



First Session - Thirty-Seventh Legislature

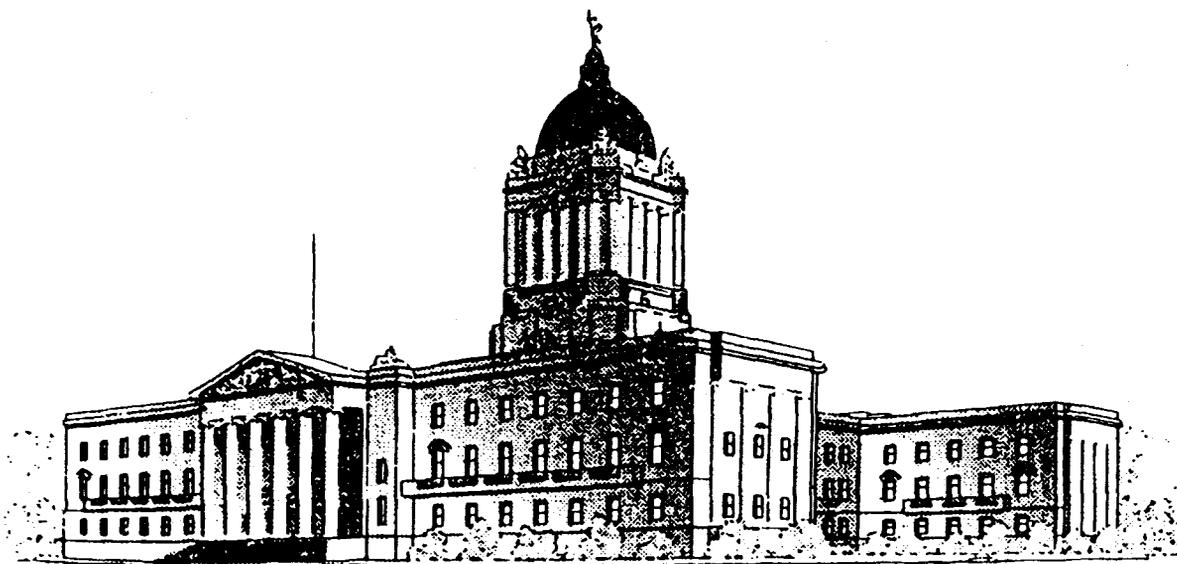
of the

Legislative Assembly of Manitoba

**DEBATES
and
PROCEEDINGS**

**Official Report
(Hansard)**

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authority of
The Honourable George Hickes
Speaker*



MANITOBA LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
Thirty-Seventh Legislature

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

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Tuesday, December 7, 1999

The House met at 10 a.m.

PRAYERS

ORDERS OF THE DAY

THRONE SPEECH DEBATE

(Sixth Day of Debate)

Mr. Speaker: On the proposed motion of the honourable member for St. Vital (Ms. Allan) and amendment hereto proposed by the honourable Leader of the Official Opposition (Mr. Filmon), standing in the name of the honourable member for Interlake who has 40 minutes remaining.

Mr. Tom Nevakshonoff (Interlake): Mr. Speaker, truly I feel honoured and to no small degree humbled to rise in this Chamber today to give my response to the throne speech. If someone had suggested to me two years ago as I drove out to Alberta to look for work in the oil fields in Alberta that I would be standing here today, I would have shaken my head in disbelief.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to begin by offering my sincere congratulations to you on being elected to sit in the Speaker's Chair to preside over this House. This was the first time the Speaker was elected rather than appointed, and I would like to state that in my opinion a fine choice was made. I would also like to commend you for winning the seat on the first ballot against three other contenders, as this is surely an indication that you have the full, unqualified support of the House.

I, myself, experienced a similar victory when I sought the NDP nomination for the Interlake seat in Poplarfield on the day that the election was called. Against three other contenders, I, too, won on the first ballot and as a result felt I had the true support and endorsement of the majority.

I also want to congratulate the honourable member for Wellington (Mr. Santos) for being

chosen to act as the Deputy Speaker. Your obvious wisdom and the experience you have accumulated in this House over the years will serve you well.

I wish to extend my sincere congratulations to all the members on their election to this Legislature. We may be of different political stripes but combined we represent the essence of democracy, that free will is unencumbered and that dissenting opinions are heard and recorded. The political party system also represents the historical dialectic, that of thesis, antithesis and synthesis which is oh so important if a system is to grow and develop in an unbiased and productive manner. Whether a member sits in government or in opposition, he or she plays a pivotal role in ensuring that the development of ideas and the expression of alternative proposals is the primary function of this body. In this respect, I offer my sincere congratulations to one and all.

I would remiss if I did not at this time offer my congratulations to the Clerk of the Assembly, Mr. Binx Remnant, on his lengthy and illustrious career in this Chamber. I am sure all members will join with me in wishing you an enjoyable and relaxing retirement. Our thanks to your staff as well.

At this time, I would like to pay tribute to my predecessor, Mr. Clifford Evans, who held the Interlake seat for the New Democratic Party through nine long years in opposition. In defence of social justice, Clif never wavered, but when it came down to it, he preferred to put politics aside and operate on an apolitical platform so as to more quickly arrive at a resolution to the problem at hand. To him the needs of his constituency were paramount and getting bogged down in political wrangling was not his way of achieving his objective.

I believe the members opposite recognized this quality in him and liked and respected him for it. As I become more experienced in this

Chamber, I hope that I too will keep an open mind to the needs and the opinions of the members of the opposition. On constituency business, whether it was lobbying for things such as the personal care home in Fisher Branch or simply trying to get a road built or a drain cleaned out, Clif was in his element.

Perhaps in the end it was his downfall because the worries of his constituents were his worries. He took their frustrations to heart and experienced their stresses vicariously. When you personally carry the problems of over 12,000 people on your back every day, it has a tendency to wear you down. I hope that I too can muster the strength that Clif so clearly displayed in this Chamber. Now that he has passed this burden on, I wish him well as he moves on in life.

I would like to pay tribute to Clif's predecessor, Mr. Bill Uruski, who served for 21 years in this Legislature, starting off in 1969 as a member of Mr. Ed Schreyer's government. Bill is still spoken of most highly by the people of the Interlake, and it is thanks largely to his efforts and achievements that this seat has been held by the NDP for more than 30 years. I feel privileged to follow in the footsteps of two such esteemed members and will do my utmost to achieve the high standard that they have set in serving the people of the Interlake.

Fellow members of the Legislature, I would be remiss in this address if I did not acknowledge the man most responsible for my standing before you today. That man is my father, Mike Nevakshonoff, who passed away in the early morning after Labour Day last year. It is my deepest regret that he did not live to see his son rise to speak in this Chamber, but his spirit is with me, and the strength of his convictions will be my guiding principle to my dying day.

Dad was born in Kamsack, Saskatchewan, in 1920 and was thus exposed to the full rigours of the Depression. When he was 10 years old, his father died and he had to leave school to help support his mother and four sisters. In the winter he would trap muskrats and in the summer hand-stook the wheat in sheaves for the local farmers. When he was old enough and

things got really tough at the height of the Depression, he was forced to ride the rails across this country in search of work.

As I mentioned in an earlier address, he had no fear of heights, which led him to do many interesting things. As an ironworker, much to the horror of his superiors, he would often run along the girders four to five stories up to catch the white-hot rivets thrown up from the ground below. He washed windows, painted flagpoles, built grain elevators and on one occasion erected a scaffold on the dome of this building to do some work on the Golden Boy.

In his later years as a building superintendent for Peter Leitch Construction, he built many schools, hospitals, bridges and so forth in the Winnipeg area. He was the head man on the job when the Polo Park Shopping Centre was built. Dad was a strong union man and always showed the men in his command the respect they deserved. He raised himself up from abject poverty and as a result became a staunch advocate of the social democratic principles which form the basis of our party today. Men such as Tommy Douglas were his role models. He never wavered in his belief for a single moment in his entire life. He was a very determined man. His primary objective was to instill in his children a sense of social responsibility.

However, I was not an easy child to convince, and we would often argue politics into the wee hours of the morning. As they say, getting things done around our house was like mating elephants. Everything was accomplished with a lot of screaming and shouting. Often, for the sake of argument, I would play the devil's advocate and put forward the right-wing perspective. He would immediately rise in defence of the left, and, over the course of many hours of debate, we would arrive at that synthesis of ideas that I referred to earlier.

What is most interesting about this scenario is that, when I was arguing about politics with others and my father was not present, I invariably found myself taking his position on issues and defending them most vigorously. I knew then that, like father like son, I, too, was a social democrat at heart.

My father led by example. In 1969 he sought the nomination for the NDP in what was then the riding of St. George and is now the Interlake, and probably would have won if he had not had the misfortune of going up against one of the party's greatest members, that same Bill Uruski I mentioned earlier. On my mother's side of the family, politics is a driving force as well. Of course, you all know my uncle, Cubby Barrett, but we will not go into that at this point.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to draw your attention to the fact that I am the third person of this side of the family to sit in the Manitoba Legislative Assembly. My great-grandfather, Henry Liddel Mabb, was the first member to serve in the Interlake area. My great-great-great-great-grandfather, Mr. Fred Bird, a half-breed in the terminology of the day, was a member of the first Legislative Assembly in the province. He was a descendant of James Curtis Bird, one of the first English Hudson Bay traders in the area. Birds Hill Park northeast of the city was his homestead.

