procedural games. I know I will deal with the Boundary Commission, and we will do it. The government had a choice to deal with the boundaries before the Speech from the Throne, but I do promise we will co-operate with the boundary legislation.

An Honourable Member: After the election.

Mr. Doer: No, before the election. This is my point. I do not think you understand this yet. There is only one individual that controls the timing of the legislation and the election. It is the Premier (Mr. Filmon). I do not, you do not, only the Premier does, Madam Speaker, and perhaps the Deputy Premier (Mr. Stefanson).

I have been through this before. We dealt with it before with integrity and we will deal with it with integrity again, but we want to debate the issues in the Speech from the Throne. We can walk and chew gum at the same time. We can deal with the Speech from the Throne. We can deal with the issues of health care, education. We can deal with the issues of child poverty and kids and economic opportunities for all of our families and pass the boundaries. It is not a difficult concept for us, and we are going to stick to the agenda of our communities who cannot even believe these Byzantine kind of changes, Madam Speaker, in terms of

procedures. We will pass in a co-operative way the boundaries. We would have passed it before the Speech from the Throne if the government had taken our advice and called the Legislature back.

The only time the Speech from the Throne that I can recall has been halted and the fundamental rights of each of us to speak on the Speech from the Throne—and there are 23 of us who want to speak on the Speech from the Throne—the only time we have done that was when a loophole was developed in the Sunday shopping law and all parties co-operated in passing a law that was distributed beforehand in one day to deal with the sanctity of Sunday shopping. We did that in a co-operative way, in an all-party way, and the legislation was handed out well in advance. If that is the issue that people want to develop against us, so to speak, after we have been calling on the boundary bill to be brought in for 100 days, so be it. I am prepared to take it, and I am not worried about it because I would not recommend that we break rules of this Legislature on the Speech from the Throne after 100 days. If it was an emergency situation, we will deal with it.

You know, Madam Speaker, the Liberal Party who uses closure in Ottawa, who uses patronage to get people out of seats when boundaries do change—and I would mention to the member opposite that the former member for Selkirk got the head of the Freshwater Fish Marketing Board so somebody else could run in that seat, and we do not need anybody putting too many halos over their head when the Ottawa patronage machine has been used to the benefit of one individual, and we will—

An Honourable Member: Yes, with a one-year hoist, right?

Mr. Doer: A one-year hoist.

Madam Speaker, we have been out of this Chamber for a long time, and this is our second day of debate. Some people are getting a little impatient, but it has given us an opportunity to meet with many Manitobans as we continue to travel around this province to spend time with our neighbours and friends, spend some time with our family, but primarily meet with

constituents in communities. I think it is safe to say that we are all proud Canadians in this Chamber. I know we all wish our armed services the most safe conditions possible in the conflict that now is proceeding with NATO in the Kosovo region of the former Yugoslavia.

I know that all of us are very concerned about safety and the safety of people if ground troops are deployed in that situation. I want to applaud the people, the humanitarians in our community, the proud Canadians from coast to coast to coast who have offered to take people in and offered and proposed to take more people into our great country of Canada. Except for First Nations people, we are all products of immigration. We are all here from different lands over different times under different circumstances. My wife's family came from the potato famine of Ireland. Other people in this Chamber have come from other economic situations, except, as I say, the First Nations people, who have been here for easily 6,000 years.

Madam Speaker, we are also all very proud Manitobans. I think that all of us are absolutely committed to making our province better and greater for all our citizens. Where we may disagree on the methodology and the means to achieve those objectives, we are all committed Manitobans who have believed that this is the finest place in Canada to live and want to do everything in our power to ensure that our family is able to stay and reside in this great community.

* (1450)

I have had the chance to travel around this province. I had a chance to visit my mother's home in Neepawa, where she was born and raised, just a couple of weeks ago after I visited nurses talking about the beauty of Neepawa and the fact that there was—[interjection] Well, Madam Speaker, the minister might want to hear the other part of this. In the morning I had met with nurses who had talked about the fact that there was—do not have a baby in the summer if it is raining in Neepawa, because their birthing room has 12 buckets in it to deal with the leaks in the hospital roof. So I was able to enjoy the

visit to my home but also able to listen to people on the front lines of health care.

I was also able to listen to a nurse in Neepawa who was really worried about her three kids, because she told me that she has three kids, two years apart, who are in a situation where each of them, over the next six years, all three are eligible for university. She did not think that their family could afford to have some \$90,000 in debt for each one of those individuals to go to—well, some of the Tories may not have this difficulty—but did not think that she was going to be able to have her kids go to university. She was extremely worried, extremely worried about what that would mean for those kids in high school who would then have a situation where they were losing hope in high school and losing opportunities for staying in this province.

I heard that again in Brandon, Grade 11 students in Brandon. The member for Brandon East (Mr. L. Evans) was there. Kids in Grade 11 said: Why should we work hard in school if we cannot afford to go to university? Or should we not be looking in another province where they have a tuition fee cap like British Columbia as a more accessible and available community to go to?

So, Madam Speaker, some of us were lucky to be able to work on the switchboard in some of those schools and make enough money to go to school, but there are a lot of kids that are not. We should worry about a society where some children—and fewer and fewer children can go to university based on economic considerations. Education and accessibility to post-secondary education should be based on educational merit and the desire to go to university and community colleges, not on the size of your parents' wallet or the size of your parents' purse. That is what we are concerned about in terms of making Manitoba a better place to live.

My father was born in the north end, and he was concerned about my ability to stay in this province, as now I am about my kids. I was interested in listening to the member for The Maples (Mr. Kowalski) the other day talk about his children and what they felt about politicians. Maybe my daughter is a little younger. I was coming back from a St. Vital nomination

meeting the other night, and I asked her about the meeting. She said, well, you spoke too long. That is probably true. You can always get truth from your own kids. But I like your points, she said in recovering in her comments to me. She also commented about—I was asking her for her opinion. It was kind of interesting, just before the comments from the member for The Maples, I was asking her about politics. What are politicians? What are politics? She said, you know, politicians are people who want to do good for other people.

I hope she keeps that view. I believe she sincerely meant that about everybody in this Chamber. I would like to think that she is obviously—there will be lots of revenge of kids with parents in the next number of years. I have seen some kids who, I thought, coming from members opposite, maybe have some pretty interesting views. I do not know whether any of our kids would have similar views to members opposite. Obviously they are free minds and free spirits and should be freely associating with the political party of their choice.

More important than anything, I think we all have a responsibility to make sure that that objective of doing good things for other people is what kids believe, because when I grew up my mother was a Diefenbaker fan and my father liked Pearson and then really admired Ed Schreyer. Politicians were considered to be pretty important people. Duff Roblin was considered to be a man of integrity and honesty and commitment to the community. Yes, Ed Schreyer was as well. John Diefenbaker with his kind of populism. It was not my politics, but it is certainly—although he had some of the similar positions on trade and free trade. Of course, Tommy Douglas is an absolute icon, and Stanley Knowles, for those of us who were raised in the community with these people.

It was interesting. You know, Shirley Douglas was at our convention. She did a great speech on health care. She did point to some of the kids in the convention hall and said: Make sure your kids get involved in politics. She said: Tommy used to take me to everything. I do not know whether that made her a terrific actress or a wonderful social activist or maybe all of those things, but I think all of us have a responsibility

to continue to be positive with our kids, be positive with our community and be positive about the public service that we all provide. Different means of how we want to achieve our objectives, but the same goal to make Manitoba a better place.

At our kitchen table at night, my wife owns a small business, and my two kids are obviously in public schools. We usually talk mostly about education, a lot about education, a little bit about sports, a little bit about the kind of singing and cultural events that are a part of our schools and, of course, about her business. If I can get a word in edgewise I am lucky, on this Legislature and the day I had. I think that to me our parents wanted us to stay in this great community, and I want my kids to have a chance to stay in this community.

When I read the Speech from the Throne, and when I think about the challenges that we collectively have, there seems to me to be a real disconnect from what I am hearing from other young people in Manitoba. I was at a social the other day with kids or youth that were a little older, and almost every one of them—they were from families that mostly own businesses. It was an interesting group of individuals. Almost every one of those kids was talking about Calgary or Vancouver and leaving Manitoba.

I think, Madam Speaker, that we have a collective responsibility as a community to make sure that our kids, your kids, everybody's kids, have a chance and an opportunity and a belief, as we do, that this is one of the best places in the world to reside, to raise a family and to be part of a community. I believe that we have a challenge to be able to pass the torch to our family the way in which our parents passed the torch to us.

I would say that when we approach this challenge there are two different visions of how to deal with it. Members opposite believe in a vision that puts absolute emphasis on the individual as a means to achieving the objective, and we on this side believe in the values of community, the values of co-operation, the values of neighbours, the values of families, if you will, that share each other's successes, that are hard working and fair minded and will give

each other a helping hand when they need it in order to be part of the community or stay active in their neighbourhood.

Madam Speaker, we have no apologies for our view and our values of co-operation in community as a better way to deal with the challenges of Manitoba going into the 21st Century and as a better way to approach the challenges we have in 1999.

I think of the flood. When neighbours worked with neighbours, when people worked with people, when people and government and the private and voluntary sector worked together, we achieved so much more as a community, as a neighbourhood, than if each of us was carrying one sandbag at a time to protect our own homes.

* (1500)

We work better together, Madam Speaker, when we consider ourselves, as a province, one community. I could think of no more realistic example that separates our vision of how we would run Manitoba in a better way than the vision of members opposite of how they would run this province in a better way than the flood comments of the Premier in this Chamber when he said those people living in Ste. Agathe, those people living in Grande Pointe, those people living in some of those communities in the Red River Valley chose to live in the flood plain and they, therefore, must be responsible for the horrendous damages done by the flood. Now that we are in pre-election period, we are getting lots of apologies, but we do not believe that people that were victims of the flood—and later on the commission report came out and said that in fact it was the government's own action to correctly prevent the flooding for the majority of people in the province that created some of the flooding. We, even before that report had been produced, said that we are one community. You cannot have every farmer in southern Manitoba or every farmer in the Assiniboine Valley or every farmer in the Shellmouth area live behind the Perimeter, behind the floodway. We are one community, and we are proud to go into the 21st Century as one community.

Madam Speaker, we can do better as a community and as a province, and when we look

at public education and community college education and post-secondary education, again it comes down to the values that we have. We on this side believe in the intergenerational support. We believe that those of us who are paying taxes because we are lucky enough and privileged enough and hardworking enough to have a job should pay some of our taxes for our young people to get a decent education and for our youth to be able to have accessibility for post-secondary education and training. Members opposite believe that if you are born to a privileged family, you can get an education, and if you are not, it is tough luck.

Madam Speaker, we believe in intergenerational support. We believe that is part of co-operation. We believe that is part of a community approach to education, and that is why, when we see a report, the Speech from the Throne today, that has absolutely no mention of community colleges, accessibility of post-secondary education, public education, we see a government that does not get it. It does not get it in terms of what it means to individuals in this province, and it does not get it in terms of what its impact will be for the economy. Even the business community is commenting on the lack of skilled workers. KPMG, CIBC, the manufacturers' association, the Canadian Federation of Independent Business—all of them in the last year have commented on the lack of skilled workers because the government, the provincial government, has not produced the apprenticeship programs, the training programs, the vocational programs, the community college programs, and the university programs, and the ability to have easy transfers of credits to achieve that. They have not got the Access programs and the New Careers programs for aboriginal people and First Nations people.

We, again, have a different vision than members opposite. They see the changing world economy as a way of having low wages, low skilled, low training, low education, as a way of competing with other jurisdictions, and the New Democratic Party and members opposite that believe in a co-operative society believe the global economy can be best met with a well-educated, well-trained, well-skilled workforce to meet the challenges of the future and to keep our young people in this province.

Madam Speaker, I was a volunteer in the Variety Club years ago. I was proud to work—[interjection] I was proud to work—the arrogance permeates right through, yes—this is the new guy in charge of the ethics of the Conservative Party. The individual that could not see Jules Benson going into the campaign office 150 times is in charge of ethics. I am surprised that the member for Lakeside (Mr. Enns) is not part of it. What did you discuss in Cuba? What did you and Fidel and Cubby discuss in Cuba? And the other person in charge of ethics in the Conservative Party is the member for Riel (Mr. Newman), the guy who blamed us for the demonstration in front of the Legislative Building. Some ethics, some new ethics to go into the 21st Century.

I say to the member for Arthur-Virden (Mr. Downey), if I had a chance, I would introduce you to Jules Benson. You know, he was the guy that was in your offices 150 times.

Madam Speaker, I digress. I know "volunteer" is a bad word for members opposite. I mentioned volunteer of the Variety Club and they—I guess they have to have a meter on all the time. But I was proud to be a volunteer at the Variety Club and serve with Peter Liba, who was the chair or the chief barker of the Variety Club. I was very proud of the fact, and very happy for Mr. Liba, His Honour now, and her honour, to be appointed to the Lieutenant Governor's job in Manitoba. I know he is a person that is deeply committed to our community, and I know he is a person who is deeply committed to health care.

In fact, it is kind of, I thought, fitting that a person who is now the Lieutenant Governor of this province was an individual whose letters we were tabling in the House just a year ago from St. Boniface Hospital talking about the lack of support for the funding at St. Boniface, talking about the lack of any plan and partnership with the—[interjection] Of course, I recall again the accreditation letters that were—Dr. Chochinov, who I met a couple of weeks ago, who talked about the infectious disease spread in the hospital because of the closure of beds, the firing of nurses, and the intolerable number of patients who had to stay in the hallways.

Madam Speaker, I was shocked when the Premier then and the former Minister of Health

then attacked the administration and volunteers at St. Boniface Hospital. Thank goodness Peter Liba, in his former job as volunteer chair of the St. Boniface Hospital, stood up for the administration, the staff, and the people of that hospital and called on the provincial government to provide leadership and resources so that St. Boniface Hospital could get back on its feet.