* (1010)

Now that I have told you a little bit about my family, perhaps you would bear with me and I will tell you a little of my own personal background. I spent the first 12 years of my life in Poplarfield where my parents owned and operated the Coronation Hotel. After a brief stint in Norway House, my family moved to my mother's home town, Fisher Branch, where we have lived ever since. In 1967 my father purchased a fishing camp called Aberdeen Lodge on the shore of Lake Athapapuskow, just south of Flin Flon. We own this business to this very day, and it has been one of the cornerstones of my life. Not only has it kept our family united in working towards a common goal, which, I think, was my father's intent, but it gave me a keen appreciation for the great outdoors and a strong desire to preserve the integrity of the environment.

In 1979, when my brother and I were fully grown, our father again did us a great service by sending us off to find work in the Alberta oil fields. He gave us an old '71 GMC pickup, a \$500 grub stake, and literally said: go west, young men. That was the beginning of a very

long journey for Paul and myself. Over the past 20 years we have travelled to Alberta to find work, and I have probably driven over a million miles across the prairies. Let it suffice to say that the experience made a man out of me and tempered in me characteristics such as patience, strength, endurance and determination, which should stand me in good stead in my new career as a politician.

After five years of work in the oil fields, the novelty had worn off, and I had matured to the point where I was ready to enter university. As I had travelled pretty well all over western Canada, I decided to go east to go to school and settled in Ottawa, our nation's capital. In 1987 I graduated with a Bachelor of Arts with Honours in East European studies. I had learned to speak passable Russian there and had written a thesis on the Canadian-Soviet trade relations in the oil and natural gas industries.

In 1991 I travelled to Russia to do a language immersion program. I returned in 1992 and lived there for almost a year, during which time I functioned as a trade representative and for a brief period of time worked in the Canadian embassy as I was contracted to do their annual petroleum sector study. This experience broadened my perspective even further and again developed characteristics which will help me in the job now at hand.

In this regard, I would now like to describe to you the Interlake riding that I represent. If ever a riding represented diversity and multiculturalism, the Interlake does. First and foremost, one must take into consideration the significant number of First Nations communities to be found here. Largest by far is the Peguis First Nation, most capably led by Chief Louis Stevenson. Fisher River and Jackhead to the north are led by Chief Crate and Chief Dave Traverse; Dog Creek, to the west of No. 6 Highway, led by Margaret Swan; and the Fairford Reserve by the new Chief, Garnet Woodhouse; Little Saskatchewan by Hector Shorting; Lake St. Martin by Norman Traverse; and Dauphin River, to the far north, by Chief Emery Stagg.

In addition to the native communities, the riding has six rural municipalities: the R.M.s of

Grahamdale, Siglunes, Eriksdale, Fisher, Armstrong and Bifrost.

In respect to communities, I do want to point out that many Interlakers live outside the boundaries of the R.M.s and reserves. The people of Pine Dock and Matheson Island come to mind. Indeed, the people there have expressed to me the concern that it seemed the previous administration had forgotten the fact that they existed at all. I want to assure them here and now that the concerns of all the citizens in the constituency will be addressed.

I will not go into the ethnic make-up because to do so would put me at the risk of omitting one nationality or other, but suffice to say that practically every nation on earth is represented here. While we all think of ourselves first and foremost as Canadians, still we tend to retain and cherish our ethnic origin and express it as a part of our cultural makeup. This is something that makes Canada one of the most unique countries of the world.

For a moment I would like to dwell on the geographical diversity of the riding. The most predominant feature, what makes the constituency so unique, is the fact that all of Lake Winnipeg and all of Lake Manitoba, as well, fall within its borders. The concerns of the people who work these waters and live along the shorelines are many. I will strive to learn the issues and do what I can to help.

I might add, at this point, that as our family is in the lodge business, I have worked on the water myself for over 30 years, and therefore feel a kinship to others who do likewise.

The Interlake also represents the area where we pass from developed and marginal farmland into the swamp, muskeg and bush of the near north. Again, my lodge experience will do me well when it comes to environment and natural resource concerns.

One little-known fact is that the Interlake is home to some of the highest-quality water tables in the country, if not the world, according to a report written by Water Resources. The integrity of this natural resource must be preserved. I will do what I can to ensure that

industrial and agricultural development goes forward bearing this in mind. Development is not sustainable in my mind if pollution is a by-product.

The southern half of the riding is fairly well developed from an agricultural perspective. A lot of the arable land is under tillage and the marginal land is being used for pasture and hay. There is still plenty of land being held in trust by the Crown, which in itself is a unique characteristic. Crown land belongs to all Canadians as a whole, and its privatization must be undertaken carefully and responsibly. We must move into the hinterland at a controlled rate so as to ensure that future farmers have an area into which to expand. As areas of Crown land are opened up to development, a certain percentage of it should be put aside in the form of parks and wildlife management areas so as to ensure that all of the people, not just the landed class, have access to the forests.

In terms of agricultural development much of the land is of marginal quality and so is used for cattle pasture. The cattle industry, as a result, is of major importance to Interlake farmers. The grain farmers are having a tougher go of it in a lot of cases due to world subsidies in other states and a rapidly changing transportation infrastructure. With total disregard for the smaller producers, the railroads and the grain companies are pulling out their lines and the elevators as everything is centralized to the south. The railroad up Highway No. 6 was lifted recently, and the line running up to Fisher Branch and Hudson was pulled years ago. Now, the last major line, the CP track running to Arborg, the largest community in the Interlake, is slated for removal next year. As go the rail lines, so go the elevators.

Agricore has said it will shut down its elevators in Fisher Branch and Arborg once their super elevator in the Rosser municipality just north of the Perimeter is built. How are the small and midsize producers to survive if they have to haul each bushel of wheat a hundred miles to the nearest elevator?

This is not progress. Our rural communities are dying as a result of it. That is my principal

concern. If you have only a dozen large operators farming in an entire municipality, you are not going to have much for towns. The low-quality jobs offered by these megafarms are no substitute for owning your own land and controlling your own destiny.

*(1020)

One solution seems to be value-added processing, and I applaud this approach as long as it is set up to serve the community as a whole. There is a place for a hog industry in the Interlake but not the way it was set up by the previous administration. The provincial government has a responsibility towards all of the people in the province and the environment not just towards those who can afford to play the game.

Why did the Tory government do away with the single-desk selling of hogs without a producer vote and open up the region to mega hog barn development? This is not a solution to the struggling farmer. It is just another form of the corporatization of agriculture. Here was an opportunity lost, Mr. Speaker, for the sake of catering to big business. The corporate agenda was always the Conservative agenda, and the majority of the people have suffered.

Perhaps at this point I might say a few words about the Tories overall economic plan over the past 10 years. Actually it was pretty basic. First of all they scrapped the concept that Manitoba was the gateway to the west and focused on turning our attention to the south to the United States. As long as the U.S. economy is strong and the Canadian dollar remains weak, and that is an important aspect, our economy will do okay, but any change to those two variables and we will be in trouble.

Before, our economy was fairly insulated from the vagaries of the market. Now, thanks to the Filmon agenda, our economies are inextricably linked and, in essence, our throats are bared. The result is short-term economic gain at the expense of long-term stability and control over our own destiny. Lax environmental enforcement and cheap labour have attracted business all right, but is this the

kind of society that we want to live in? Hog barns and call centres, that is the Tory legacy.

Was nothing sacred, Mr. Speaker? Do they think we have forgotten their blatant attempt to privatize home care a few years ago? Here we are dealing with the most vulnerable segment of our society, the elderly, the sick, the disabled. In the case of the elderly, these are people who have worked hard and paid taxes all of their lives, and now in their twilight years they were to be cut adrift by their government and their care was to be opened up to the forces of the market. Their care was to be turned into a business.

Of course, the objective of business is to make money. As the contracts were to be tendered to the lowest bidder, how was this home care firm to go about maximizing profit? By scaling back services and introducing a variety of user fees and by cutting wages, pure and simple, not a desirable scenario in my eyes.

What about the workfare project that they were talking about yesterday? Let us talk about this. Classic 1930s boondoggling is what it was, trying to shame people and force them off assistance. Look at the numbers. For approximately \$300 of assistance, a person was expected to work about 150 hours a month. It does not take a rocket scientist to see that this amounts to about \$2 an hour. Meanwhile, this person's chance to look for work has been eliminated. It is a vicious circle which eventually ends in a person's either going off assistance or being terminated regardless of his or her need.

Let us look at their policy toward education. Three letters tell the whole story, YNN, the Youth News Network. The essence of public education is that it is provided by the state and that it is to be unbiased and impartial. Our children are sent to school to learn and to be educated, not to be brainwashed and indoctrinated into the corporate way of thinking. They say that it can do no harm, that it is only 15 minutes a day, and, besides, the kids are already exposed to advertising from a hundred different sources. They say this is a small price to pay for all the free computer equipment that could be

had. I say that it would be a perilous step out onto a slippery slope.