Regrettably, a year later, a year later we still see the same Tory propaganda paid for by taxpayers. We still see the announcement of the personal care beds 18 months from now. Eighteen months ago it was going to be 18 months. Now it is 18 months again. In 1995 it was going to be within 12 months in the fiscal year. We have hundreds and hundreds of Manitobans in hallways and hundreds of nurses that have been fired and more nurses that have been burnt out. Regrettably, whether it is St. Boniface or the hospitals in Winnipeg or the hospital in Brandon that had its capital promised and cancelled eight times or the hospital in Swan River that has rotting walls, moulding walls, we can and must do better in health care. Manitoba communities and neighbours and families deserve it. They are going to get it with a change of government after this next election campaign.

Madam Speaker, I also worked with Peter Liba when I was vice-president of Special Olympics. He helped fund us in some of our formative years in the early '80s in raising money for the games, more particularly raising money for the 500 volunteers that we had working throughout Manitoba for the kids in our programs. As a volunteer, I met many other volunteers who were working with kids in school, in communities, in many of our programs. The words about children in the Speech from the Throne I think are words that we all can share. But we can do much better for our kids. We have to do much better for our children.

* (1510)

I was again proud of the fact that in 1994 we put forward a Healthy Child alternatives, a set of 18 ideas for kids and children. A couple of months later I saw a report from Dr. Postl that I thought was an excellent document for kids. In

1994, the Tories, after they had cut money out of kids programs in '91, '92, '93, the Tories in the Speech from the Throne in 1994 promised early intervention for children and programs to deal with the intolerable waiting lists in the province.

In March of 1995 they again promised it. I asked the question in '95, I asked the question in '96, I asked the question in '97, I asked the question with parents in 1998: Why do you have a two-year waiting list for kids, preschool kids in Manitoba? Why do we have a waiting list of two years for those children who cannot get early assessment and proper treatment? I think it is an absolute disgrace that the government across the floor waited four and a half years and made a pre-election announcement for kids. You should never play politics for kids. A promise made in '94 should have been a promise kept in 1995. The only guarantee those kids will have that assessment programs and programs for audiology and speech therapy and behavioural challenges are going to be met on a long-term basis is to elect a group of men and women who are committed to those programs on a long-term basis, and I dare say, Madam Speaker, that that will happen.

We have the highest child poverty rate in Canada. I guess the question is: Have you surrendered to that horrible, horrible distinction or are you trying to change the definitions or are you going to put in long-term, meaningful programs to do something about it? The school trustees have talked about this. I have met with Harvest volunteers who have talked about this. The Social Planning Council has many ideas. Many people on the front lines have good ideas to deal with child poverty. We should have programs for foster parents for aboriginal and nonaboriginal children that make it possible to have stable family settings for those children who regrettably do not have so.

We should have the transition from foster parents to adoptive parents be easier, not harder, in our society. Why can we not agree that foster parents who want to adopt children can have an easier time doing it under our society that cares about each other? We who care about our community will care about our children and make it easier to have our kids go from a situation where they have no parents to foster

parents to adoptive parents. That is a commitment we make today and a commitment we will follow through in government after this next election campaign.

I am also very concerned about community safety. My first job in the provincial government was working in the summer at Vaughan Street Detention Centre. I was given the opportunity while I was going to university to become the then deputy superintendent of that detention centre, and it was a tough place to work, I do not mind saying, as a 21-year-old dealing with kids who were 17 years old, a lot of tough kids, a lot of kids who were in for very serious charges. It was a challenging place, an interesting place, and a tough place, and I learned a lot about our community.

I learned a lot about kids who were in there who with a little bit of a helping hand would be out of there and out of there for life, and I have had the opportunity to meet many since working there who have now straightened out, as they say, and have got alive in an activity in our community. I also learned that there were no recreational programs or programs for kids in the inner city of this city. I then became a volunteer president of the YAP drop-in centre, which became the first Boys and Girls Club in Winnipeg, and I was the first president of it.

The reason why I believe that you had to work at Vaughan Street and you had to go out in the evening to work in the community is: How can you always just deal with the toughest kids that should be—in my opinion, there were some there who I never wanted to see out in the streets again, but some there that I knew if they were out in the streets again they had to go to some place to do something meaningful to have a chance, to have opportunity, to have a peer group, to have a friend, to have a mentor, to have somebody who would give them a helping hand if they could not get it at home.

Now, obviously, everybody here believes home, family, a structured, loving setting is the best place for kids. We know that. We know that. But if that is not the case for some of our children, we must have contingency plans, and it has to be in the community, in the nursery schools, in the public schools, in the community

clubs, in the programs that can make a difference, because often all these kids need is just one person to spend some time, spend some attention and give some guidance.

I learned a lot as a volunteer at the Boys and Girls Club, and particularly at the YAP drop-in centre. I learned you could take kids that were off the streets with a minor program, putting a teacher around a pool table to get those kids from the streets to the pool table to the classroom. If you go with the kids and move with the kids, you could do a lot with the kids. I believe therefore that we have to have an approach that deals with the justice system to make sure the backlogs are less, and we have to have hope and opportunity and meaningful hope and opportunity for our kids.

We should not be cutting Access programs, we should not be cutting New Career programs, we should not be reducing the opportunities for students' social allowance. We have to give kids a helping hand and families a helping hand, just like we would do with our own family member if they needed a helping hand. We as a community make a lot more sense if we give each other a helping hand to have a meaningful life of dignity rather than to have a life of institutionalization and dependency, and that is why we will work as a community to provide the community safety on the one hand but provide opportunities and prevention on the other hand. That is why we are different than members opposite, because they talk about the justice system and do nothing about it and they do nothing about the community, and we will work with the community in office. This I promise you and this we are committed to.

* (1520)

Madam Speaker, I worked with the Core Area Agreement as the minister responsible and we knew that you could not just invest in bricks and mortar; you had to also invest in people. The training programs have been dramatically reduced. The opportunities for quick training with the private sector have been reduced. Access, New Careers, you know what the first decision the government made on the Core Area Agreement when they came into office? You know what the first decision was you made?

You probably do not even know this, do you, because the Winnipeg Education Centre was slated to be built in the inner city of Winnipeg on Logan and Ellen, and you know who cancelled that program? Members opposite. They cancelled it and now they are running around like Nero with a violin while the inner city 11 years later is in really serious problems taking notes. We would have built the Winnipeg Education Centre in the inner city of Winnipeg. We would have followed through on our commitments and that is where the government went wrong 11 years ago, and they have not made a correct decision since.

Madam Speaker, we need a housing strategy and the member today from Radisson (Ms. Cerilli) asked about that. Now the housing strategies of the '90s and the next century are going to be different from the housing strategies of the early '70s. The early '70s and late '60s there was a strategy to deal with land banks to keep housing affordable. That does not make any sense anymore, but there are lots of sensible community-based programs and lots of programs to rebuild neighbourhoods with people through education, training, housing, infill housing, co-operative housing, pension fund investment in housing, renovations, programs and conservation. Those are not difficult programs. They should not be just announced and leaked out to the Free Press as sort of a pre-emptive election strategy. They should be part of your programs day in and day out to make a difference, and we see housing as part of the challenges. We will not deliver on housing for four weeks before an election. We will deliver on housing with the communities for four years after the election. That is our pledge to the people.

An Honourable Member: How would you do it? Tell me: how would you do it?

Mr. Doer: You give us the keys, and we will show you how to do it.

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Doer: Madam Speaker, we talked about a co-operative society—

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Madam Speaker: Order, please. The honourable Leader of the Official Opposition.

Mr. Doer: Madam Speaker, when we talk about a co-operative society, we believe that orderly marketing in the Canadian Wheat Board and the provision of the Canadian—[interjection] Oh, that will get a rise out of the people opposite who believe in the individual competitive nature of people.

Madam Speaker, we believe that farmers working together in an orderly marketing system will do better than farmers competing against each other. That is why we have no hesitation in supporting the Wheat Board. We have no hesitation in supporting the consensus decision making of our elders and First Nations people. We have no difficulty understanding that this Legislature should work in a more co-operative way on economic development. Business, labour and government must work in a more co-operative way. Look at the success of the Crocus Fund, Vision Capital investment decisions made by labour that I dare say with the Shamray decision have been better decisions made by the so-called experts from the government side.

These are the kinds of examples we have to build on and we can do better on. Madam Speaker, urban planning and urban development must be a co-operative effort. I was the minister responsible for negotiating with Jake Epp with The Forks Agreement, and we worked together with planning groups and community groups. We worked together as the three levels of government to bring The Forks into public ownership. All Manitobans now will take their friends and relatives to The Forks because they are proud of The Forks. But it was an effort between the private sector, the public sector and the three levels of government. That is our vision of how we deal with the 21st Century. You want to know how we are going to work in government, you go down to The Forks and you look at how we did in the past. That is how we will deal with the future.

Madam Speaker, we must do better on urban planning. We always believe that each individual plan, whether it was in Brandon or Gimli or Dauphin or Roblin or Swan River or Winnipeg,

each individual plan in the Capital Region of an area must be evaluated on its total impact on its citizens. That is why we had no difficulty. The former minister and the member for Brandon East (Mr. L. Evans) was very instrumental in expanding the urban limit line of Brandon to ensure the taxes from Simplot came to the community, and what great foresight when we see the taxes of Maple Leaf staying in that community.

We need the same kind of vision here in Winnipeg. We cannot just take "approved" and put it on your forehead and every individual plan that comes through to take away the green space outside of the city of Winnipeg to convert the agricultural space, to have to buy schools and hospitals and ambulances and libraries. We cannot sustain a development that is way beyond our means, and we can do better in terms of urban sprawl and what its impact will be on the Capital Region. We will say yes to plans that make sense. We will say no to plans that do not. We will ensure that the city of Winnipeg gets proper balance for its development. You will never see another BFI program at the expense of the city of Winnipeg under New Democratic government to rip off our future.

Madam Speaker, we will also use public enterprise for the benefit of all citizens. As the minister responsible for telephones, when we had problems of safety in areas, we would put telephones in those communities because it was a public service as well as a Crown corporation. We put phones on highways in remote areas for the safety of our people. Hydro is now using lighting in areas of the city, and we believe that the public Crown corporations should be used for the benefit of all our citizens.

We believe the community should own our Crown corporations. We should not have our Crown assets shipped out of Manitoba to be owned by people outside of this province. The only thing that has happened since the sale of the telephone system is that the private shareholders have gotten richer, the board of directors and the management have gotten richer, and the consumers and employees in Manitoba have become poorer. The privileged few have gained and the many have lost.

That is why, Madam Speaker, a better way for our future has to be that Manitoba Hydro will be owned by the people for the benefit of the people, and we are proud to say that members opposite, as Justice Monnin had said on page 16, he has never encountered—and I do not have to finish the rest. It was the same case with the Telephones, never encountered more liars in my life. I suggest it is the same thing for the people of Manitoba on Hydro. The Tories cannot be trusted with public enterprise. They only care about the privileged few, and only the NDP can be trusted to keep Hydro in public ownership for the benefit of all.

We believe this Legislature can do a lot better. We believe this Legislature will do a lot better with the change in government. We must have an elected Speaker. We have proposed for four years that that position be elected. We may have agreements and disagreements with past Speakers, but we believe—[interjection]—well, again, the Tories have not learned from the Monnin inquiry, have they? They are still arrogant. They are arrogant and cynical. We are one of the last Legislatures in Canada to have an elected Speaker. We have a private members' bill that we can pass tomorrow. Maybe we will get leave to pass it tomorrow if that is more important than something else. The only way people will be guaranteed of an elected Speaker is to put in a group of men and women who were committed to an elected Speaker in 1994. It is not this Premier and this caucus; it is members on this side. We are committed to that.

It is absolutely unacceptable that our legislative session went 280 days before we sat. What kind of power does the Premier have with members opposite? What do you discuss in caucus? Do you go there and say, oh, we have got to be afraid to go back to the Legislature? Oh, the opposition has got lots of stuff. We better sit under our desks and in the bunker. Madam Speaker, I remember the Tories of Sterling Lyon. The Tories of Sterling Lyon liked it in here. They had the courage of their convictions. They were proud of what they were doing. We were not, but they had the courage of their convictions. What has become of the old mighty Conservative Party? It is old all right, but it is not mighty any longer. It is weak, weak-

knead, and really lacking of any energy, any gas, any commitment to what they believe.

* (1530)

You know, when we swore in the Lieutenant Governor, it was like Groundhog Day. We had all these Tories come out of the groundhog holes and appear in the Legislature, and then they went back in till spring appeared. We must do better in this Legislature. We must have a sitting of this Legislature in the fall. We must have a sitting in this Legislature in the spring. We reject the idea of the Liberals to have fixed dates. I think we tried that, and it did not work that well. The closure kind of process in Ottawa is unacceptable to us, but we are committing ourselves publicly now to having a fall session in 1999 when we are elected to government after this next election campaign.

Mr. Marcel Laurendeau, Deputy Speaker, in the Chair

Mr. Deputy Speaker, this Legislature should not sanction the production of political ads to be paid for by the taxpayers and being circulated in our communities, and we will ban political ads for image advertising to be paid for by the taxpayers. I would much rather hire nurses to work on the frontlines of hospitals than to spend a half a million dollars on Tory propaganda for the health of the Conservative Party. If you think this is working, you are wrong. We are going to take that pamphlet back to every citizen and say: Do you want a nurse, or do you want Tory propaganda? They will choose a better way of going with nurses in hallways rather than pamphlets in the mailbox from the Conservatives after this campaign.

Accountability—[interjection]

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order, please. Could I ask the honourable members who want to carry on a conversation to do so in the loge. The honourable Leader of the Opposition has the floor at this time.