In the beginning, YNN's requirements will be minimal and the contents of their broadcasts relatively impartial, but once they have got their foot in the door, there will be no stopping them. Just like the Free Trade Agreement, once you have got it, there is no getting rid of it. Twenty years from now, the transnational corporations will be educating our children, if you had your way.

Governments have a responsibility to the people they serve. In Canada this means control over things like education and health care. In my opinion, it should also include basic utilities that everybody depends on such as hydro and the transportation network. Selling off Crown assets for the sake of short-term gain and renegeing on your responsibility to the people just so you can give a juicy tax break to your rich friends is no way to govern. A government is not a business, and its purpose is not to make money but to provide services to the people who put it in power.

On Thursday, November 25, Manitobans heard the first speech of the newly elected New Democratic government. This was a throne speech in which Premier Doer, my colleagues and I take pride. Manitobans sent a very clear message when they went to the polls last fall. They voted for a government that would fix health care, make improvements to our education system and ensure greater security in our homes and communities.

This government is already taking steps to end hallway medicine, reduce waiting lists for surgery and diagnostic tests, train and hire more nurses and strengthen home care. This government is also working on new programs that will attract and keep health care professionals in rural and northern communities as we did in Arborg a short time ago.

Our throne speech also followed up on our election promise to ensure that there is renewed hope and economic opportunities for young people, and the government of Today's NDP knows that the best policy for any province to pursue is a strong education policy. We will

double the number of college spaces over the next five years, make post-secondary education more affordable and provide a stable investment in public schools, so that learning and skills for Manitoba's children take priority over school fundraising drives.

Good government means acknowledging our financial limitations. As the throne speech states, Manitobans have made clear that they expect their government to live within its means. Therefore we will focus our resources on the priorities given to us by the voters, namely improvements to basic government services and sustainable tax reductions.

Our government is committed to public safety and justice in practice and in principle. Manitobans are entitled to safety and security in public, in their homes and in their workplaces.

Our government is determined to create a new relationship with the aboriginal peoples, a relationship based on their aspirations, their rights and their needs. This includes long overdue action on identified recommendations of the Aboriginal Justice Inquiry. Likewise, our government knows the special role immigration plays in Manitoba, and we will work with the multicultural communities and business to reach a significant increase in immigration.

In rural Manitoba, we have a unique and pressing challenge. We know that it is our job to work with the federal government to ensure that the concerns of the prairie farmer are acted upon. Alone we cannot fix the foreign subsidy problems, but working with the public and the other provinces, we are committed to having our message heard in Ottawa and beyond.

In the coming months our government, under the leadership of Premier Gary Doer, will demonstrate the respect we have for all sectors of our society and our economy. We envision a Manitoba economy that will allow business, labour and government to sit down together and forge a new strategy for economic development. Likewise, this government will be vigilant in protecting our natural resources. Our future depends on it.

The recent throne speech serves as a general outline of what our government will do for you in the coming months. It also speaks to the longer term plans of Premier Doer and his government. Finally, it recommitments this government to the mandate it was elected to fulfill, a mandate that put the health, the security and the economic well-being of all Manitobans ahead of the narrow self-interests of a few. It is more than simply our throne speech; it is our promise to Manitobans for a better future.

* (1030)

In conclusion, Mr. Speaker, I would like to acknowledge some of the people who worked very hard to put me in this position. At the risk of omitting someone, I will not attempt to name everyone, but some deserve special mention. The first step was the nomination process, and it was a hotly contested matter with four candidates seeking the position. The key was to boost the membership base as it had slipped somewhat in recent years. With the help of people such as Mel Podaima, Roger Lowe, Mike Leschyshyn, Peter Ozarko in Poplarfield, Jack Kowalchuk, Palmi Palsson, to name only a few, I was able to effectively triple the membership base and bring this group to the nomination meeting.

The next step was the election campaign itself. As long as I live, I will never forget this experience. We had to move quickly as Premier Filmon had called the election that morning, the day of the nomination, but we had a young, energetic, and committed team that worked nonstop. We had a few veterans as well, such as Bill and Elaine Uruski and Arnold and Ilse Sinclair, which was invaluable.

What was most gratifying was the number of people whom I did not know personally who became involved, people who canvassed, scrutineered, put up or accepted signs or who made donations. All of you have my sincere thanks. The provincial office and central campaign were very helpful in getting information to us and sending in professional help when we needed it.

I want to thank the constituents of the Interlake who remained faithful to the party

through 12 long years in opposition and for accepting at face value a newcomer like me, despite a smear campaign that was orchestrated in the latter day of the campaign. I will do my utmost to serve you well.

Mr. Speaker, they say that behind every successful man, there is a good woman. In my case, I am doubly blessed with having my mother, Joyce Nevakshonoff, and my fiancée, Rozanne Imlah, in my camp. When you are in the public eye constantly, the pressure can be enormous, and those you love most often bear the brunt of your frustration and anxiety behind the scenes. Their patience, encouragement and unflinching support are what put me here today.

On that note, Sir, I take my seat.

Mr. Leonard Derkach (Russell): Mr. Speaker, it is a pleasure for me this morning to rise and speak to the Speech from the Throne as was read by His Honour the Lieutenant Governor of our province.

I would like to begin, Mr. Speaker, by first of all congratulating you on your election as the first elected Speaker in this House. I certainly want to wish you well in your tenure as Speaker for the House.

Secondly, I want to congratulate our pages and welcome them to the Legislature for this term and certainly wish them well as they perform their duties in this House.

Mr. Speaker, when I entered the Chamber some 14 years ago, one of the more colourful and interesting persons that I had met in this Chamber was Mr. Binx Remnant, who is the Clerk of the House. Indeed, through the course of time, Mr. Binx Remnant has certainly provided good stewardship for this House and has advised us very wisely on very many issues throughout time. But I think one of the more interesting things is when the House gets a little excited. You will see Mr. Remnant rise from his chair and go scurrying around the House, with his cloak flying behind him. It makes me think of how this man continues to have the energy. I appreciate and respect the fact that he has the energy to make sure that indeed the progress and

the process of this House go on without error and as smoothly as possible.

As he takes his retirement, I want to wish him well and wish him a happy retirement, filled with health and happiness. I hope that he does some of those more interesting things that I know he enjoys to do when he does not have to make his attendance here at the House. So my very best wishes to you, Mr. Clerk, as you take your retirement this year.

Mr. Speaker, I want to speak for a moment about my constituents because I want to thank them publicly for the support that they have given me in re-electing me as the representative of the Russell constituency.

Secondly, I want to thank my former constituents, the constituents of Roblin-Russell, for the support that they had shown me over the course of time. I represented the Roblin-Russell constituency for 14 years. Indeed, those people, who now move on to the Dauphin-Roblin constituency, were folks who I had a great admiration for, who supported me. Indeed, I was very pleased to represent them, and I want to thank them for the support that they have given me over the course of time.

I look forward to representing the new area, which I have taken as a result of the redistribution of boundaries. Let me say that I look forward to representing the people in Clear Lake, the people in Erickson, Sandy Lake, Strathclair, Newdale, Elphinstone and all of those areas that were added to my constituency, including Cardale and Oak River.

It becomes a very large constituency geographically, Mr. Speaker, and one which is going to take some time to get around. There is a lot of travel involved in trying to visit all of the communities in the course of a year, in the course of months. It certainly is a constituency, I think, that has a diversity that is to be admired because not only do we have vibrant rural communities, rural towns in that constituency, but indeed if you look at the diversity, we have the tourism aspect when you look at the south Riding Mountain area. When you look at the facilities that you have at Clear Lake, some wonderful tourism and recreational facilities

have been developed there over time, and then you go to the west side of my constituency where a newly developed ski resort is about to open on December 17. So indeed it does provide opportunities for tourism, for recreation.

Ms. Bonnie Korzeniowski, Acting Speaker, in the Chair

It also is a very diversified agricultural area, which is very important to the economy of our province.

Madam Acting Speaker, the strength of our province has always been in our people. Indeed, over the last 11 years, as we were government of this province, I have to say that many, many meaningful partnerships were developed during that time.

First, as Minister of Education, I was pleased to be able to work with the many school divisions and people across this province who were eager to see improvements in education to ensure that our children were ready for the global economy, if you like, for the new millennium as we approach it. Indeed, we tried to do what it was we could to ensure that we were meaningful partners in the area of education.

Later, when I was moved to the Department of Rural Development, I have to say that I was most pleased to be able to work with so many people across this province, whose interests were to ensure that their communities remained strong and remained competitive in our global economy. If you look at it, Madam Acting Speaker, I have to say to you that Manitoba is indeed blessed with many, many wonderful people who have a genuine interest in seeing that their communities continue to grow and are sustainable throughout the course of time, because we know the attack there is on the rural part of our province.

Over time, rural communities have had to struggle with trying to survive. I guess, we have to say that the first level of government, and that being the municipalities, have really come on stream in terms of understanding what it is they have to do as leaders of their communities to ensure that their communities survive. That

means trying to attract the industries that are out there looking for homes into their communities by trying to grow businesses and industry within their own communities to make sure that this province continues to be a very strong province in the future.

I guess, when I look at the throne speech, I am somewhat disappointed, because the NDP mentioned that they were handed a strong base to build on, and the base is there, thanks to the administration that was there before them. Indeed, our government tried to ensure that, first of all, we put our own house in order. I hope that is something that this government is going to maintain as a focal point as they administer the province's affairs, because indeed keeping your own house in order is one of the primary focuses that one must have.

* (1040)

Now, I have to say that the Minister of Labour (Ms. Barrett) who, when she was in opposition, was as vocal as she is today as she chippers from her seat, should understand that she—[interjection] Chirps from her seat, I am sorry, I will correct that. She should understand that she has the responsibility today to see to it that her department indeed carries out its mandate in a way in which it is going to make Manitobans proud and which is going to be responsive to the needs of Manitobans and is going to fulfill being part of a balanced budget and ensuring that the fiscal responsibilities of this province are fulfilled by her.

You know, our government had to struggle in its first few years to try and balance the budget, and indeed it was not an easy task. But after we were able to crawl out of that terrible state where we were constantly living with the legacy of the former administration and the deficits time and time again, we were able to balance the books of this province, put our house in order, and then come forward with four straight balanced budgets. I have to say to the members opposite that if, let there be no mistake at all, that had this party been elected to govern for another term, the books of this province would have been balanced once again. There is no question about that, and let that be understood.

Now, the new administration, as the new Premier (Mr. Doer) took his seat, he threw up his hands and said, my God, we are not going to be able to balance the books. Well, I have to tell you that indeed a balanced budget is one that we were able to achieve four times in a row, and indeed it was in the last balanced budget their party voted for it. In other words, they said the government was on track. This government was on track. They assisted us by voting in favour of a balanced budget that was going to produce a surplus of \$21 million. But as soon as they took office, Madam Acting Speaker, all of a sudden they could not live up to that commitment, and we are on the verge of seeing a party that cannot live within its means, a party that cannot live within a balanced budget. It is going to be interesting to see what happens with the balanced budget legislation in the next few months.

I have to say that when I was in Brandon at the AMM convention, I believe I heard the comments of the Minister of Health (Mr. Chomiak) who said: Well, you know, it is time to stop blaming; it is time for us to get on with managing. Well, I remember when he was sitting as the critic for Health. The only thing that he could do was to blame. But as soon as he took the reigns of power and became responsible, he said: Oh, no, do not blame me anymore; it is time for us to act, and we want your support. Well, what strange events happened.

Let there be no mistake that Manitoba has never been in better shape than it is today. The reason that it is in such good shape financially is because of an administration that partnered with businesses, that partnered with municipalities, that partnered with communities to ensure that together we walked towards making sure that our house was in order, making sure that our economy was strong so that we could provide the services that Manitobans needed. Manitoba's economy—and this is not fiction; it is fact—outpaced the national economy in 1996, 1997 and in 1998. We have the second lowest unemployment in the country at 5.3 percent.

Now, that is a little different scenario than it was when we took government, but it has happened because of a concentrated effort to

work with all parties in this province, all members of society, to ensure that we created a healthy economy for the benefit of all Manitobans, so that we could provide the services that are needed in health and in education and in family services and all of those important services that Manitobans want and need. Manitoba continues to experience record levels of manufacturing shipments, exports and consumer spending.

Today, more Manitobans are working than ever before. Manitoba gained almost 22,000 jobs in the private sector in the last two years alone, so Manitoba has come a long way. We can go on and on. Over the last five years, Manitoba's exports grew by 72 percent, whereas the national growth was 40 percent. So we have outpaced exports if you compare us to the national averages. Foreign exports of goods and services are equal to approximately one-third of Manitoba's \$30-billion economy.

Madam Acting Speaker, between 1981 and 1988 the previous NDP government more than doubled our debt in just six short years or seven short years, and it has taken us a long time to get out of that debt, to get out of that deficit and to ensure that Manitoba's economy is strong. Do not take my word for it. Go and talk to Manitobans anywhere. Talk to people in Winnipeg. Talk to people in rural Manitoba.

What is the province's economy like? There is not anybody that I have met who says that our economy is not strong. There is not anyone who says that Manitoba's economy is not outpacing the rest of the country. This is not because a government did not care, it is not because a government was not responsible, it is because we managed our affairs prudently. We worked with Manitobans to ensure that we balanced the budgets, that we balanced our books, that we got our house in order, and then we went on to build the economy.

Mr. Speaker in the Chair

I want to spend a few minutes talking about the rural economy, as well, because our province is made up basically of one large city and then we have a rural and northern side of our province, which is vast in area and where small

communities have difficulties because of distances, because of isolation, because we are such a vast province in area to try and be a part of the mainstream economy. But you cannot have a weak rural economy and a strong urban economy and think you are going to have a strong province. It just does not work. You have to have a strong rural economy and a strong urban economy, and together you go hand in hand to build a strong province.

Mr. Speaker, I have to say that that is why we put such emphasis on rural economic development, whether it was to help the small communities like Neepawa or my own community of Russell or Arborg, and then larger communities like Portage la Prairie, like Brandon, like Flin Flon and Thompson and many of those larger communities. And the response was absolutely amazing because these communities seized the opportunities, they seized the vision, and together we went out to attract businesses into our province.

* (1050)

You know, when I hear comments about the hog industry and about the fact that the elimination of the single-desk—and providing more flexibility in marketing of hogs was a negative step. Now this is still a mentality that seems to be held by the present government, and it is unfortunate because we have witnessed what has happened in our economy as a result of taking away the single-desk approach and adding more flexibility and marketing of our products to ensure that we add value to the products that this province produces. Just look at what has happened. Witness. Witness. Maple Leaf Foods would never have come to this province, to the city of Brandon, had we taken that same approach, that same old tired approach that has been taken by the members opposite. And I ask you to look at other provinces. Look at what is happening in other provinces. Look at your neighbour in Saskatchewan and then ask yourself whether or not the single-desk approach is still in tune with today's economy because indeed it is not.

Look at what is happening with Schneider's now, who want to expand their processing facilities again in the province of Manitoba.

Why here? Because there was a government present in this province that had its eye on the target, that knew where we had to be in order to attract these industries into our province for the creation of jobs.

You know, I also made note of the mention in the former Speaker's address regarding call centres. I want you to look at the number of jobs that call centres have created in our province. A new industry, an industry that other provinces would love to have in their cities. Manitoba and Winnipeg have not only created a call centre industry, but an industry that is actually looking at doing research and becoming a centre for knowledge, a knowledge-based economy. Is that not what we are all after?

Mr. Speaker, I ask the government today to rethink its old tired position on some of these issues and to start looking at what it is that Manitobans really need and really require to help our economy grow. When one looks at the Speech from the Throne, one has to ask himself or herself what reference there is to helping rural Manitobans in the throne speech. I think there were only two references made in the throne speech to rural Manitoba and our rural economy. I am wondering now that we have a new department called the Department of Intergovernmental Affairs whether or not one of the mandates of this department is to ensure that attention is paid to the rural economy in our province because it certainly was not evident in the Speech from the Throne. There was nothing mentioned in the Speech from the Throne regarding the rural economy, regarding building on some of the good things that have happened in rural Manitoba, partnering with Manitobans to ensure that we sustain and we continue to build a strong rural economy.

I also noted in the throne speech that there was only one reference made to the difficulties that are being faced by the agricultural community in our province, and that reference was with regard to the disaster that happened in 1997. There was a complete void in terms of what happened in 1999. Now I know that perhaps members do not want to face the reality of what happened in 1999, but in the southwest part of our province there was a disaster. It was probably many more times harsher on the people

in that part of the world than it was on the people in the 1997 flood because in 1997 farmers were able to put their crops in, in the Red River Valley. They were not able to do that in 1999 in the southwest part of our province, so there is no income coming to these families.

I ask members opposite: how do you expect these families to survive, to be able to put their crops in again next year in the hope that they will be able to garner a crop in the year 2000? What support has this government offered to those people, to those producers, who did not get any crops in? Yes, our government paid \$50 an acre. Yes, we did have to respond.

Now during the election campaign, the now Minister of Agriculture (Ms. Wowchuk) said that she was going to consult, and, if they formed government, they were going to be there for the farmers who suffered in the flood of 1999. Yet, when the throne speech was read, there was nothing in it. What has happened? Has the now new Minister of Agriculture lost her clout? Is she not able to address the issues? She went to Ottawa claiming that she was going to be victorious. But what have we seen from Ottawa to date? Not very much. I do not blame the Minister of Agriculture of the Province of Manitoba for that, but I say to her that indeed the words that were spoken through the election campaign do not mirror what the actions are today as she takes her chair in the Department of Agriculture.

So, Mr. Speaker, as we look at the crisis in agriculture in southwest Manitoba as a result of a disastrous situation last spring, I would have to say to the government that I was disappointed in no mention with regard to assisting those producers who are Manitobans, who indeed need to be able to somehow survive through the next year or so. Not only are they hit by a crisis, but, indeed, they are hit by low prices as well.