Mr. Doer: Mr. Deputy Speaker, I am speaking of accountability in this Legislature working better. I remember the Premier (Mr. Filmon) of this province saying, after we had a bill in this

Legislature on the takeover of Inter-City Gas—I remember the Premier debating it for four months and that committees of the Legislature debated it for four months. The Premier of the province said: Oh, we should have an inquiry about the takeover at \$180 million of the gas company. We had a 30 percent rate reduction during that debate from the gas company, so we finally achieved one of our objectives. Then we had to make a decision after we achieved the price objective of whether to continue on with the takeover or walk away from it, but at least this Legislature had a debate. It had a vote, I might remind the member for Lakeside (Mr. Enns), and it had a full discussion. Now we have a situation where close to \$500 million in debt and equity and tax provisions have been negotiated in the backrooms of cabinet and Hydro without one smidgen of debate in this Legislature and without an act of this Legislature.

How do members opposite justify adding a half a billion dollars in responsibilities to the people of this province that we underwrite without a full debate? Maybe you have—[interjection] The member for Lakeside might be spending way too much time in Cuba and China, because they are starting to run this province like they are a single-party state with a single-party dictator. I would suggest that members opposite should be committed to a fulsome debate. We want to know, why are we taking it over for twice the price? What is it going to mean for rural gasification? I know the tax provisions will be better of a publicly owned corporation, but how do you square that with the lines you gave us on Telephones? How does it fit? What kind of protection do we have for commodities? We always were worried about the price of the gas in Alberta and Saskatchewan rather than the cost of the pipes here in Manitoba because that in essence is the energy source. How competitive is Hydro going to be in a situation where they own both energy sources?

The only thing we are sure of on this side, that members opposite cut a secret deal to fatten the calf, the golden calf of Hydro, to prepare it for future privatization, and, again, we want to evaluate the gas company and keep Hydro owned by the public, unlike members opposite.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, this Legislature has also been denied an opportunity to debate the numbers properly in Finance. The Auditor came out last week and said that he cannot tell where all the money is going. That is the second time now. The members opposite are getting more and more arrogant, even in areas that are supposed to be their strength. They are getting cited by the Auditor for contempt really of the Legislature.

Last year the Auditor would not say that the numbers fairly reflected the books. This year the Auditor said what we said last year and the year before that, that the surplus was really close to \$200 million, not the \$26 million to \$46 million the government had claimed. That denies the people of this Legislature, and it denies the people of Manitoba the opportunity. When you mislead the people on the numbers, you mislead people on the options. That is why I was proud last year that, when we came out with an alternative budget, it was within \$1 million of the Auditor's numbers.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, last year we said that our No. 1 priority should be health care. Our No. 2 priority should be more funding for education and training, particularly skill development. Our No. 3 priority should be kids with real programs, not just these pilot projects of great PR advantage with no results, and that we should start reducing the property tax burden on people throughout our communities.

The clawback and the property taxes that were made by members opposite, that raised seniors property taxes and raised individual property taxes, should have been reinstated with that surplus last year as we had proposed in our plan. We can balance the budget and fairly deal with the surpluses, and our vision for how we will deal with those surpluses in the future is to make sure that the community, through health care, education and training, has a balanced budget with no tax increases, tax decreases and property taxes and health and education that was available for all, rather than a system to give an income tax cut that will benefit, like Mike Harris, only the very wealthy in our communities. We have community priorities for the surplus. They have individual priorities for

the privileged few with the surplus, and again we are proud to take that forward in the next campaign with our alternative budget.

An Honourable Member: That is NDP policy. Spend your way out. Close the hospitals.

Mr. Doer: Mr. Deputy Speaker, when we deal with this Legislature doing better, we must also deal with the whole issue of—

An Honourable Member: And then they advertised it in B.C.

An Honourable Member: Who closed Misericordia?

An Honourable Member: The guy in B.C. did it. The guy in B.C. closed them. The Premier of B.C. closed—

Mr. Doer: I think Greg Lyle closed them all actually—Ontario, Manitoba—

* (1540)

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order, please. We can wait until the members are finished their conversation to carry on with the debate, if you would like. The honourable Leader of the official opposition, to continue.

Mr. Doer: Thank you. I want to close by talking about a last point of how we can do better. I have already talked about the boundaries act and our commitment as 10 years ago to deal with that. We remain committed, and we remain committed to both the boundaries act and The Election Finances Act. Mr. Deputy Speaker, members opposite may not feel the same degree of passion on this issue that we do. The Liberal Party—and, you know, we did not want to do it, make this statement—but the Liberal Party was convicted under The Elections Act of 1995 with a person called Joe Anderson, another aboriginal candidate, in Minnedosa.

The Conservative Party, only by statute of limitations, was, according to Elections Manitoba, guilty of breaking the election law with the vote-rigging exercise that was conducted in 1995.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, we know that one was an isolated example, and one was a consistent campaign to deceive and use the most vulnerable people in our society in a way that is both morally and ethically reprehensible. We want the boundaries, and we want the new laws before an election is being fought. Now, members opposite may not feel the passion that we do about that issue, but we feel it because we went through it. Our MLAs went through it in Swan River. They went through it in Interlake. They went through it in the Dauphin constituency. [interjection]

I think this is a very serious subject. I think this is very serious. Day after day after day, we asked questions last year, last June. But everybody in this House contributes money to their own political party. Everybody in this House declares that. Everybody in this House has a pretty good knowledge of what people can afford in an election campaign, and I saw the election return. We knew that an investigation had to be conducted. So when people look the other way, when people choose to look the other way, we thought it was very serious.

Now, in 1998, in January, we had heard some inkling that this was not just a rumour, but it was, in fact, there was confirmation that we received and confirmation that we always believe in having more sources, and the second confirmation was achieved in June of 1998. We believe the Premier should have taken action. He should not have attacked us. He should not have attacked Darryl Sutherland. He should not have conducted this kind of Republican response to really very serious issues arising.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I believe the Premier, when he read the Interlake newspapers when they said people were admitting in the Conservative camp that they were giving advice and support to the Native Voice campaign, he had a responsibility right then and there to call in his senior staff to find out what was going on. He did nothing. The only person that passed the boundaries are the members of the party and senior people, the campaign manager and other senior people of members opposite. The Elections Act does require a leader, by the way, to take responsibility for activities in their own

party. It does require a leader to take responsibility, and I take responsibility.

I moved a motion two years ago after we had phone calls to open-line shows and letters to the editor and letters in the constituencies, I moved a motion for the first time ever on Mr. Sokolyk's salary line in the Premier's office. I felt that the dirty tricks that I believed were going on then were unacceptable in the Manitoba tradition, and like trained seals the members opposite stood behind the Premier and Mr. Sokolyk and voted to retain his salary in 1997.

Now, Mr. Deputy Speaker, why is it that members on this side understood the character flaws of the Premier's principal staff and campaign manager before the Premier acknowledged after the fact that there were indeed significant flaws in the conduct of the campaign manager and the chief staff member of the Premier? How can we have a situation where the head of Treasury Board, the former Conservative treasurer is directly involved as a civil servant in the approval of the budget, the issuance of cheques, and the alleged cover-up that took place after that?

The people that were named as contributors to one of the candidates—markers were called in. Mafia terms were used. Mafia terms. Markers were called in for cheques to be issued under the radar screen for both the Conservative Party or for the Native Voice party of Manitoba.

I would have expected more. I was interested to read Bruce Cherney's report today or yesterday in the Real Estate News. We are getting editorials everywhere about this issue. The political underworld, it is called. I did not know this, you know. You learn something every day. I did not know that former Tory Premier Sir Rodmond Roblin was not held accountable for the original scandal of 1915 in dealing with the construction of this Legislature and the construction of other buildings with the similar funds. He makes a parallel comparison between that finding and the present findings.

I would remind members opposite that even former Justice Monnin said: With all the

evidence before me, I am still not convinced that all the evidence that is available is before me.

So, Mr. Deputy Speaker, if members opposite think that this issue is dead, it is alive and well. Regrettably, it is not healthy, and it is not democracy.

We believe, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that we should be working with all of our citizens as one community. We should be working with our First Nations people who have the highest poverty rates and the highest unemployment rates and the greatest health challenges and the highest mortality rate as children. We believe we have to work together in partnership.

As the member for The Pas (Mr. Lathlin) stated two days ago, they only received the vote, yes, from John Diefenbaker a few short years ago in relative terms. To have those people used in a deceitful way in this campaign, I think, is a disgrace. I am proud of the fact that Manitobans send people all over the world, the former communist countries, former fascist countries, former dictatorships, South Africa where blacks were not entitled to vote. I am proud of the fact that we send people all over the world to help countries move from dictatorships and totalitarian forms of government to democracy. The revelations of the seven or eight people as part of the Filmon team, I think, is unprecedented. I think it is more serious than even some of the financial scandals that you hear of from time to time in other governments in other jurisdictions, because I think that people who are elected by democracy must be committed to democracy.

We believe that this Premier no longer has the legitimacy to remain as Premier. We believe that he should have brought in the boundaries and called the election immediately. We believe that the members opposite should stand up for democracy in their own caucus and their own party.

* (1550)

Mr. Deputy Speaker, regrettably, with the lack of legitimacy, with the failure to respect democracy, but with a government that is arrogant, out of gas, has lost the courage of their

convictions, has no heart and no ethics, I therefore 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 failing to uphold basic democratic principles as key government officials were involved in a vote-rigging plot, which, as the Monnin inquiry states, "constitutes an unconscionable debasement of the citizen's right to vote. To reduce the voting rights of individuals is a violation of our democratic system," and has thereby lost the trust and confidence of the people of Manitoba and this House.

Thank you.

Motion presented.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: The motion is in order.

Hon. James McCrae (Minister of Education and Training): Mr. Deputy Speaker, I am extremely pleased to be able to participate in the debate today respecting an address in reply to the Speech from the Throne and on the amendment moved today by the honourable Leader of the Opposition.

I join with the Leader of the Opposition and others in offering my thanks to Lieutenant Governor Peter Liba on his participation in the opening of our session. I offer my congratulations to Mr. Liba and Mrs. Liba as they embark on the responsibilities they have as the vice regal representatives here in the province of Manitoba. I wish them well. I have been pleased to have an opportunity to have some business dealings with Mr. Liba in the past when he was Mr. Liba as opposed to Your Honour. As Health minister in Manitoba and my dealings with him as chair of the St. Boniface Hospital Board of Directors, we had an amicable and fruitful and productive working relationship and that would be my expectation for the future as we carry on with our responsibilities in this place.

I would also like at this point, since I did not have a chance on changeover day—if that is what it is called—when one Lieutenant Governor

ceases his responsibilities and a new one takes over, to pass on my best wishes to Yvon Dumont and Mrs. Dumont as they carry on with their new lives. Indeed, I have been pleased already to have dealings with Mr. Dumont in his capacity of chief executive officer of the Louis Riel Institute. I know he will serve that institute with the distinction which has characterized his service in his other functions in the past.

I have had the pleasure to work with Mr. Dumont not only as Lieutenant Governor of Manitoba but as president of the Manitoba Metis Federation. As a chief spokesperson for Metis people from right across Canada in constitutional negotiations, discussions always found Mr. Dumont to be an extremely decent individual who brings an honest and straightforward approach to whatever he does.

I join also with others in welcoming the new pages to our Legislature. I know sometimes we run them off their feet a little bit. I will apologize in advance for that and hope that I do not ask for too many favours in that respect in terms of running messages and things like that, but we could not operate this place without people like that who are prepared to serve their fellow Manitobans in the capacity as pages in the Legislature.

I had the experience for a number of years to be an employee in a Legislature, that is the House of Commons, and to work together with pages and other staff. A number of years later, I found a former page in one of the professions right here in the province of Manitoba quite successfully carrying on. I think that it may be that the experience here will serve the pages well as they address the challenges of the rest of their lives. So good luck to all of them and thanks for being here.

I offer a personal congratulations to our new Sergeant-at-Arms, Mr. Mac Allen, because I believe that Mr. Allen will discharge his responsibilities with distinction. I think we are all going to be well served by his services as Sergeant-at-Arms, and I like to see someone of his calibre taking on that responsibility.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, the throne speech opening this Legislature in 1999 is probably, of

all the throne speeches I have heard, the one that has the greatest vision. I do not say that to say that other throne speeches have not been of extremely high quality, but I think that the throne speech that we are debating this week does indeed have in it the kind of vision that I believe my children and those who come after them will appreciate was there, because they will be the ultimate beneficiaries. As we stand back and look at the opportunities and the challenges we face and the best way to maximize the benefits of living in Manitoba, I believe that the throne speech and all that it represents will go down in the history of this province as one of the more visionary of all of the throne speeches that have been put forward to the people of Manitoba. It is not only visionary in that it looks forward but that it also sets out the significant achievements of the recent past in Manitoba that have done so much to lay a foundation for a very successful future.

You know, it was not that many years ago that I was feeling a little nervous about the future for my children because, in those days, there were higher unemployment rates, there were record levels of government spending and borrowing and profligacy. This caused me a fair amount of concern. It still does today but less so, because I can see that, through the stewardship of ministers of Finance in recent years here in Manitoba and the Filmon administration, some control has been placed on the profligacy and some common sense has been applied to the spending of hard-earned taxpayers' dollars and quality programming has been put in place to ensure a much better future.

We are already seeing results, Mr. Deputy Speaker. We are seeing results in our trade figures; we are seeing the benefits of diversification of our economy. Certainly in the area I am privileged to represent, we are seeing diversification especially in the agricultural sector, which is and will yield significant benefits for generations to come in that part of Manitoba. Indeed, when one part of Manitoba benefits, the rest of the province does as well. We know that the spin-offs go far beyond simply western Manitoba, spin-offs of developments like those represented at, for example, Simplot and at Ayerst Organics and shortly Maple Leaf Foods. We will see significant activity being

carried out in a sustainable fashion, which means that our generation and those who come after us will benefit from these developments.