So what is this government's plan in terms of assisting these producers? Now, we paid the \$50 an acre as a government, and the Leader, the now Premier (Mr. Doer), said during the election campaign—and I was sitting and watching him when he said this—he said that he felt the government paid the money out too soon. Too soon? What did he expect us to do, hold on to

that money and let these people go down the tubes before we would dribble out some money in small amounts? No. We knew that the land needed to be maintained, so we paid out the \$50 an acre so that producers could get out there and maintain their land so there would be some hope that they could put a crop in in the year 2000 in order to be able to harvest a crop in the year 2000. [interjection]

The member for Dauphin-Roblin (Mr. Struthers) asks me whether or not we have a strong, united force. He does not need to ask that question. He knows where we were as a government. We paid out the \$50 an acre, but, in addition to that, our Minister of Agriculture then, the member for Lakeside (Mr. Enns), also put in place a program through MACC to help farmers who were strapped for cash. They were able to go through MACC and borrow up to \$50,000 as an individual farmer, up to \$100,000 as a corporate farm or a family partnership, and then be able to pay some of their bills off, postpone the interest payment or postpone the principal payment for two years, again giving some relief to that family farm that needed it.

So where is this government today? Well, if I look at the throne speech, Mr. Speaker, I am saddened by the fact that there was only a passing mention of the fact that agriculture is indeed a foundation in our province. I am happy to say to the members opposite that as a party we will be there as we were when the delegation went to Ottawa with a member of our caucus who joined the government to make sure that Ottawa lives up to its responsibilities, because there is no question that our province cannot, with its Treasury, ever compete with the treasuries of the United States or with Europe. We understand that, but indeed there needs to be more done than we have seen mentioned in the throne speech.

Now, the member for Brandon West (Mr. Smith) says stay tuned. I say okay, but here is the document that was supposed to provide the direction for this next year. It is called the throne speech. What was in it? What hope are farmers supposed to take from reading the throne speech that indeed your government is going to do anything for them.

* (1100)

Mr. Speaker, I go back to the urban issues that are facing us, and indeed there are some challenges. As the minister of rural development, I worked closely with the minister of urban affairs on the issues that I guess blend between urban and rural, issues like the Capital Region issue. We established the Capital Region task force, the panel that is out there today, I am hoping, doing consultations with the public before the final report comes down at the end of the month.

The Capital Region is a very important region to us as a province, because indeed it holds most of the province's population, if you take a look at the area. It also holds a very important link between rural and urban Manitoba. There are services that are provided and duplicated so many times in Winnipeg that are also duplicated outside the city, services that if blended together could be much more effective in serving the needs of people. That is why we established the Capital Region task force. That is why we had the Capital Region Committee that met at least twice and three times a year to try and focus on the major issues that link rural Manitoba to urban Manitoba.

Again, when I look at the Speech from the Throne, very little is contained with reference to the issues between Winnipeg and the surrounding communities, the Capital Region and indeed how we are going to address some of the issues in that area.

What about downtown revitalization? Yes, we heard a little bit about the core. We heard about Brandon's economic growth, but in terms of the real issues that Manitobans are facing in our urban centres, whether it is Brandon or Winnipeg, very little mention was made of that in the throne speech.

Mr. Speaker, I am proud of the record that our government had while we were in office. Yes, Manitobans have spoken and Manitobans have given a mandate to the New Democrats to govern our province for the next four years, but let it not be misunderstood that Manitobans appreciated and indeed supported the direction

that our government had taken with regard to the economy, with regard to building our economy. If you look and you consult with any other jurisdictions in this country, they actually marvel at how Manitoba has progressed in that short time.

How is it that this little province in the centre of the continent all of a sudden can attract major developments like McCain Foods, Maple Leaf Foods? How is it that we can attract a company like the strawboard plant, the first of its kind and of its size in a rural setting? How is it that we can all of a sudden attract the interests of—

An Honourable Member: Six dollars an hour.

Mr. Derkach: Mr. Speaker, a job is a job, and we are not dictating as a government what companies need to pay their employees. That is something that is between the companies and the employees. That is not where government should be, and we do not intend to be there. If this government feels that it now has to intervene in telling industry what it must pay its employees, then I think we are in for some sad days ahead.

Mr. Speaker, the reason that companies are finding Manitoba an attractive place is because of our tax regime as well. I remember very clearly that, when we took office as government in 1988, we were the second highest taxed province in Canada. Nobody was looking at us as a place to invest. People were looking in other directions, going in other directions. People were leaving this province. Now, I have to say that today we have improved that situation immensely. We are a province that has the second lowest tax rate in Canada, and I am glad that in the throne speech at least the government decided that it would live with the commitment that was made by the previous administration to reduce the personal income tax level by 1.5 percentage points as well.

Mr. Speaker, companies look to Manitoba because we have a competitive advantage here in many ways, even though we have some disadvantages which mean that we are further away from major markets than some other jurisdictions are. But given our labour force—

and I have to congratulate Manitobans for that, because if you look at the turnover in workers in any company in Manitoba, we far outpace, in a positive way, other jurisdictions—we have a more stable workforce, a workforce that is more committed, and that is something that companies look at when they look at our province.

I think our new Premier has misled this province somewhat when he said that the review that was done was an audit. I think Manitobans were somewhat afraid of the fact that this audit was an actual audit and that the province's books were in as bad a shape as the Premier was signalling. It was not an audit. It was a seven-day review. Can you tell me any firm—and Deloitte and Touche would be offended if we as a government or as a Legislature expected them to do a complete forensic audit of the books in seven days? All they did was a review. [interjection] Oh, I would welcome that today.

When we voted for a balanced budget last summer, and it was supported by the New Democrats, with a surplus projected at \$21 million, it did not mean that we were going to leave the books and go away for a holiday. It meant that you had to manage the affairs of the province until the books are closed at the end of March. So that is the challenge to the new government. Can you manage? I am hearing that they cannot manage. They are starting to throw up their hands and say we do not know how to manage.

Well, I think Manitobans will judge this government by its record, and I will be out there to ensure that we keep this government accountable for the actions that they take.

When you look at the whole area of education, and I would like to spend a little bit of time on education because it is an area that I still have some interest in, always have, and will continue to for, I guess, as long as I am on this earth because I was a teacher at one time and I know there are many teachers and former teachers in this Legislature who can identify with, I guess, the interest that an individual might have in education. I have three children who have gone through, or are going through, the education system, and I think it is everybody's hope that our children will receive

the best possible education that they can, so that they can compete effectively in the workplace and in the global economy. The globe is shrinking, and today our graduates and our children are competing with graduates from all over the world.

But how are we going to keep these young people in our province? That is a challenge. We are going to keep them if we continue to grow our economy. We are going to keep them if we continue to provide highly skilled opportunities in the workplace. We are going to keep them if we continue to build on the research that has been taking place in our province, whether it is through Monsanto—and I am saddened by the fact that the Pinawa research station is closing. We tried to do our very best to keep it here and to make the federal government understand the importance of this to our economy, but we have to continue to strive in that direction. We also have to make sure that our students are up to par at various stages of their development.

When I was Minister of Education, I remember for two years I was the chair of the Council of Ministers of Education. During that time, we developed what was called the national indicators test, because provinces throughout this country knew that we had to have some standards by which we could measure the progress of students at various levels. The national indicators test was developed for 13-year-old boys and girls across this country to see whether or not as provinces we were developing at approximately the same rate and how we were competing with countries outside of Canada as well.

We did not fare very well in that national indicators test, I would have to say, that we were probably below the average of the pack. So we had to put measures in place that would bring us up to speed. Mr. Speaker, I am proud of the fact that through that period of time, we put special emphasis on things like literacy, and literacy projects were developed throughout the province. We put special emphasis on things like standardized testing. Why did we do that? Was it just because it was a philosophical bent by a party that wanted to have standards testing and that was it?

* (1110)

I will never forget the first standardized test that was delivered in mathematics in Grade 12 when I was minister. When we administered that test, we found that two schools in Manitoba failed the test. Every student in those two classes who failed the test were below the average, and we wondered why. We said now this is what a test is supposed to do. It is supposed to show us where the deficiencies are, and then it is our responsibility to address those deficiencies. So we sent staff into the schools to find out what had gone wrong, and we found out what went wrong.

First of all, the teachers who were teaching in those classes were not from Canada, and they were teaching an American curriculum. Yet these students were expected to enter university and compete with Canadian students and compete with a Canadian curriculum when they had not been taught the Canadian curriculum. So that was corrected. But that is an example of what a standardized test can do for you, because it is a provincial test which measures whether or not throughout our province our students indeed are competing, and whether they are able to compete for the positions at our colleges and our universities.

Now, why do we offer a test in Grade 3 and in Grade 6 and in Grade 9? Because it is no good trying to correct a problem in Grade 12 if there has been a problem that has started way back in Grade 3 or in Grade 2. Let us start to correct these problems earlier. So we give a test in Grade 3, and we determine whether or not our Grade 3 students, at the end of three years of formal education, are at a standard where they can go on to take their Grade 4. If they are not, then we have to adjust the system, and we have to find reasons why they are not.