The developments would not likely be happening if it were not for a climate of optimism that has been carefully cultivated here in the province of Manitoba. I have been in this legislature since 1986, arrived here the very same day as the Leader of the Opposition (Mr. Doer), but since 1988 I have been privileged to serve on the government side of the House and to be part of laying that groundwork for a strong present and a stronger future for Manitobans.

* (1600)

It has not been an easy 11 years, but it has been productive. It is clear to me that no good will come simply by taking the easiest way out. Prior to our arrival on this side of the House, we could see the folly of that particular policy. We changed that policy and we now see the benefits of those changes. I am pleased to be part of those changes.

I listened to the Leader of the Opposition this afternoon in his response to the Speech from the Throne, and I have to admit, there were some positive points and some not so positive points in what he had to say. As a father and parent, I especially appreciated the way that he put across his feelings when he spoke about his own children and his aspirations for them. I think he is probably like most Manitobans who have children. We have very fond hopes for them. I think as parents we all try our best to help them maximize whatever opportunities there might be here or anywhere they might be, but that part of his speech I could identify with quite a lot, because I know what stirs in people's when they think about their children and the future. So I appreciate the things that he said in that regard because I can see that he cares about his children and their contemporaries in the same way that I do.

But shortly after that, I became a little disturbed by some of the things that I heard him say. The things that I heard him say more and more created a very clear distinction, or demonstrated a very clear distinction, between what he and his colleagues stand for and what I

am my colleagues stand for. Over and over again I heard him say we have got to give a helping hand, we have got to give a helping hand, we have got to give a helping hand. I certainly have to agree in part when it comes to doing charitable things and doing volunteer efforts as he enumerated some of his, and I think I and most everybody in this House in one way or another have engaged in volunteer activities and tried to be charitable.

But you see, it goes beyond charity and that is where it stops with the New Democratic Party, because giving a hand up is sometimes better than giving a helping hand. As my colleague the honourable member for Charleswood (Mrs. Driedger) pointed out that you can give somebody a fish and that might feed them for a short time or you can teach them to fish and that will feed them for a very long time. That, Mr. Deputy Speaker, demonstrates the difference between the policies enunciated by the members of the New Democratic Party and those practised by members of the government party in this House. One clear difference, and that is borne out in the policies of the unfortunate '80s for which Manitobans are still paying and will for the next 25 years be paying for that kind of profligacy which was simply to adopt policies that just said yes to everybody who had a request, never mind looking at how the dollars are being spent.

Today we see the New Democrats calling themselves today's New Democrats as if to fool the public into thinking there is something new about the New Democrats. The fact is they call themselves today's New Democrats and come in here as recently as today's Question Period demanding more and more spending. Spend, spend, spend, and we know what that means to the taxpayers of Manitoba, more and more taxation, more and more spending and ultimately the borrowing that will have to happen. What the New Democrats will not tell you is that to carry out their program, the first thing they are going to have to do if they ever have an opportunity, which they are not, but if they ever should have an opportunity what they would have to do is call a referendum. They would have to call a referendum because their policies would demand that people dig deeper and deeper and deeper into their pocketbooks to pay the

taxes to pay for the unwise and misguided spending habits of New Democrats. Every time you turn around, the folly of what they are talking about is revealed.

Madam Speaker in the Chair

There is nothing new about today's New Democrats. They are the same New Democrats they were back in the '80s when they were putting us into the trouble that we are in today and have been in. Thankfully, we are putting those troubles behind us, but it has not been easy and honourable members on this side of the House and all of the people with whom we do business as ministers can tell you that it has not been easy. It has been a very challenging 11 years, and that is thanks to the profligacy of the '80s compliments of the New Democrats who today claim that they are different. Oh, we have had this conversion on the road to Damascus to now we are going to balance budgets. Now we support that even though they voted against it over and over again. Now they say they are going to balance budgets, but every time they stand to their feet they are asking for more spending. Madam Speaker, it will not work. The taxpayers of this province are going to put New Democrats to the test on that very point because it needs to happen.

Another thing that I have noticed, and that did not just dawn on me today, I have noticed that one very key difference between what I see on this side of the House and on that side of the House is, day in and day out, whether it is in this House or out on the street or talking with the media or whatever it is, from the New Democrats you get rhetoric. From the government side of the House, you get substance. Take your pick. Rhetoric, substance. Rhetoric, substance. Well, I think I will go for the substance because there is nothing in rhetoric. It is empty and it is hollow. If you combine the rhetoric with the profligacy that we have seen from New Democrats, then you know what you get.

Now, honourable members do not want to talk about Bob Rae or hear about Bob Rae. They do not want to talk about Glen Clark or hear about Glen Clark, but I invite you to look at what happened to Ontario after a very short term

of office of the New Democrats there, and look what is happening in B.C.

Mr. Steve Ashton (Thompson): How about Saskatchewan?

Mr. McCrae: If the honourable member for Thompson (Mr. Ashton) wants us to talk about Saskatchewan, we can do that too. Look how many hospitals have padlocks on their doors in the province of Saskatchewan, and you get a sense of just what happens in those jurisdictions. The people of Manitoba will not be fooled when presented with the choice of rhetoric versus substance. They are going to take substance 10 times out of 10.

Now that I have the attention of the honourable member for Wolseley (Ms. Friesen), maybe I should talk about education for a few minutes, because I know this is a matter of interest to her. It is a matter of very significant interest to me.

Madam Speaker, I am so pleased to have been asked to perform this function on behalf of my fellow Manitobans. I have been working very hard in my opening months to acquaint myself with all of the issues. While nobody ever really gets fully acquainted with everything, as some people might suggest it is a reasonable thing to do, although they would never do it themselves, I have had the opportunity to listen in the last few weeks to hundreds of Manitoba parents. I have listened to hundreds of Manitoba school trustees and probably dozens and dozens of teachers in meetings all across this province, and I have never been so impressed in my life about people's commitment than I have in the last couple of months about the commitment of people in the education system in Manitoba. It is really a very, very encouraging thing to see.

* (1610)

I have a lot of respect for the education system of which I am a product and which my children are going to be products and which many of our honourable members here are. We would not be the best country in the world and Manitoba would not be the best province in the best country in the world if we had an education system that had not been working well. That

needs to be said because I think some people think it is broken.

If you listen to honourable members opposite, they would have you think that our education system in Manitoba is somehow broken. I am saying to you, Madam Speaker, and to honourable members that we are all the products of a very good quality education system, but we do need to keep our minds on the future. This is something that members opposite have a little problem with. Actually it is a big problem, because I will give you an example. They will tell you that every problem can be solved if the Minister of Finance (Mr. Gilleshammer) would dip into the Fiscal Stabilization Fund and spend the dollars that are there today. They forget to tell you that once that money is spent it is gone, and what about next year? Oh, that is too far off for a New Democrat. They cannot think that far ahead.

That is what really bothers me about their approach to fiscal stabilization. They do not believe in fiscal responsibility, so why would they have any understanding whatever about what you need a Fiscal Stabilization Fund for? Oh no, just spend it. Spend it. Because, oh, somebody said they wanted it.

Madam Speaker, what about a year from now? [interjection] The member for Osborne (Ms. McGifford) suggests I should calm down. It is probably good advice, but she will have to forgive me if I get rather excited about the future of Manitoba with the groundwork that has been laid in the last 11 years. You will have to forgive me if I am just a bit excited about that. If I get a little bit defensive about anybody who wants to suggest we start going backwards again, I do get excited about that because that is the wrong thing to do. I would be very concerned that somebody should ever be taken in by this sort of claptrap that we get about let us take our Fiscal Stabilization Fund, spend it and everything will be better. Oh, yes, that is the way to go.

Well, it is not. The fact is, it is very clear in the law of this province the way the Fiscal Stabilization Fund is supposed to be run. It is being run that way and it is reflecting the priorities of Manitobans. Those priorities are

health, education, family services, justice, and on through all of the priorities of Manitobans. It is the extent to which governments truly reflect those priorities in their budgets and in their programming that they should be judged. I am quite happy to have Manitobans examine the spending priorities of this government and the program priorities of this government over the last 11 years and compare it with the rhetoric that we have been getting and even more importantly compare it with the record of the New Democrats when they had an opportunity to serve in this capacity the people of Manitoba.

They failed miserably. They claim they have changed; they have not. The evidence that they have not changed is happening as recently as today in Question Period when they are asking about all the spending that ought to be happening again. You see, it never does hold up. So you get the rhetoric versus the substance. I will take the substance 10 times out of 10.

As I was saying, the honourable member for Wolseley (Ms. Friesen) makes me want to engage in discussion about education. I know she cares about education. I know she sees education as an investment and a key to the future, and so do I. So, that being said, let us go at it, Madam Speaker. I am pleased to tell you some of the good news that needs to be heard from time to time about Manitoba's education system, but I still want to make sure that there is no impression on the part of anybody, in my opinion, that our system in some way is deficient or failing. Nothing could be further from the truth.

Manitoba had a strong education system even before recent renewal efforts began. One way to make a good program better is to improve it, and that is exactly what has been going on. These efforts have been designed to make a good system even better, and we are succeeding. That is the good news. The last five years have been a period of unprecedented change as we brought in New Directions for the Manitoba education system from kindergarten through Grade 12 and beyond to post-secondary education and training. Since the release of our blueprint for change, we have increased our emphasis on core subjects, introduced world-class standards that are measured through

province-wide testing and increased parental involvement.

Sometimes I get confused when I interpret some of the criticisms of New Democrats and sometimes Liberals too that maybe they do not support testing, maybe they do not support standards, maybe they do not support having a good quality, modern curriculum. If I am wrong about that, I am willing to be corrected, but all the rhetoric suggests that I am not wrong about that. Or is it simply that they really do not have anything else to do but natter and criticize because they have nothing else to do? That is the key. They simply have not got anything else to do because they do not want to spend much time thinking about substance, that is for sure. The substance resides on this side of the House.

Mr. Marcel Laurendeau, Deputy Speaker, in the Chair

The honourable member for Osborne (Ms. McGifford) asked me to calm down and everything but, you see, Mr. Deputy Speaker, it is so hard when the honourable member for Wolseley will not be still long enough for me to get a complete thought out—[interjection] You see, there she goes again. But I am going to try anyway.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order, please. I am enjoying the debate between the members, but this is the opportunity for the minister to put some words on the record. The members will have their opportunity to put their words on the record when they are recognized for their contribution to the throne speech. The honourable minister has the floor at this time.

Mr. McCrae: Thank you for confirming that I have the floor, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I was beginning to wonder there for a minute who it was.

Since the release of our blueprint for change we have increased our emphasis on those core subjects, as I pointed out. In the process, we are introducing vital new core curricula based on outcomes identified in the unique project. It is called the Western Canadian Protocol for collaboration in basic education and has brought

together partners from the western provinces and territories to define what students should know and be able to do in a subject at the end of a grade. Curriculum frameworks have been prepared for English language arts and mathematics, and work is continuing, as I pointed out earlier today to the honourable member for Wolseley (Ms. Friesen), on other core subjects.

There are many advantages in pooling talent and resources in this way. Our curricula are now in sync with those in western Canada which will allow for a smoother transition for students who move from one province or territory to another. I think we can probably all agree that is a good idea, and that is going forward. Science curriculum outcomes have also been defined, with provincial and territorial partners, but this time all provinces, with unfortunately the exception of Quebec, were involved, and it is known as the Pan-Canadian Science Project. In Manitoba we have taken the outcomes defined in the first of these two collaborative projects and developed our own curriculum frameworks for math and English language. We are hearing reports from schools that they are excellent. Excellent.

Our new curricula define standards or performance expectations. To assess how well students are meeting them, we brought in province-wide standards testing at four key points—Grades 3, 6, 9 and 12, or Senior 1 and 4 for some people. The tests we have created are valuable and reliable because they are based on sound research. They also conform to principles of fair assessment found across North America, so they can be counted on to help us make decisions about teaching and learning. Standards tests are developed in Manitoba by Manitoba teachers for Manitoba students and are based on Manitoba curriculum.

I can go on and on and talk about all of the technologies that are part of our system now and the support for that technology, and I can talk about the use of MERLIN in assisting in getting technology working in our school system. I can talk about parental and community involvement. Now, that is really important to children. I think that that is important to the New Directions policy as a whole as well. It has been

demonstrated over and over again that children who have the benefit of the participation of their parents in their education perform better, not only in school, but when they are finished their education into the world, so I am doing everything I can. That is why I embarked on the new millennium consultations with parent councils so that we could indeed try very hard to encourage more and more parents to get involved in their children's education. I think we are making some progress. In fact, the reception received on these consultations has been positive. We have discussed all the aspects of education, the good parts, the parts that people are not so happy about, and the parts where we need to improve, and that is a good thing to do in our democratic society where we place so much reliance on our public education system.

I could talk about amalgamations and the work being done by Mr. Schellenberg to try to promote that where that is a defensible and promotable and realizable and a goal that would bring about better education opportunities, but, you know, we should talk also about the advanced education and training part of education because it is so very important even to the questions raised earlier today, to the changing workplace out there, the changing global economic environment everybody is working in. Our post-secondary institutions and our training and apprenticeship programs and Access programs all need to be geared to a realization that learning is a lifelong matter.

* (1620)

It is also a matter that requires periodic additional training opportunities, and we need to be able to provide them, working with the marketplace and labour organizations and the federal government and business. We are indeed moving forward. We are strengthening our colleges; we are making our credits transferable; and we are integrating education at all levels. These are all positive developments, and we need to keep bringing more of those positive developments in if we are going to maximize on the opportunities. I keep talking about maximizing on opportunities because that is what we are talking about when we are trying to have our children stay in Manitoba, if that is

what they want to do. Return to Manitoba, if that is what they want to do. It is just something that is on my mind in our family.

So these are things that we want to make possible so that we can continue to grow and prosper and just be a successful provincial jurisdiction.

I want to talk for just a brief moment about special needs which has also been identified in my consultations. The report on special education review arrived in the Education minister's office shortly before I got there, and we have been working very hard to make ourselves ready to deal with the implementation aspects of that report. [interjection] The honourable member for Wolseley (Ms. Friesen) is trying to do that thing again, Mr. Deputy Speaker, but I do not think I will complain too loudly right at the moment because I only have a few more minutes anyway.

I do believe that the special education requirements have been very much a priority of this government over the years. The funding for them has been doubled to \$109 million annually, and earlier today I added \$2 million to that on an annualized basis which is the right thing to do. It addresses some of the issues identified in the report, and we have work to do. This was a first step, and I think it was important to take that first step to demonstrate to all Manitobans the priority we place on it. After all, it was this government that commissioned that particular work. It was this government that could see the value of an investment in special education children and their requirements, because those children will grow up to be contributing members of our society. So we need to make an investment in them as well, and that is happening and will continue to happen in the months and years ahead.

I would not like to finish my comments in any debate on the Speech from the Throne without a reference to the Westman region and Brandon, in particular, and Brandon West even more in particular. We have as a community been seeing some very significant changes, and if we can address the challenges in Brandon in a sustainable way, we will be an extremely successful community in the future. We are

successful already, and we are going to be even more successful. I look at the role the government of Manitoba has played in the development of the city of Brandon over the last 11 years, and the achievements are certainly helping to create a stronger and stronger community to support future generations of Brandonites.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, if you recall you will know that Brandon is a hub for agricultural activity in our province. We just finished the annual celebration of agriculture at the Royal Manitoba Winter Fair.

An Honourable Member: And what a great fair that was.

Mr. McCrae: And what a great fair it was, and I was so pleased to see so many of my colleagues from all sides of the House attend that fair again this year. I think they keep coming back, sometimes more members than other years for various reasons, but I know that the fair is always quite an attraction for MLAs and we are always happy to welcome them all on MLA day.

I look at what is happening in education in Brandon. I see Brandon University continuing to provide relevant education opportunities for people in Brandon and all around. Assiniboine Community College is increasing enrollment and increasing its menu of training and skill development of programs, again, in line with work done by the Council on Post-Secondary Education which is there to try to co-ordinate and be ready for the various opportunities, the numerous opportunities that are presenting themselves to Manitobans.

I see what is happening in business development in Brandon. I see the leadership being taken in Brandon by our political and business leaders, and it is all pretty impressive. It is nice to see the courthouse is under construction. I expect that the first phase will be completed at some point in this year, and next year we will finish the project by renovating the old part of the courthouse, which is really a personal triumph for myself as one who has

actually worked in that building but also as one who sees the value in a community like Brandon to retain some of the best heritage that we can, so that future generations can enjoy them, too, not that courthouses are always there to be enjoyed so much, because some people do not always enjoy what happens when they go to the courthouse. On the other hand, there are people who work there who are entitled to a proper workplace, but we are doing more than that. I think we are making it more than just proper, we are making it into a real historical landmark in Brandon.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, 18th Street has almost in some ways become the main thoroughfare for Brandon. Yet, Rosser Avenue and Princess Avenue are still very attractive places to be. They are fun places to go because of the assistance of this government, represented at one time in the Rural Development department by the member for Emerson (Mr. Penner). Also, the member for Arthur-Virden (Mr. Downey) and for a number of years now the member for Roblin-Russell (Mr. Derkach) have paid close attention to issues related to Brandon. I think they paid close attention. Hopefully I had a role in that, but partly because we have had good leadership at the City of Brandon and a credible leadership at the City of Brandon, because of that they have been listened to. As the mayor of Brandon has been quoted as saying, the government of Manitoba has been responsive to the needs of the province of Manitoba, but he adds, that is because they always make such reasonable requests. As one of those people involved in making those reasonable requests, he could well say that. I can well agree, because I think we are well served by Mayor Atkinson and the council there and our school division and all our elected people.

So I am a very fortunate person to have the opportunity to represent that constituency, Mr. Deputy Speaker but, you know, I look back at the last 13 years, certainly the last 11, and as I represented the city there on the government side of the House, I have to remark, what a change. Brandon is booming. This gives me tremendous gratification, because working with so many others in the Brandon region and in this place in government, we have been able to see things happen.

We can see progress happening as promised. I see more construction cranes per square mile than probably anywhere else in Canada these days right in my home city of Brandon. Building permits in Brandon are up millions and millions, and that is exclusive of the Maple Leaf building permit, which is a huge one but, exclusive of that, very, very significant growth is going on in other parts of our city. Other towns in the region are gearing up to serve the market and to reap the rewards of diversification of a government and of a province that is prepared to accept the challenge and to reap the benefits of preparing themselves to maximize the benefits of what can happen with diversification.

* (1630)

We have seen significant things happening at the Emergency Services College in Brandon. That college is already a world-class training facility for emergency services personnel, and the college is another success story for Brandon.

We have seen over \$200 million of new investment at Simplot. No company is going to spend that kind of money, Mr. Deputy Speaker, without a pretty significant commitment to the future, and we are delighted to see that.

We have seen Ayerst Organics over the years built and expanded and providing jobs not only in Brandon but throughout rural Manitoba and providing product.

We have seen the library building and Clark Hall original building capital projects at Brandon University. It is a great place to get an education.

As I say, we just recently provided \$500,000 to the Assiniboine Community Colleges to help them with their information technology requirements.

Of course, the Brandon Regional Health Authority has been quite successfully dealing with the challenges in health. My personal thanks and a tip of the hat to Earl Backman and Peter Eckersley, their board and their staff and all the physicians and nurses and health staff in the Brandon region for the good work that they

have been doing. It is nice to see that dollars have been made available for waiting lists for surgery and diagnostics programs. We have a breast screening program. We have an osteoporosis program coming on, and in our mental health area we have been able to meet the requirements of mental health reform and to look forward to the future to continued provision of good and quality health services of all kinds in the Brandon area, which is certainly a regional referral centre and the third major hospital in the province of Manitoba, something not everybody is aware of.

We have seen the Winter Fair and infrastructure projects in the city. The foundations are laid for future growth. If we keep on building, the future looks bright ahead.

Mr. Daryl Reid (Transcona): Mr. Deputy Speaker, it is my pleasure to rise to add comments on the latest throne speech address by His Honour the Lieutenant Governor, the new Lieutenant Governor.

I have many comments about this particular throne speech but first I would like to start by welcoming the new members of the Legislative Chamber in their daily activities with us here as we perform our duties and functions on behalf of our constituents. First, I would like to welcome the new Sergeant-at-Arms to his duties and tasks in this Chamber. I hope he will enjoy his time here in his function and role in providing the necessary support services that the Sergeant-at-Arms do provide for us.

I know I had many discussions with his predecessor during his time here. It was quite enjoyable to find out some of the past history of Dennis and also his role in providing security services through the RCMP for visiting dignitaries from different governments around the world including our own Governor General of Canada and the Prime Ministers. It was interesting to find out some of his life's experiences in that particular capacity. I look forward to any discussions we might have as well in finding out about your history, sir, and some of your life's experiences as well that perhaps you would be willing to share with us during our times we may be able to talk together.

I would also like to welcome the new pages to this Chamber. I know that it is perhaps a somewhat unnerving experience for a page to come in here. I often think about their first days in here and you look around this room and you see 57 MLAs, in addition to the Chamber support staff that are here, and think that it must be a very difficult task to come in here and have to know the names and constituencies of each of the individuals who are representative of the communities here. I think that when they are standing there and they are doing the call on particular votes, I am not quite sure how I would fair, but I do recognize the achievements that the pages make and the addition they add to this Chamber and I welcome them here.

I know in talking to pages that have come from my constituency in the past, and there have been a few and I have talked to them personally, some of their experiences were, if I can relate them here without shedding too much light of identity to the individuals, some have said to me that it is an experience that they will treasure for the rest of their lives. Others say that they may want to run for political office as a result of their experience here. I hope that our pages too will enjoy that same experience. There has been the individual page, from time to time, that comes along that is quite taken aback by the process here and perhaps never wishes to repeat that experience, so there is a wide variety of experience of individuals that come to this Chamber as young people. I know that they take on additional duties by being here to assist the MLAs in the performance of our duties, in addition to their own responsibilities in your high schools and the work that is no doubt required there to continue to keep your grades up, because it is my understanding that the pages that come here have to be a fairly high level in academic achievement and we would hope that your experience here would in no way impede your academic standing. We would want to see you graduate to the fullest opportunity available to you.

With respect to the throne speech, and I listened quite closely to the comments by the new Lieutenant Governor of Manitoba, and I welcome Lieutenant Governor Liba to his new post and new role as our Lieutenant Governor. I do wish to share with members of this Chamber,

even though my Leader has given some experience in his former endeavours with the Lieutenant Governor in a previous life, employment activities and volunteer activities—but I wish to share with this House that Mr. Liba, from my understanding, served as a school trustee in the Transcona-Springfield School Division prior to moving into the broadcast industry. So we do know that there is a link between the Lieutenant Governor's office and Mr. Liba himself having been a resident of Transcona, and we welcome him to his new role and his new post as the Lieutenant Governor of Manitoba.

Before I go too far into the beginning of the throne speech, there were some things that I found quite interesting in the throne speech. This goes back to my time at the end of last year, just prior to Christmas of 1998. I was home after leaving the constituency office late one evening—I went home and happened to receive a phone call from a particular polling company. This particular polling company happened to be Angus Reid Group. Of course, Angus Reid Group, we know, does polling for a variety or a number of different contracts, perhaps throughout North America and perhaps even throughout the world. I listened quite closely to the questions. When pollsters call me, I quite often ask them whom they are working on behalf of. It is interesting to note, even though these particular call centres are not given that information up-front, they also have their own suspicions. This particular pollster indicated that he thought that they were working on behalf of the Conservative Party of Manitoba or the Government of Manitoba—one and the same, I suppose, in his mind.

I just want to read to you some of the questions or indicate to you some of the questions that were asked by this pollster and then to give you the cross-reference link between the current throne speech, and you can make up your minds along the links that were occurring. This poll was taking place between the 15th and 23rd of last December.

There were several issues. Of course the first question that was asked was: what is your political party affiliation, if you have one? Of course, being the open and honest

straightforward person, I indicated my party of preference obviously, as one might expect, wanting to not skew the results of this—

An Honourable Member: What was it, Daryl?

Mr. Reid: Let me think here for a moment. I believe it was the New Democratic Party. Yes. But knowing that I do not have a Conservative thread running through my body, I thought it was only fitting that I would answer the question in the most honest and truthful way and not force others to go searching.

An Honourable Member: If you did, you would get that thread cut off.

Mr. Reid: Yes, I would get that thread cut off.

After the first question was asked about political party affiliation or support, of course the questions went on with respect to questions like: do you believe in ensuring openness and honesty in government? Of course, knowing that the inquiry was underway and having to be in opposition for a number of years and seeing the actions of this particular government, that was a pretty easy and straightforward question to answer.

An Honourable Member: What did you say?

Mr. Reid: You may not want to hear some of my comments that I referenced because they would be unparliamentary language, and I would prefer not to put those on the record.

The second question we got: do you believe in a positive vision for the future? Well, I mean, that is a pretty motherhood statement, motherhood and apple pie, I guess. I mean, who would not believe in that one? The next question was: do you believe in spending taxpayers' money wisely?

An Honourable Member: Did you mention about the \$500,000 advertising campaign?

Mr. Reid: Well, we were just coming up to that advertising campaign, and I do not believe it had commenced by that point. So it was just a short time later that that advertising campaign started. Then the questions go on, and I will go through

them more quickly here, Mr. Deputy Speaker, to give you an indication. It says today's provincial government is neither smaller nor more efficient, ensuring adequate police services to combat crime, taking steps to make schools safer, encouraging business investment in Manitoba, improving Manitoba's transportation system, roads and bridges, providing social assistance programs. It goes on from there talking more about debt and deficit and repayments and tax reductions.

In addition to the other questions, it was interesting to note, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that the Angus Reid Group that was, I am told, or alleged to be, providing this phone canvass or survey on behalf of the Conservative Party or government indicates that they were pitting one group against another, which I found very, very disappointing that a government would try to do that in their polling to find out what steps they should be taking here.

* (1640)

These are questions that were put to me by the pollster, the pollster that has apparently been hired by your party, questions about making spending choices to use the surplus funds pitting one group against another. Do you think that money should go to nurses' salaries, or do you think that money should go to providing new technology for our hospitals? That is one of the questions. Do you think money should go to community colleges or money for computers for our schools? Do you think that the money should go for hiring more corrections officers or for hiring more judges? Do you think that money should go to welfare or for child nutrition programs? Do you think money should go for public housing or for apprenticeship programs?

Now, looking at what has happened as a result of the Monnin inquiry, I can understand the ethics, that thread that runs through these questions and links the Conservative government.

An Honourable Member: Did they ask if they wanted money for an inquiry into corruption?

Mr. Reid: No, that was the only question that was not asked and perhaps should have been on

the survey. Perhaps the next time the government—and I know they do continual rolling polling here as we are leading up to the election campaign and have been doing this for some time—perhaps that would be a question you would like to ask, and no doubt we will hear that you will be asking that question about ethics and morality in government.

In addition to these questions that go on here, it goes on to say: Has the government done a good job in the last two years? Where should the tax breaks go? Of course, it goes on and on from there about things that I find, perhaps coincidentally, are now showing up in the throne speech. I want to give you a comparison of some of the things. I want to give you a comparison of the things that I found in the poll, your Angus Reid poll that was being done, and are now showing up in your throne speech. So you were polling the information before you would build it into your throne speech. [interjection] That is more likely the case.