Now, the Minister of Education (Mr. Caldwell) announced a diagnostic test. I see my light flashing, Mr. Speaker. I have two minutes left. Let me just say very quickly that I do not object to a standardized diagnostic test, but why are you taking away the standardized test at the end of the year? It makes no sense. I say to the minister, instead of giving directives like that, go back to the schools, go back to the school

boards, consult with them, go back to the parents and consult with them and then make your decisions, rather than simply doing it because of some philosophical bent.

There are many more issues that need to be addressed. The throne speech, I think, was somewhat of a failure, because it did not address some of those very important issues that Manitobans are facing today. How are we going to build our economies? How are we going to build the economy of this province? How are we going to continue to keep our economic environment competitive? How are we going to attract companies to this province, and how are we going to create jobs? These are questions I think that the government failed to address.

It failed in many other areas. It is taking some steps in health today and in education that I think are regressive, but we will wait and see what the results are because indeed I think that undoing some of the good things that have happened in the past is not a positive way to go. If you talk to Manitobans out there and you consult with them, I think they today will tell you they are somewhat fearful at some of the steps that are being taken by this government.

As I conclude my remarks, I want to say that I will continue to represent my constituents to the best of my ability. Indeed, over the course of the next four years, I take my place as a member of the opposition. My job is going to be to keep a watchful eye on what this government is doing and how it is administering the affairs of our province for the betterment of the people of Manitoba. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Doug Martindale (Burrows): Mr. Speaker, I would like to begin by congratulating all the newly elected members of this Legislature on both sides of the House and also the member for River Heights (Mr. Gerrard).

I also want to congratulate you, Mr. Speaker, the member for Point Douglas (Mr. Hickes), not only on being re-elected but on being elected as the first elected Speaker in the history of the Province of Manitoba.

I would also like to welcome the pages and hope that they enjoy their stay here in this session of the Manitoba Legislature.

I want to say farewell to Mr. Binx Remnant, who not only is the Clerk of this Legislature but the dean of all the Legislatures in the Commonwealth. I look forward to being at a reception in his honour later this week. In fact, I think the fact that we may shut down the Legislature for an afternoon is a sign of the esteem in which we hold him, but I think that is being negotiated. [interjection] Shutting down the Legislature may be negotiated. The fact that we hold him in high esteem is not negotiable.

After the election, I was picking up election signs and my 85-year-old father was helping me. I sort of felt like I was exploiting him, but on the other hand, he was thoroughly enjoying spending time doing that. He was very happy to be here on election night and be present to see his son get re-elected. As we were picking up signs, there were some kids on the boulevard and they said: Are you Mr. Martindale? I said: Yes, that is my name on these signs. They said: You won, didn't you? I said: Yes. And they said: What did you get for winning? I tried to explain it in language that an eight- or ten-year-old would understand. So I said: I get to sit in the Manitoba Legislature, that building on Broadway with the Golden Boy on top, which they understood.

But I also receive the honour and privilege of representing the constituency of Burrows in this Legislature, which means that I am their voice in this Assembly. I have always wanted to be a voice, especially for marginalized people and working people who are the majority of my constituents in Burrows. Because of boundary changes, I regret that we lost from the constituency of Burrows four polls south of the CPR yards. We also lost six polls along McGregor, in fact, six of our best polls, which we gave to Point Douglas to help the MLA for Point Douglas (Mr. Hickes) get re-elected.

But I am sorry we lost the residents of St. Josephat Selo, a Ukrainian seniors building, and also Ivon Franco Manor, another Ukrainian seniors building, and also the Ukrainian Labor Temple, where I attend many events. It is also a designated provincial historic site. So I am disappointed to lose that from Burrows constituency.

With the boundary changes, 14 new polls were added to Burrows, all of them between McPhillips Street and Keewatin. So we inherited the Shaughnessy residential area, Gilbert Park public housing, Willow Park Housing Co-op and Willow Park East Housing Co-op, where our family lived for three years. Also in the new boundaries is Fred Douglas Lodge, which I visited yesterday, and Sisler High School, where our son and daughter attended high school and where I attended their December 6 memorial event yesterday. I am proud to call myself a northender. The north end is the only place that we have lived in Winnipeg.

The results of the 1999 election were very satisfying. The people of Burrows voted by a majority for the NDP in every poll, in fact, not only in this election but three elections in a row. Or another way of saying it is that the NDP won every poll in three elections in a row in Burrows constituency.

I would like to pay tribute to Kevin Lamoureux, the former member for Inkster. One of the reasons why his area did so well when he was the MLA there was his personal popularity. In fact, in 1995 the Liberal Party won seven out of 14 polls between McPhillips and Keewatin, but in 1999 the NDP won every poll partly because Kevin Lamoureux was no longer the incumbent there. In fact, in one poll our percentage went up from, I think, 26 percent to 74 percent in Willow Park Housing Co-op. So we are very happy to represent that new area in the Legislature.

Now, I would point out that, as one of the voters said to me: we voted you in, and we can vote you out. None of us here should forget that. In fact, I believe the percentage vote in Burrows went down about 16 percent between 1986 and 1988, and it went up by 16 percent from 1990 to 1995. A change of 15 percent or 16 percent in any constituency would be a major change. In fact, about half of the MLAs here probably would not get re-elected if there was a 15 percent change on the downward side. Anything can happen to any of us, so we should realize that our tenure here is precarious and really depends on how our party is doing and whether we are doing a good job in our local constituency or not.

I would like to welcome two new colleagues in north Winnipeg, the honourable Minister of Labour (Ms. Barrett), the MLA for Inkster, and also the honourable member for The Maples (Mr. Aglugub). We are happy to have them as part of our team in north Winnipeg.

Now, why did the people of Burrows vote once again for the New Democratic Party? Well, I believe they were voting for change. In fact, I think on September 21 the people of Manitoba were voting for change. They voted for a platform that was modest. In fact, that was very helpful in going door to door in the election. Frequently people would say to me and people frequently say to us as candidates in an election or as politicians: why should we believe you? Politicians do not keep their promises. You promise the sky, but you do not deliver.

* (1120)

It was very helpful to say that our party was running on five major promises, or five commitments. So I was able to say to people: we are not promising you the moon. In fact, we are not promising you a billion dollars; we are only making five commitments. So Manitobans voted for a platform that was modest and was focused.

Now, we did not know about the dire financial situation left to us by the outgoing government, but following the financial review we are glad that we did not try to match the spending promises by the Tories. We never thought there was a billion dollars to spend. In fact, going door to door, people were saying: well, for the last 11 years the Tories said there was no money, and all of a sudden we are in an election campaign, and they found a billion dollars. There was a lot of ridicule on the doorstep about the billion dollars. They said: money does not grow on trees; money does not fall out of the sky. Where did Mr. Filmon find a billion dollars?

I think it is very ironic that, when we left government in 1988, we left the government a surplus, and now we are going into government in 1999 and are inheriting a deficit. In fact, there were some very interesting comments from the former member for Brandon West in the

Brandon Sun. This is what Mr. McCrae had to say. He acknowledged the Conservatives blamed the NDP for a deficit upon winning office in 1988 only to reveal five years later the previous government had left a surplus.

I think if you look at the Auditor's report, you will find that there was a surplus of about \$58 million left to the Conservative government in 1988. Now we are inheriting a huge deficit which could be in the hundreds of millions of dollars. In fact, even if we emptied the entire Fiscal Stabilization Fund to cover current-year expenses, there probably will still be a deficit. If there is not, that is all to the good. No government wants to inherit a deficit. In fact, if the deficit is \$400 million and the average borrowing cost for the Province of Manitoba is about 7 percent, that is \$28 million in interest costs the first year, which means that if revenue and expenses are the same in the next fiscal year, we already start with \$28 million less because of interest charges on the Tory deficit, if it is in the range of \$400 million. We certainly hope it is not that much.

I think it is important to note that we made a number of commitments and we plan to keep those commitments, and it is because of these five commitments that people voted for a change on September 21. For example, in the area of taxes, we plan to keep the commitment to a 1.5 percent reduction in personal income tax, effective January 1, 2000, a commitment that was made by the previous government in the last budget, plus our own commitments on property tax relief and reductions in small business taxes, and these will be described in our first budget.

For most Manitobans, property tax relief is the No. 1 priority due to the steady increases in property taxes over the past decade which in turn were due to the provincial government's cuts in school grants and the offloading of responsibilities to local governments. I think people were quite understanding about that. People were upset about the increases in property taxes, especially to support education, but they know that the problem was caused by the former Minister of Education and his successors who kept cutting the budget in education and the result was that school boards increased property taxes. In fact, in Winnipeg

School Division, one of the lowest, it was over 3 percent in some years, but people knew the source of it. They blamed it on the provincial government, not on their school boards. In fact, many of those trustees who raised taxes got re-elected. This government who offloaded to local municipalities and school boards did not get elected because people blamed many of the education problems, rightfully so, on them.

An Honourable Member: Okay, enough already.

Mr. Martindale: I could go into rural development, but time does not permit.