So, in other words, you have to check your language out that you are going to put into the throne speech on the public first before you even have the courage of your convictions to state what you actually think should be done. In other words, you bounce these ideas off the people to see if they are saleable or the language is saleable before you would build them into this document, and I will give you an example here.

Vision for the future. On the second page of your throne speech about the fifth paragraph: "My government shares that vision for our future"—the first line of that paragraph. What do we find is the third question of the survey? A positive vision for the future. When we talk about spending taxpayers' money wisely, let us go over to page 9 of the throne speech. Now what do we see? Using taxpayers' money wisely. When we see about today's provincial government is neither smaller nor more efficient, there is on page 9 of the throne speech: "to reduce the size of government without laying off any government workers and making government more efficient." "Banishing bureaucracy" was the term you used in the throne speech, alternative service to the workforce, the government service.

Another question that was on the survey that had taken place by the Angus Reid Group here says ensuring adequate police services to combat crime. So let us turn to page 10 of the throne speech: "If a greater police presence is required, my government will work with the city to find the resources necessary to make this happen." Take steps to make schools safer. Let us turn back to page 7 of the throne speech. "In the coming year, my government will introduce new policies and programs to keep communities, particularly schools, safe for our children and families."

When you talk about another question that was in your Angus Reid poll, improving Manitoba transportation system roads and bridges, let us turn to page 14 of the throne speech. Page 14 of the throne speech says: "A new National Highways Program must continue to be high on the list."

Now, here is a government that conducts their business and develops their throne speech on the basis of a poll. Do you not have an original idea or bone in your body to put forward your own ideas and your own initiatives in a throne speech? You must be out of gas. It is the only thing that I can conclude, that you do your throne speech as a result of a poll you conducted five months back.

Going back to the National Highways Program, this is a program that I share your beliefs in. I believe that the federal government does have a role in playing a partnership role in the National Highways Program for our infrastructure, our transportation infrastructure in the province of Manitoba. We have done this publicly going back to about 1992 and '93. When I was down in the community of St. Pierre talking about development of Highway 59 and the infrastructure routes, I said at that time that we were supportive of having the federal government play a partnership role, and to this day I continue to support that concept that the federal government has a responsibility in providing that for this province.

This is only one small aspect of the throne speech. There are many other problems with the throne speech that I will draw your attention to in a few moments.

I do want to talk for a few moments though about the issues that have been drawn to my attention that I see are very serious. It involves health care, as you might expect, and it involves the Maintenance Enforcement Program, which is another problem. I am continuing to receive an increasing number of requests for assistance from people that are a part of the Maintenance Enforcement Program in the sense of families that are recipients of the monies that are supposed to be collected by the program. I find that the Maintenance Enforcement is unable or unwilling, I am not sure which, to keep up.

An Honourable Member: They do not answer the phones.

Mr. Reid: In many cases they do not answer the phone. I have to leave messages. I find that the best way for me to communicate with that department is to send a detailed fax message to them, hoping that they will respond back to me within a couple of days. Now sometimes it takes a little longer; sometimes it is less than a couple of days. But I find that is the only way that I can communicate with Maintenance Enforcement in this province to try and get answers for my constituents.

You have a problem in your Justice department, Maintenance Enforcement branch, and I hope that you will deal with that, because what it is doing is that it is disadvantaging the families who are recipients or supposed to be recipients of the money that is supposed to be collected by that program and forwarded. Those families are paying the price by the failure to collect those monies and to forward them. I have had situations, one at Christmastime where an individual was double-collected and was shortchanged money at Christmastime for his new or blended family. I have had situations where women and their children are not receiving payments, are two and three months behind in the payments that are supposed to come forward from Maintenance Enforcement.

Mr. Edward Helwer, Acting Speaker, in the Chair

When I contact Maintenance Enforcement, they are unable to answer me immediately, and it

takes some time to get a response back. In the meantime, the families are continuing to wait, so I tell you here very seriously that you have a problem with Maintenance Enforcement that needs to be addressed. These are the regular payments that are court ordered, and the court-ordered payments are supposed to be garnished. The garnishees sometimes are not taking place. Sometimes they are taking place, but the monies are going to Maintenance Enforcement but not being forwarded on. So there is this double problem here: one is the employer problem, and one is the maintenance enforcement itself. So I suggest you look at ways of correcting your problems in Maintenance Enforcement.

One of the other problems that I found and I want to relate this to you is with respect to the Pharmacare deductibles. I have had a call from an individual, a gentleman in my community last week. He is 63 years of age. He is on a fixed income, and, as you might expect, there is not a lot of disposable income for a person that is retired and unable to work. This individual has contracted an illness or a condition that requires medication that the doctor has prescribed. They have tried a number of different medications, and they are now towards the point of last resort and they have resorted to a medication that is extremely costly. I have checked with the Pharmacare and Manitoba Health Services here with respect to generic drugs, and there are no generic drugs for it or substitutes for this particular product.

* (1650)

This person suffers from body, complete body, or skin rashes on the body, and the medication, 84 pills, is going to cost \$350 for a three-week prescription. Now this individual says to me: I have a hard time meeting my deductible which you have now raised, the government has now raised to \$694, which shows the level of income that the individual has. It is under \$15,000 a year, I believe. So you have got a situation here where a person who is on a fixed income, in living almost or in poverty, and his doctor is giving him a prescription that will hopefully cure his condition that is going to cost him \$350 for a three-week prescription. He says: I cannot afford it; what can I do. I cannot afford it.

He has told his doctor that. We have checked with the Manitoba Health Services. We checked with the pharmacy program here where there are doctors on staff. Nobody can do anything to help this individual. So this individual says: Now I have to live with this condition, hoping it does not get worse, because I cannot afford to buy the prescription and because of the deductible that you have in place.

Now, had there been perhaps a significantly lower amount, perhaps under \$100, or there would be some substitute available, we would understand that there would be an opportunity for the individual to get this prescription that the doctor has given to him. But he says that he cannot afford this, and I can understand, living on a poverty-level wage, that he would not be able to afford \$350 for a three-week prescription.

So your Pharmacare program is continuing to hurt families and seniors, as I have demonstrated in this case. I think that corrective steps need to be taken on the Pharmacare program. You know full well that you are in a budgetary surplus situation here and that your Pharmacare reduction program saved you peanuts in comparison to your overall health care budget and that it would be wise for you, and I say to the Minister of Finance (Mr. Gilleshammer), to look at restoring the Pharmacare program to what it originally had been in this province.

In addition, I am finding calls coming in about quality of food in hospitals, constituents calling me from their hospital bed telling me about the poor quality of food, and I am talking community hospitals here. They are quite distressed that they are in a situation where they are confined to hospital for extended periods of time—and I am not talking long-term care patients, even though that is also a problem. I am talking about patients, acute care patients, that are having to eat this reheated or rethermalized food in the hospitals. They are telling me, they are calling me from their hospital beds, so they know first-hand what the situation is in the hospitals and they are not happy with it.

I have also received a call recently from a family. The woman was hospitalized, is still in

hospital, has had major surgery, has been sick off and on for two years, has had five operations and now has an infection, and our medical system here in Manitoba cannot find the cause of the infection. So what is the solution? Our medical system in the province says: Take a cheque, make sure you have got at least \$5,000 in your bank account, and go down to the United States of America, the Mayo Clinic, and see if the American health care system can help you, because we cannot do anything to help you here in Manitoba.

That is what is being recommended to this family and they state—that when they call me and this gentleman tells me, he says: I think my wife is dying. She is in a hospital, they have got her on morphine, they have got her on antibiotics because of the infection trying to keep it under control. It is not curing because she has been on it for weeks. The only solution they had was for him to take a \$5,000 cheque and travel to the United States.

I say there is something wrong with our health system here. I think it has something to do with the disappearance of our specialists when we have to rely on other non-Canadian hospital systems to provide the necessary treatment and care for families like this family. I hope this woman will be cured, because I can tell you that it took us two weeks of phone call efforts every day trying to get our medical system here in Manitoba to move to help this woman. The delay in the system here is deplorable. Nobody should have to wait that long for somebody to make a financial decision on whether or not we should send this person to Toronto or Montreal or to the Mayo Clinic in the U.S. That decision should be made not on the basis of a financial consideration here, but that person should be sent off if we cannot provide that medical care here in Manitoba. Let us worry about the medical bill after we cure the person, not make that part of the primary decision before we decide where we are going to send them. That is what the family in my community has asked me to convey to this Legislature.

I go back to the throne speech. It talks about health care workers and other government service people. I look at the fact that the new

Minister of Labour (Mr. Radcliffe) has appointed Professor Wally Fox-Decent to be the arbiter or the mediator in the dispute between the provincial government and the nurses. I find it quite interesting that the government thinks that through their essential services legislation that you brought in at the behest of the Manitoba Health Organizations I believe it was a couple of years ago, a year and a half ago—I have been so long out of this Chamber I cannot even remember how long it has been since we dealt with this legislation—but I believe that you think that this legislation, your essential services legislation, is going to solve your problem, should this dispute with the nurses fail.

Perhaps you want a strike. Perhaps what you want is confrontation between the government and the nurses. I do not think that is a good thing for our patients. I do not think that is a good thing for our health care system, including the nurses, and I do not think that is a good thing for our communities. But your essential services legislation may not work as a result of your own undoing. It was your government that made a lot of these nurses—after you cut 1,400 of these nurses and 1,000 hospital beds, these nurses went elsewhere to find work. The ones that did remain in the system are .5, .6, .7 jobs. What are you going to do? You cannot force them to work full time, come in extra hours, if they decide to withdraw their services, because they are less than full time already. So you have a crisis on your hands that is of your own making, and I hope you recognize that if it does come to withdrawal of services by the nurses that you will be the authors of your own misfortune as a result of the way you have treated the nurses in our health care system in Manitoba.

Mr. Marcel Laurendeau, Deputy Speaker, in the Chair

Going back to the throne speech, there were parts of the throne speech that I found quite humorous. I deal with some of the facts that you relate to about Manitoba's strong transportation sector and how the railways are doing so well. I want to give you a bit of background about how false your message is. I look back to the Manitoba Transportation Action Plan to the Year 2000, which we are rapidly approaching. This

study was conducted by John Heads of the University of Manitoba Transport Institute in 1990.

I look to some of the figures here. In that time, in 1989, because they are using 1989 data for that study, rail employment in Winnipeg and in Manitoba was 8,400 jobs. I dare say, because your department will not release the information, because no doubt you are too embarrassed to talk about it, that our rail employment in this province is 2,000 or fewer rail jobs in this province today. So I tell you that we have lost near 6,000 railway jobs. I am talking high-skilled, relatively well-paid jobs, and substituting it with other lesser-skilled, lower-paying jobs in Manitoba.

An Honourable Member: Truckers are not getting paid that poorly.

* (1700)

Mr. Reid: They were not making \$22 an hour, I will tell you that. That is essentially what the wage is for a skilled tradesperson at the railway. So you cannot substitute \$22-an-hour jobs with jobs that are paying you perhaps \$12, \$14 or \$15 an hour and think that it is not going to have some effect in the economy, because there is that spin-off effect as that money turns over. When there is less disposable income, there is less goods and services that are purchased and it hurts us all in the province. So I do not know why you would talk about improvements in the transportation sector, and particularly the rail economy, after you have lost nearly 6,000 rail jobs in this province, and you will continue from what I understand to lose rail jobs.

Just looking at the latest release that came out from Canadian Pacific Railway, work that we used to perform in this province. CPR to assemble GM locomotives, where? Not Winnipeg Weston yards but Calgary. Where is CN doing their work now? Not Winnipeg. They have moved it out to Montreal, Toronto, Edmonton, not here. You gave them a tax break, you gave the railways a tax break on their fuel taxes several years ago, and how have they responded to your generosity? They have taken more jobs out of Manitoba. So we really gained out of that—did we not?—and I say that tongue in

cheek because we lost 6,000 rail jobs in the process after you gave them the tax break.

An Honourable Member: That is smart.

Mr. Reid: That is smart economic planning.

An Honourable Member: Do you know how many jobs were lost when the railway came through this country? When we stopped taking our furs and goods up to Hudson Bay, about 5,000 jobs were lost.

Mr. Reid: Well, I would comment on that except that that was a number of years before my time and I defer to the wisdom and knowledge of my colleague opposite, the dean of this Legislature, who says he recalls quite clearly the fur trade in this province. I have to rely on his expertise and defer to his better advice on that in that regard.

But we have lost a significant number of transportation jobs in this province. So I do not know why you would build it into your throne speech that we have a blooming economy here. In fact, the latest, I think Standard Aero Engines, that new contract they got with the United States military to do engines for aircraft in the U.S. Where are they doing the work? They are not doing it in Winnipeg. They are not doing it in Manitoba. They are doing it down in the U.S., so I am not sure how that helps our employment situation and our skilled tradespeople in Manitoba. Yes, it was a good announcement for the company, and we may get a few administrative or planning jobs out of it or parts-ordering people, but as far as the hands-on building people—the mechanics, the electricians, the labourers—none of them will be hired to build these engines because they are going to do it in a plant in the United States. I am not sure how that helps the Manitoba economy.

I want to talk about another part of the throne speech when it talks about Workers Compensation Board, a topic that is near and dear to my heart. It says in your throne speech that the Workers Compensation Board has moved from a deficit to a surplus position and its improved financial health has resulted in a more competitive economy. Well, there is a term that

I could use but it would be unparliamentary language.

An Honourable Member: It is getting more and more difficult to give speeches now.

Mr. Reid: It is becoming more difficult, but I am sure members opposite being part of the agricultural community will recognize that there are certain amounts of fertilizer that are occurring, and I think that this is one of them.

When you look at the statements that have been made in the annual reports—and I can reference them here for you and pull quotes out of your own government's statements—it talks about where the money came from. It talks about unfunded liabilities, monies that would be owed in the future, much the same money you would owe to your civil servants or your teachers that you have not been showing on the books now for a number of years and has reached a proportion of several billion dollars, I believe. This is the same position that the compensation board was in, and it was an unfunded liability that they had. It was not a huge insurmountable deficit that they had. It was an unfunded liability for future costs.