Our second major commitment has to do with rescuing health care. We are committed to ending hallway medicine and have already released a strategy. We are also committed to reducing waiting lists, hiring more nurses and establishing programs to attract and retain health professionals to areas outside Winnipeg.

The crisis in health care was the biggest issue for Manitobans, and I do not think it matters what side of the House you are on, I am sure that Conservative candidates in the election found out that health care was the No. 1 issue. They really wanted to run on balanced budgets, but that was the issue in 1995 when we ran on health care and you ran on balanced budgets. You got elected in '95. In '99 people voted primarily to end hallway medicine and out of their concern for a deteriorating health care system. I am sure that you heard lots about health care on the doorstep in this election, and sure, we heard about taxes, but I am sure that in addition to hearing about taxes you heard about health care. Like I said, if you inspire me, I will be going much longer.

Almost everyone has a story about how they or someone in their family received health care that was not up to the standards they expect. I remember being on a doorstep somewhere west of McPhillips, because I try to knock on every door between every door between McPhillips and Keewatin, between the CPR yards and Burrows, and I remember an individual talking to me at a door about the health care that her father received and she was literally in tears. I am sure that probably almost everyone who ran

in this election heard stories like that about their parents or someone in their family or their children. That was one of the reasons why people voted for change on September 21.

I remember a press conference that we had in the Legislature here and I phoned up two of my constituents and invited them to come down to the NDP caucus room, and I was very surprised that they came. I did not think that a Ukrainian Orthodox priest and his wife would come to a press conference in an NDP caucus but they did, and the reason they came was that they were so upset about what happened to the father of one of them who was in a serious car accident in Steinbach and was transferred by ambulance to Winnipeg, and after receiving care at the Health Sciences Centre was transferred to Deer Lodge Hospital; then, for the second time in a row, because of pressure for beds was sent back to Steinbach and died shortly thereafter. Both in the case of being discharged from the Health Sciences and discharged from Grace Hospital—I meant to say Grace Hospital—they felt that he did not get the proper kind of medical care that he should have got, and, in fact, his doctor in Steinbach said that he died unnecessarily or much sooner than he should have because of the lack of continuity in his care. He believed it was due to the pressure for beds that his patient was discharged prematurely, not just once but twice.

This problem, actually the many problems in health care, will not be fixed overnight. The Tories laid off over a thousand nurses before discovering they had created a shortage. They put their energies into adding costly layers of bureaucracy and pouring millions into wasteful programs like SmartHealth and frozen food. Every change we make will be designed to improve patient care in Manitoba.

Our next commitment has to do with improving education. We are committed to doubling college spaces over the next five years and making post-secondary education more affordable. At the K to 12 level, we are committed to stable funding for public schools and a guarantee that parents will receive an assessment of their child's reading skill at the beginning of the Grade 3 year.

Now people have asked me about getting rid of standardized testing in Grade 3. The reason is that we consulted. We consulted widely before the election with parents and with educators, and there was almost universal agreement or consensus that we should get rid of Grade 3 testing. There was no such consensus with Grade 6 or Grade 9 or Grade 12, and that is why we made this election promise to get rid of standardized testing in Grade 3, and that is why we are following up on this commitment.

Underfunding and cuts to education under the Tories have created a skills crisis for employers, taken resources out of our classroom, and denied access to post-secondary programs to qualified students who cannot afford the tuition. Cuts in school grants have also led to increased pressures on local property taxes. To compete for good jobs in the new economy and keep our young people here in Manitoba we need a skilled workforce. The Tory strategy was pointing us towards competition on the basis of low wages.

* (1130)

Improving public safety is another priority. We are committed to providing more opportunities for kids at risk of getting involved with crime, and at the same time ensuring a stronger justice system response to gang crime and auto theft. Certainly crime is something that I heard about going door to door. It is something that I have experienced personally, and it seems that every time I speak in Throne Speech Debate I can add one more story to the personal problems that the Martindales have had.

As a victim, our house has been broken into twice, our car has been stolen four times, our garage has been broken into four or five times, and now my bicycle was stolen from outside my constituency office. In this case it was my own fault because I did not chain it up, but I must say that the crooks in the north end are getting more sophisticated because this time they left me a replacement bicycle. Now I am a little concerned that it might be hot, so it is going to be turned over to the police, and I am hoping that my bicycle might be recovered because it is a rather unusual one. It is a collapsible three-speed bike, and it has got my driver's licence

engraved on it. So, if you see a white collapsible three-speed, please phone the police or collar the person that is riding it. It is my bicycle.

But, you know, we do not only want to talk about consequences of crime, although consequences are important and dealing compassionately with the victims of crime is important, but we also believe in prevention. There are some very good things going on. There are community patrols, for example. The newest one in the north end is the St. Johns community patrol, and the MLA for St. Johns (Mr. Mackintosh) had a hand in starting it. I believe that they are using his constituency office, and they have invited me to go out and join them on a patrol in my neighbourhood, which I am going to do. I am hoping to organize a community patrol in the new part of Burrows constituency. There are some ongoing patrols like Night Owls that have been going for about a year.

Also, youth justice committees which we are committed to extending to every community in Manitoba. There are three or four in north Winnipeg, and I am planning to visit all of them. In the new year I am going to be attending a meeting of Park West and the Keewatin Youth Justice Committee. We hear many encouraging stories about the ways that youth justice committees deal with youth in the community, with their peers and volunteers in the community, instead of going through the justice system. It is a very positive alternative.

We also want to keep the schools open evenings and weekends, and we are also working on proposals, examining proposals, to reopen the North Y. We hope that those kinds of things are positive alternatives to the street for our youth.

Tory policies have taken away hope from our youth, particularly those most at risk of becoming involved in crime. The Tory incompetence has left our justice system poorly equipped to respond to what are now some of the highest levels of youth crime, violent crime and auto theft in Canada. We are suggesting practical steps that are long overdue, a new gang unit in the Prosecutions branch, car theft penalties that have more bite, opening up our schools at nights and on weekends, as I said, to

give young people more recreation and learning opportunities.

Implementing the Aboriginal Justice Inquiry recommendations is another priority. We have already acted on the first recommendation of the 1991 Aboriginal Justice Inquiry, which was to establish an implementation commission. Reported in 1991, this is late 1999, and finally we have implementation of one of the recommendations. You know, we are on the receiving end of many delegations and groups that come to meet with our caucus, and some of them meet with all caucuses. I remember meeting with the United Church, briefed a government committee, and we asked them about their presentation to the government caucus. One of the things they told us was that the government caucus—the Conservative government at that time—told them that they had implemented 100 recommendations of the AJI report. So I found that most intriguing. In fact, I did not believe it. So I asked the United Church to get back to the government and ask for a list of those 100 things that they implemented. I am still waiting for the list, because I do not think it exists. I do not think they implemented hardly anything from more than a hundred recommendations in the Aboriginal Justice Inquiry.

I would like to tell a rather revealing story here that comes from one of my colleagues whom I phoned the day after he was sworn into cabinet. I phoned him about nine o'clock at night, and he phoned me back at ten o'clock. I was quite impressed. He told me that he had had over 300 phone calls since he was sworn in at about six o'clock the night before. That is really quite amazing, but it is a very illustrative story, because the people who were phoning him were the people who felt left out by the previous government for 11 years and now they feel—

An Honourable Member: It is a long time.

Mr. Martindale: And 11 years is a long time. Now they feel they had access to the government, that there was an openness to meeting with them and finally they were going to be heard by this government, and not only

would they be heard but their concerns would be acted on, so I think this is a hopeful story.

An Honourable Member: Do not be too mean on the opposition.

Mr. Martindale: Well, he is part of a collective. He is part of a caucus, and if those 300 people felt left out for 11 years he is one of the reasons. He is part of that caucus, and those—[interjection] Well, I am not surprised that the member for Pembina (Mr. Dyck) feels that he is taking it personally. I can assure him that I do not intend to direct this at him personally. I am saying that it was his caucus and his government that made these people feel left out for 11 years and now they feel included by our government because their voice is going to be heard and their concerns are going to be acted upon.

An Honourable Member: Someone is cheering for you.

Mr. Martindale: Well, there are a lot of people cheering for us who are not in this Chamber this morning, who are the people who are out there in constituencies like Burrows and 31 other seats who support this government and its agenda and who voted for change on September 21. They are cheering many of the things that we are doing not only with frozen food but many, many other issues, ending hallway medicine and—[interjection] Well, I think the member for Pembina needs to go door knocking with me in Burrows and listen to what people are saying about our government because so far it is all positive.

An Honourable Member: Okay, I will not interrupt you.

Mr. Martindale: Well, I really do not mind the interruptions. It really inspires me to reply to these ad hoc interjections.

We are also acting to give better protection to child victims in the legal system, and we are encouraging the federal government to ensure that its laws against child pornography are enforceable, even if in the last resort it has to invoke the notwithstanding clause. Nine years of inaction by the Tories followed the release of

the AJI report. We are looking at practical steps to bring justice closer to home for aboriginal communities, steps that will make the operation of justice less alien to First Nations citizens and may end up saving the justice system money.