This compensation board has reduced its support for injured workers in this province quite substantially, and I can reference you quite clearly where that has taken place. In the compensation system, the compensation system has withdrawn thousands of dollars away from injured workers. I am going to give you an example. Previous to 1992, and I am going to give you an example here, an injured worker under the pre-1992 legislation making \$8 an hour working full time would have been entitled to 75 percent of his gross income in the event of a workplace accident, and he would have made \$240 a week. Under the new system that you have devised and implemented as a result of your Bill 59 reforms to the compensation system, that same worker making \$8 an hour working full time, 40 hours a week, at 90 percent of his net collateral income, would receive \$217 a week of income. You have a reduction there of \$23 a week for a person making \$8 an hour, and you would expect that a person at that wage level could hardly afford that wage loss. Now, if you increase that hourly rate to \$9 an hour,

under the old system they would have received \$270 a week. Under the new system that you have devised, that worker would get \$240 a week, a \$30 a week penalty. So the more money that individual would make on an hourly rate, the higher the penalty gets. That is the system you devised.

Now, if a person has a permanent partial disability, an injury for which the recovery is plateaued and which they will never totally recover from, it would be with them for the rest of their life, most likely, under the old system, a worker making \$8 an hour would have earned \$1,039 a month. If the disability was 30 percent permanent partial disability, for example, that worker would have been entitled to, if you extrapolate that out for an average of, say, 28 more working years, \$74,000 over that period of time. Under your system that worker is entitled to \$21,000.

I will tell you how your system is structured. For any disability percentage rated between zero and 10 percent, you get \$1,000, and then \$1,000 for each percent above 10 percent of disability. So if you have between zero and 10 percent disability, you get a \$1,000 lump sum. That worker previously would have got \$74,000 over a period of time, over the rest of their working career, if you extrapolate that out, for a 40-year-old worker.

If you take that worker to the \$9 level, the numbers go up. The worker would have received \$84,000 over that 20 years. Under the new system, they still receive \$1,000 for each percent up to 10 and \$1,000 for everything over that for a total of \$21,000. So you penalize that worker \$63,000, and if you multiply that out by the number of injured workers in this province who have long-term or permanent disabilities, you can see where your surpluses come from and how you are able to generate the surpluses that you have now built into your compensation system. That is how you are able to give that \$70 million back to the employers of this province by way of premium reductions and rebates—on the backs of the permanently disabled workers of this province.

These are numbers that are readily available. You have people in your own departments that

can do the calculations. You do not have to rely on my numbers.

There are many other things that we could talk about, Mr. Deputy Speaker, with respect to the throne speech. When it comes to the off-road vehicles legislation that you are proposing, I would hope we would be able to do that legislation prior to the end of this Legislature, should we move to a provincial general election, and that I would think that, of course, we would want to see what would be included in that prior to us giving our approval. I think it is a positive step. I do not want to be overly critical of everything that is in the throne speech, but I do note that there were a couple of positive things. The off-road vehicle operation with regard to drinking and driving is a positive move, and we would look forward to that.

* (1710)

When you talk about reducing the size of government, I have to ask, Mr. Deputy Speaker, in my closing comments: In the early 1990s, when you assumed government after the 1990 election, you reduced the number of Workplace Safety and Health officers in this province from 57 technical and professional support staff in this province down to 35, so my question for you is that you are talking about reducing the size of government through attrition. Where are you going to eliminate those jobs in the public service? Are you going to eliminate them in Workplace Safety and Health, as you did last time? Or are you going to eliminate them in the social services branch, now that you are amalgamating the city and the provincial plans? Are you going to eliminate other sections of government? So I think you have a lot of questions to answer, and we look forward, should we get to the point of Estimates for the Department of Labour, in asking questions on how these changes are going to affect our government departments and operations, because we do support the public service in this province. Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Hon. Eric Stefanson (Minister of Health): I am pleased to rise to make a few comments about the Speech from the Throne, obviously to speak very positively about what I think is an

outstanding and excellent document and a great vision for the future of the province of Manitoba.

Before I make some comments about the Speech from the Throne, I, too, want to wish the Speaker well, and I want to wish you well, Mr. Deputy Speaker, in terms of the challenges that you will have over the course of the next several weeks and months in terms of the whole role of Speaker and Deputy Speaker. I think I certainly speak on behalf of all members of this House in wishing you nothing but the best with that position and those challenges.

As well, I, too, want to congratulate the new Lieutenant Governor, Mr. Peter Liba, and wish him well in his position who, I think, will do a very good job and certainly has my—

Mr. Deputy Speaker: I hate to stop the minister when he is in full flight. The honourable members will have an opportunity to put their fluff, as they call it, on the record after, but at this time the honourable minister has the floor.

The honourable minister, to continue.

Mr. Stefanson: Thank you very much, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I thought for a minute we were in Question Period there, and I am certainly prepared to revert to Question Period and respond to any questions that they may have across the way.

But, again, just to conclude on the new Lieutenant Governor, I think he is obviously an excellent choice. He has a great track record of community involvement in our province, and I certainly wish him and his wife nothing but the best in that position. I, too, congratulate the pages for accepting their positions, and I think they will find it a very interesting, rewarding and gratifying experience to act as pages here in the Legislature of Manitoba.

I am going to devote most of my comments to health, but before I do, I certainly am very impressed with, as I say, all elements of the throne speech, and I would welcome the opportunity to spend some time talking about, obviously, our balanced budgets, our four balanced budgets in a row, and I, too, look

forward to our next budget coming down very shortly from the Minister of Finance (Mr. Gilleshammer). As well, our balanced budget legislation, the fact that we are actually paying down our debt in Manitoba, all of those positive things that are happening in Manitoba. I will leave further remarks on that issue for another day, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Obviously, the economy is an issue alone that I could take my full time and more to talk about the many positive aspects in Manitoba's economy today. In terms of our record low levels of unemployment relative to the rest of Canada, record levels of employment, all of the economic indicators, the vast majority of them are very positive for Manitoba. The economic growth projections for Manitoba in this year, I believe, have us in the top three. Again, that is a complete story unto itself to talk about the change in Manitoba's economy, the confidence, the enthusiasm that is shown by people in Manitoba in terms of the economic future of this province, but that is a whole other issue for another day.

I have to admit that I was also very impressed by another aspect of the Speech from the Throne on page 5 that goes on to talk about, and I quote from the speech, Mr. Deputy Speaker: "As part of our plan to keep our children at home in Manitoba, my government will be lowering taxes." That is certainly something we have literally done over every budget that we have brought down to date, but I am very pleased to see that continued commitment outlined in our Speech from the Throne.

I know that is an issue that the members opposite have some difficulty with, certainly based on their track record when they were in government back in the 1980s, when I think they increased some 25 or 30 taxes in the province of Manitoba. I think it is something that certainly is at odds with their track record and what I have been hearing from them over the course of the last weeks and months in terms of what their intentions are and their view of the future of Manitoba. So again I was very pleased to see that in this throne speech as well as the establishment of a lower tax commission to undertake further consultations on options on

government tax reform, a very positive aspect of this Speech from the Throne.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, just very quickly before I move on to discussing health care issues, another aspect of the throne speech that I think is well worth highlighting was the aspect that referred to the outstanding job that Manitobans have done in terms of hosting various sporting events. As Minister of Sport, I want to seize that opportunity to compliment the volunteers, the fans, the sponsors, obviously all of the athletes who participated in events to date; the World Junior Hockey Championship, where we set three records in terms of attendance at the event, in terms of financial performance, and in terms of the viewing audience, I believe, for TSN television; obviously, the successful Grey Cup last fall, and so on. Again, I think we are all looking forward to the 1999 Pan American Games.

Manitoba has developed a reputation as being an outstanding province to host an event of any type. It is certainly a reputation that I believe we deserve, again because of the outstanding involvement of Manitobans themselves. We never have any difficulty in terms of attracting people to serve as volunteers, to participate in all aspects of the events. It certainly is something that I think we should all be very, very proud of, irrespective of our political parties and political beliefs.

I do want to move on to health, because health is certainly a very important issue. It is the No. 1 issue, I believe, on the minds of Manitobans and Canadians, and I am very pleased to now be serving as the Minister of Health in the province of Manitoba. I do want to congratulate my predecessor, the MLA for Lac du Bonnet (Mr. Praznik), for his hard work, his dedication, his commitment obviously to health in general and to many of the issues that he had to deal with in his time in the portfolio.

I certainly want to take the high road when I talk about health care issues, which I am sure is the case of everybody in the Assembly, Mr. Deputy Speaker. When the health care system makes the news day after day, it certainly is easy for some, and I say for some, to point fingers and for some to be negative, but health care is

too important to Manitobans and to Canadians for any of us to indulge in mere rhetoric, which is what happens occasionally. The health systems of Saskatchewan and British Columbia, the health systems of Nova Scotia and Newfoundland, the health systems of every other province and territory are facing many of the same challenges that we face right here in Manitoba.

Let us start by looking at the issue of funding and the issue of the federal government's role in terms of health care funding. Federal funding cuts have meant that more and more of the cost of health care is borne by Manitoba today. Today Manitoba receives, if you go back just to the year 1994-95, on an annual basis, we are receiving \$240 million less each and every year in support from the federal government. That is an awful lot of money, Mr. Deputy Speaker, and that is in spite of the adjustments that the federal government just made in their most recent budget. I do compliment them for the adjustments that they made in the 1999 budget, but I would do that very much as just a first step.

The federal budget is certainly not a windfall that some have made it out to be, but in 1990-91—and let us look at some of the numbers—when we began implementing our plan of health care restructuring, provincial health care spending totalled about \$1,488 per capita. That is just back in 1990-91. This past year alone, we are now spending about \$1,691 for every man, woman and child in our province. In that same period of time, the per capita spending by the federal government went from \$298 down to \$175, Mr. Deputy Speaker. So, again, certainly the numbers themselves tell the story in terms of the reductions in support for Manitoba's health care system, similarly right across Canada, from the federal government. As I say, I compliment them on a first step to restoring some of the money that they have taken out of the system over the last few years.

But, Mr. Deputy Speaker, health care here in Manitoba now represents approximately 35 percent of our provincial budget, and I might add, there is only one province in all of Canada that spends a greater percentage than we do in Manitoba. It certainly is our largest

expenditure—I think we all know that—and if this government had not stressed the importance of building a strong economy and getting our financial house in order, we would not have been able to secure and improve the quality of life in Manitoba. But now with consistent balanced budgets and a strong economy, we can protect and we can enhance the services that are so important to Manitobans.

* (1720)

Health care continues to be our No. 1 spending priority, and in spite of some of the pressures facing the system, we are determined both to maintain and to sustain our health care system not only now but for the new millennium, Mr. Deputy Speaker. But the pressure can be even more acute when one considers that the health system is by far the most complex and multidimensional organization that provides service to the public. It includes services directly provided by government such as the Selkirk Mental Health Centre. It includes the spectrum of services provided through the new regional health authorities and the Winnipeg Community and Long Term Care Authority. It also includes services provided by physicians and other care providers, some of whom are employed directly by hospitals and others who are working on their own behalf but are funded through the public system. It includes private and public laboratories, sophisticated health information and decision support technology. It includes rapidly changing medical procedures, technologies and new pharmaceuticals.

The challenges for the system are certainly significant, Mr. Deputy Speaker, but much of the system was built at a time when health care was expressed in bricks and mortar. The system was designed at a time when technology and pharmaceuticals were relatively low cost and exceptions to service, rather than the dominant force that they are becoming today. For example, the budget in Pharmacare has increased by more than 100 percent over the last 10 years, from \$30 million to more than \$60 million. We all know the immense cost the new technologies and new pharmaceuticals are placing on the system. We all know about the pressures that are coming from an aging

population. As well, new strains of influenza, antibiotic-resistant diseases, threats to our blood supply, rising rates of diabetes and a host of other concerns have added to the complexity and the cost of health care and will continue to put some pressure on the system.

But I want you to consider just one issue, Mr. Deputy Speaker. It was referred to by the member for Transcona (Mr. Reid). A new agreement is currently being discussed with the Manitoba Nurses' Union, and many Manitobans in both the public and the private sector have been a part of making some sacrifices in order to help not only protect jobs but to maintain and protect services in Manitoba. This government has every intention of being fair as we recognize the contribution that they have made in protecting the integrity of the economic development of our province, but wage demands have to be realistic. I would hope we all agree with that fundamental objective. We cannot now destroy what we have all worked so hard to protect.

Manitobans, I believe, will support reasonable adjustments to salaries for our nurses and for other people funded and paid for by the provincial government, but they are unlikely to support proposals that would threaten the security and sustainability either of essential health care or any other important services that we provide. As Minister of Health, I will certainly do what I can to give nurses the recognition and the support that they deserve.

Make no mistake, Mr. Deputy Speaker, they deserve an increase in compensation. They deserve an increase in pay. But there is much more to the issue than just reasonable compensation. It is not only about money. Nurses can also be supported and they can be recognized in other ways, and that is why we intend to introduce legislation to update The Licensed Practical Nurses Act, The Registered Nurses Act, The Registered Psychiatric Nurses Act and The Physiotherapists Act. This existing legislation is more than 20 years old, but the role of nurses and other health care providers has obviously changed during that time. Many nurses have told me that much of their frustration comes from not being recognized in the ever increasing responsibilities that they

have taken on over the years. It is safe to say that nurses from 30 or 40 years ago would have some difficulty recognizing the profession in some ways today. The legislative changes will recognize these new roles and they will include enhanced public representation on the governing bodies and committees.

So, Mr. Deputy Speaker, the members opposite will have to acknowledge that Manitoba's health system has been able to sustain and protect itself and to begin some of the complex change that we will need for the new millennium better than many other jurisdictions. There is certainly far more good news than there is bad news.

Let me just give you a few examples, Mr. Deputy Speaker. In spite of some of the issues surrounding the health care system, independent, objective evidence provided by the Manitoba Centre for Health Policy and Evaluation by researchers who are recognized worldwide has shown that the restructuring of our Winnipeg hospitals has resulted in enhanced numbers of critical procedures, not fewer; has resulted in higher quality care, not lower quality; and has resulted in better access, not less access. Long before a single bed was converted to outpatient care, there were periodic headlines in the media about emergency room overcrowding. It is ironic that many of the people who have expressed their concerns about that issue or the quality of the health care system have not actually had occasion to use it. Since becoming Minister of Health just a couple of months ago, I have talked to many Manitobans, to physicians and to nurses and to other Manitobans who have participated in our health care system who have assured me that the service they have received and that they provide continues to be excellent.

I want to acknowledge that the majority of credit and most of the credit for the high quality of care that Manitobans receive in our health care facilities is obviously due to the dedicated professionals who work in our system, to the nurses, to the doctors, to the health care support, and so on, who are also dealing with some change at the same time that they continue to provide quality levels of care, but ultimately it is the people who are the key to the success of our health plan. I am proud of the professionalism

and the additional efforts being made by our health care workers during a period of change and transition. They are placing Manitobans first, and I am committed to making sure that we continue to keep these dedicated professionals and that we can continue to attract the health care workers that we need.

Nursing issues are being addressed by attracting more nursing students and exploring incentives to attract more nursing specialists. I am pleased that nursing programs are now offering more courses at rural and northern sites. I am also pleased that employers are converting more part-time and casual nursing positions to full-time, permanent jobs.

As outlined in our plan, more doctor specialists are being attracted in high-demand fields such as anesthesia and neurology. Allied health professionals have been added and will continue to be added to support rehabilitative care and other important areas of patient care. We are also accelerating recruitment of doctors for northern and rural areas. Medical students today can access a program offering loans in return for services to communities where doctors are needed. To interest more medical students in rural practice, Manitoba Health also offers paid summer work experience with family doctors in rural areas.

One of the interesting things that I learned recently is that studies have been done which show that physicians who have had rural and northern experiences tend to view them very, very positively. Often the decision to stay or go has little to do with money but has much more to do with other kinds of issues and/or choices.

We need to do everything we can to make physicians and their families feel welcome in rural and northern practices, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Some of you in this House may remember that when we began the process of restructuring the health care system almost eight years ago now, this government made a commitment to strengthen community care.

Our Continuing Care Program now has almost tripled its budget over that period. It has tripled. We have added significant numbers of long-term beds in Manitoba. We have initiated

exciting, new examples of delivering services closer to home where people live and work.

Manitoba's home care system today, Mr. Deputy Speaker, has become a model for jurisdictions around the world. I was proud to learn that the national home care conference held in Halifax almost exactly one year ago singled out Manitoba's home care program as a model for Canada. This year alone, since January, home care services were provided to almost 7,000 individuals in Winnipeg alone. Last year more than 30,000 Manitobans accessed this very important community-based service.

I have spoken to many seniors who have told me that they desire to live independently as long as possible, regardless of the health-related challenges that they might face. The Support to Seniors program consists of 226 projects at a cost of \$3 million annually. Manitoba Health has recently added approximately \$445,000 for development of 26 new and 32 expanded support services to senior projects.

* (1730)

These projects assist Manitoba seniors in maintaining their health, remaining in their communities longer, and it reduces the need for home care services. Over the past 10 years, our mental health system has become much less institution based and much more community based. With new community services in place, more Manitobans with mental illness are able to remain independent. This approach helps them build a local support system to cope more successfully as they continue to build their lives within their community.

What I like about this approach is that it is people helping themselves and each other with our support. Another example of innovative community-based approaches is the whole issue of the new mobile breast screening service that was put into service in July of 1998. The program takes two mammogram units on the road to communities throughout our entire province. With this equipment 11,000 more women could be screened each year. This year alone we expect that 33,000 women will be screened, as many as in the last three years combined.

Providing services closer to home where people live and work has also meant developing new ways of doing business. A key example is the way in which we have created a regional structure for managing and delivering health services. While most provinces in Canada have regionalized their services, a fair-minded person would acknowledge that Manitoba's careful approach to regionalization, where we have listened, consulted and acted, is paying off.

We have taken careful pathways in the implementation of our regional plan, and that is leading to a regional structure that is transforming our system for the better without some of the massive disruptions that other provinces encountered. As outlined in our plan, there are many advantages to the new regional system. For example, we are linking prevention, population, health and treatment into a seamless continuum of care. We are using evidence-based decision making and creating a broader base of service, planning and delivery. We have enhanced consumer choice and consumer involvement. Thanks to regional decision-making organizations, like the Winnipeg Community and Long Term Care Authority, like the regional health authorities, the Winnipeg Hospital Authority, we are making progress in providing more efficient, more effective service delivery for all Manitobans.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I am committed to continue to make regionalization work. A little over a month ago we increased funding to the Winnipeg Community and Long Term Care Authority, the Winnipeg Hospital Authority by some \$17.5 million to improve access to hospital care and to develop new options for our province's seniors.

One interesting new option, Mr. Deputy Speaker, is companion care. Companion care will be another new choice for people who can no longer live independently. Through this Winnipeg Community and Long Term Care Authority, care providers welcome older people to live in their homes where they will receive many of the services offered by a personal care home as well as home-cooked meals, use of the kitchen and garden and the opportunity to live as part of a family with dignity and with respect. I think we all know that companionship and a

sense of belonging are essential elements in keeping people healthy. No institution, no matter how good, can substitute for the kind of companionship found in a family-setting environment.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I said I would take the high road and I wanted to share with you the goals for the health system in the new millennium as in our plan. The goals are: maintain a high quality health care system for all Manitobans; improve the general health of Manitobans; ensure services are appropriate, effective and efficient; encourage the system to be flexible and responsive; ensure equal access to services and equal standards of quality.

These are very important goals. They are goals that will preserve and protect our system for future generations. To achieve these goals, the system will have to change in some ways, and it is already changing. That is why we have taken measures to inform the public about the emerging system, about new services and new ways of accessing services. We know that the system is not necessarily perfect and that it can continue to be improved, but we also know that knowledge is power.

An informed public, fully aware of how to use the renewed system, can help to make it work even better, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I acknowledge that there are still some things that have to be done and remain to be done. Just yesterday, I was very proud to be part of an announcement with my colleague the Honourable Bonnie Mitchelson, our Minister of Family Services, whereby \$1.1 million in new funding for better services for speech, language, physiotherapy and occupational therapy services for children was announced. More than 1,000 children will benefit from those additional services and resources.

We also need to do more to protect women's health. Just last year, our government contributed \$5.6 million in funding for the development of a comprehensive breast health program. The Winnipeg Hospital Authority and the Winnipeg Community and Long Term Care Authority jointly announced the implementation of this program in November of 1998, and funding from Manitoba Health will be used to

develop a new site for the program and a rapid access diagnostic centre. This innovative centre will bring breast expertise and services to one site. The consolidation of services will reduce the time that it takes to diagnose a suspicious lump from weeks to days, and the new facility is slated to open in the next few months.

What about aboriginal health? Manitoba needs to establish policy related to aboriginal health and which will do some of the following: to establish a strategic direction for aboriginal health and wellness within Manitoba Health, the government of Manitoba and its agencies; to provide leadership to and to work with all partners to promote aboriginal health and wellness; to provide leadership to all government departments and agencies to ensure that aboriginal health is provided in a co-ordinated manner and that resources are maximized; to create a comprehensive analysis of priority aboriginal health issues with all partners participating in the process; to set priorities for and allocate funds to programs and projects that promote health and wellness—negotiating sources of funds must be a priority of both the federal and the provincial governments; to partner with governments, government departments, agencies, aboriginal organizations and the private sector to ensure that the aboriginal peoples have access to opportunities for good health and to present a comprehensive negotiation strategy to the federal government in all areas and concerns of aboriginal health and wellness.

Another issue, Mr. Deputy Speaker, we need to do more to give Manitobans faster access to testing treatments. One of the highest priorities for this government is to continue to reduce waiting times. I am committed to make sure that our access to service is among the best in Canada.

Two new MRI machines will help us provide more than 3,500 new scans this year. Our capacity for CT scans has increased by 15 percent. With the expansion of the ultrasound services, about 8,700 more procedures can be performed this year.

Additional funding for cardiac care will provide echocardiograms for 3,000 more adults

and 300 more children and cardiac catheterizations for 800 adults.

Bone density services have been introduced into Brandon and have been expanded into Winnipeg. More than 8,000 additional screenings can now be done each and every year.

A very important quality-of-life issue is the provision of hip and knee replacement surgery, and I am committed to continuing to provide faster access to hip and knee surgery. That is why there will be up to a \$7.8-million increase and has been for orthopedic surgery. Up to 600 more Manitobans can receive faster relief from hip and knee problems this year alone.

As I mentioned before, one of the pressures that the system will be facing is the complications resulting from diabetes. Just this year, we have expanded our dialysis capacity by 15 percent, which is making it possible to provide some 15,000 more treatments annually to meet the growing needs. Dialysis services have been added in Ashern and expanded in Portage la Prairie and The Pas. In the coming years we will continue to meet the challenge of diabetes faced by a growing number of Manitobans.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, prevention is by far the most important way to protect the quality of life of Manitobans at risk of this disease. Diabetes is the No. 1 cause of blindness in Manitoba, and this summer we will be working with the regions to develop a province-wide program for the prevention and support of diabetic eye disease.

Another critical priority is to relieve hospital overcrowding. Hospitals should be used for what they were intended. That is primarily acute care. In the next 18 months, we will be adding more than 600 new net personal care home beds to provide better accommodations for people needing long-term care, in some cases who are now in acute care beds.

As I have said before, we have tripled the budget for home care since we began restructuring, and we will continue to enhance this program which is so vital to relieving demand of hospital beds. We are also moving to new approaches for emergency care.

Misericordia's 24-hour urgent care centre is a new service that is taking pressure off Winnipeg emergency rooms and is contributing to improved access to health services.

* (1740)

Another important means of improving access to health services is through primary health care, the basic care that is the first line of defence in the treatment of illness and in the promotion of health. A number of primary health care models are being tested in Manitoba, including four community nurse resource centres. As well, for example, we have already implemented the Aboriginal Health and Wellness Centre. Several additional primary health care centres around the province are in the planning stages, and an example of such an initiative includes the proposal for the Francophone centre recently announced.

As well, Manitoba Health is presently engaged with the Winnipeg Community and Long Term Care Authority in the development of a neighbourhood resource network. This is an organizational framework for co-ordinating the delivery of health care services, but no matter how good our illness care system becomes, it is far better to keep healthy than to suffer the burden of illness or injury. Manitoba has been a leader in reducing incentives to smoke through our anti-tobacco smuggling initiative. I am told that this has been a major factor in slowing the growth of tobacco use among Manitoba children and youth.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I already mentioned our challenge in preventing and treating diabetes. It is important to find ways to encourage good health at the earliest age. Perhaps I am still wearing an old hat, but this approach also makes good economic sense because it helps reduce the long-term demands on our health care system.

I will just quickly touch on a few of the innovative programs that helped families raise healthy children and that lead to the promotion of health. The Women and Infant Nutrition (WIN) provides up to \$65 per month to help women on social assistance eat well during pregnancy and the first year of their child's life.

The Stop FAS works with women at high risk for delivering babies with fetal alcohol syndrome. The BabyFirst funds visits by public health nurses and home visitors to help new parents provide good care and nutrition, and EarlyStart helps families meet the ongoing health and development needs of growing children.

Another critical piece in keeping Manitobans healthy is preventing the spread of infectious disease. Manitoba is expanding vaccination programs to fight infectious illnesses, such as measles, flu and hepatitis B. To help agencies stop the spread of HIV our government provides about \$1 million annually in funding and has established a province-wide co-ordinating committee.

So, Mr. Deputy Speaker, in conclusion, I am fully aware that as the new Minister of Health I am building on foundations that were laid by all of my predecessors. They have faced up to the challenges and some of the pressures on the system, and they have certainly begun the work of building on a plan to ensure the system is not only here today but well into the future.

Everywhere in Canada health system restructuring has been a challenging process. Everywhere in Canada health system restructuring has been met with some controversy. I think we all agree, change, even change for the better, is not necessarily easy, but I believe that we have been fortunate here in the province of Manitoba. We have done more than preserve and protect our health care system. We have laid the foundation for stable and sustainable change for the better.

We are fortunate in Manitoba in another way. Our economy is strong. Our fiscal house is in order. If we worked together, if we have the will and the vision, we will have the capacity to build a health system that Manitobans need and Manitobans deserve.

In the months and the years ahead, Mr. Deputy Speaker, we will need to continue to make new choices and decisions. All of our efforts are aimed at one very important goal, a high-quality health system that is sustainable both now and for the future. That is what Manitobans expect of us. That is what Manitobans deserve, and we must and we will make sure that that happens. Thank you very much for this opportunity.

Mr. Conrad Santos (Broadway): Mr. Deputy Speaker, I would like to just give a preview of what I am going to say, and then maybe we can call it six. I intend to speak about why the Lieutenant Governor invoked the aid of divine providence, why the Speaker, every time we meet here, asks for guidance from the Almighty in running government. I will also talk about the link between the moral foundations of legal rules and generally the interplay between precepts and ideas in politics, how they affect human conduct and our stewardship of government.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Is it the will of the House to call it six o'clock? [agreed] When the motion is again before the House, the honourable member will have 38 minutes remaining.

The hour now being six o'clock, this House is now adjourned and stands adjourned until ten o'clock tomorrow morning (Friday).

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Thursday, April 8, 1999

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