In the area of environmental protection, we are committed to banning the sale of bulk water out of Manitoba lakes and rivers and to improving the protection of our water. We will also continue to work with Manitoba fishers and concerned citizens to oppose North Dakota water projects that threaten our environment.

The member for Pembina (Mr. Dyck) wants to comment on my use of the word "fishers" as opposed to fishermen. Perhaps we could educate him on using nonsexist language. In fact, I have a manual on nonsexist language in written reports and speeches, and I would be happy to loan it to him in order that he could incorporate nonsexist language in his speeches. [interjection] The honourable Minister of Culture (Ms. McGifford) says she would be happy to assist me, so we will have two people educating the member for Pembina.

In the area of improving democracy, we are committed to giving Manitobans a say in any proposed sale of Crown corporations, unlike the former government that did not give Manitobans any say on the sale of the Manitoba Telephone System. In fact, it rammed the sale through the Manitoba Legislature with a Speaker who acceded to the requests of this government and who did not recognize members for privilege and violated numerous rules and traditions of this Legislature in order to pass the MTS bill—[interjection] The previous Speaker, yes, the previous Speaker—in order to sell the Manitoba Telephone System.

We, on the other hand, are going to consult Manitobans before any Crown corporations are sold, because we know that, if Manitobans are allowed to have a vote in selling a Crown corporation like Manitoba Hydro, they will overwhelmingly say that it should continue to be owned by the people of Manitoba, as they would have said had they had a chance to speak on the sale of MTS.

We will increase citizen participation in regional health authority decisions and environment licensing, and we will ban union and corporate political donations.

Manitobans felt betrayed by the sale of MTS following an election in which the Tories denied they had any plans to privatize. We want to ensure the same thing does not happen with Hydro. After all, just where were the Tories planning to find that \$1 billion as they promised? Well, that is what I said to voters on the doorstep. All of a sudden, in the middle of an election, they found a billion dollars. I would be interested to know if the former Premier actually consulted members of his caucus about this billion-dollar promise.

* (1140)

I suspect he did not, that it was dreamed up by the backroom boys—sorry, the backroom people—who thought out of desperation that this would help get them re-elected. So all of a sudden they found \$500 million of increased spending for health and education, and they found \$500 million for tax cuts, but no one was told where the money was coming from. So, when I was talking to voters, I said: well, the only way they can pay for this is either by massive cuts in spending in every department but two, and that is not on because you just cannot find those kind of savings without laying off thousands of civil servants and terminating tens of programs, or sell a Crown corporation or sell a whole bunch of Crown corporations to pay for the spending commitments.

So what I am suggesting is that the billion dollars would be paid for by selling a Crown corporation like Manitoba Hydro. That is what I said during the election campaign, and that is what voters were saying too because we did not trust them. The people of Manitoba did not trust this government and for many good reasons.

The rate of child and family poverty in Manitoba is unacceptable, and we are committed to a number of measures to begin reducing poverty, including annual reviews of the minimum wage, aid for neighbourhood efforts to build and improve local housing, new child-

parent centres in targeted schools, and working with the federal government and the recently announced strategy for child poverty.

I would like to comment on these individually. For example, aiding neighbourhood efforts to build and improve local housing. We hope that, if the deficit is not too great, in some future budget we will have money for new housing initiatives. They are badly needed because of 11 years of neglect of the inner city. In fact, when the federal government cut out money for housing, when the federal Liberal government did not put any money in for housing, the provincial Conservative—

An Honourable Member: Uncaring.

Mr. Martindale: The member for Carman (Mr. Rocan) says uncaring federal Liberal government. This same uncaring provincial Conservative government did exactly the same thing when the federal funding was cut off. The provincial funding was cut off in the same year, so there was no investment in housing in the inner city. [interjection]

It depends on the size of the deficit that you leave us what our ability will be to reinstate some of that money, but we know that there are some serious problems because of boarded-up houses, because of empty lots, because of houses that need repair. We want to work with existing community groups and new community groups on training people on social assistance to do housing renovation and on renovation programs, and, if the money is available, on new construction to fill in some of the empty lots, to rehabilitate some of the boarded up houses. We are going to begin by amending The City of Winnipeg Act so that inspectors have more authority when it comes to some of the derelict housing. [interjection]

The member for Carman is being really silly now. I wish that he had to live for a while in an area like mine where there are boarded up houses—

An Honourable Member: Excuse me. I lived on Pritchard Avenue. Do not come and give me this all mightier than thou.

Mr. Martindale: With all due respect to the member for Carman, Pritchard Avenue has greatly changed since you lived there, and I would love to have you live on Pritchard Avenue again and worry about your garage being burned down at night or the house next door being torched and having these serious social problems and the value of your house declining by a third. So now the average house price in some parts of the north end is only \$20,000. People are not going to invest \$30,000 to fixing up a \$20,000 house, and nobody is going to build a \$50,000 or \$60,000 or \$70,000 house in a neighbourhood where all the other houses are only worth \$20,000.

So if landlords will not fix up their houses and if building inspectors cannot get in to issue work orders, then, yes, The City of Winnipeg Act needs to be amended. In fact, the former Minister of Urban Affairs said to me the other day, well, you are just going to do what we were planning to do. So I think the member for Carman should not be nearly so critical of laws that they were planning to amend.

An Honourable Member: I never said nothing about the law, Doug.

Mr. Martindale: The member for Carman (Mr. Rocan) was reflecting on the kind of action that this government is going to take against slum landlords, actions which are long overdue.

For example, in Burrows constituency, at 733 College Avenue there was a house that was boarded up for 15 years—15 years it was board up. The housing inspectors could not get in because the current law says that as long as it is secure they cannot get in the house, which means that they cannot issue work orders or demolition orders. The member for Carman would be interested to know that it was only after there were two fires at 733 College that the building inspectors got in or the environmental health inspectors got in and issued demolition orders. Now there are two brand-new houses built with volunteer labour by Habitat for Humanity. I am looking forward to going to the official opening there. I think it is on December 17 in Burrows constituency. It is a great improvement to the neighbourhood. The neighbours are very happy that I helped assist them to get the former house demolished that

was boarded up for 15 years. That is why we need to amend The City of Winnipeg Act, to give environmental health inspectors more authority to get rid of some of these houses or to renovate them and put them back in the rental market.

Also, we have promised new child-parent centres in targeted schools. This will really just reverse a policy of the previous government where there were five parent-child centres that were all closed by the previous government to save \$300,000. Now they are using all these pilot projects to implement almost identical programs, the programs that they terminated in 1993. But we will reinstate parent-child centres because they help parents to network. Parents that have supports and parents that feel supported and have friends in the neighbourhood are better parents and are much less likely to be involved with Child and Family Services.

I have the research studies in my office that were done about parent-child centres in the inner city of Winnipeg and how when the parents were involved in these parent-child centres they were less involved with Winnipeg Child and Family Services. So they are an investment in our children and an investment in the future and they prevent the very high cost of having children apprehended.

Also, we hope that we can end the clawback of the National Child Benefit. I would like to quote from a news release that I released on behalf of my caucus on December 8, 1998, asking the previous government to end the clawback. As I said at the time: "It is time to end the clawback in Manitoba and help turn the tide on our shameful child poverty record." That was one of the worst records of the previous government, where at one time we were the child poverty capital of Canada. Now I think we are third. But it is still a disgraceful record, and we need to do many things in order to improve our record here in Winnipeg and in Manitoba.

We are committed to new partnerships, to a partnership approach to government, including, in particular, building a new relationship with Metis and First Nations Manitobans; working in a more co-operative way with business and labour, beginning with an economic summit in

the new year; working with our multicultural communities and the federal government to achieve a significant increase in immigration in Manitoba.

As we enter a new century, we want to establish a new approach to government in Manitoba. If I could pick one word to describe it, it would be an inclusive government as opposed to an exclusive government. We want all Manitobans to feel included, to feel that their voice is heard and that their concerns are going to be taken seriously, as opposed to the previous government that was an exclusionary, an exclusive government that catered to their corporate business friends and almost no one else. There were many people, many groups, many communities and many organizations in Manitoba that felt excluded and left out for the last 11 years. Now they feel and are included. Notwithstanding our current constraints and the need to live within our means, we must work with our citizens to prepare for a better future.

We must take practical steps like securing a quality health system, giving our young people the education options they need, giving our citizens a greater sense of security in their homes and communities that will pay out dividends over long haul.

An Honourable Member: Sure.

Mr. Martindale: I am glad to see the member for Pembina (Mr. Dyck) agrees with this NDP government agenda. We must check the tendency to short-term thinking and expediency in government and focus on the decisions that will benefit our province throughout the coming century. If the member for Pembina agrees with that summing up, then he should vote for our budget and against the amendment, if he were going to be consistent.

An Honourable Member: That is not a budget.

* (1150)

Mr. Martindale: No, I am sorry. Vote for our throne speech. Well, you can vote for our budget next March, too.

We made some commitments to lower taxes. We are going to do that. Managing your deficit is a significant problem because we may have a

huge deficit and it is going to take some managing. It is going to give us problems in our first budget because of the deficit and the interest on the deficit that we are inheriting.

I like this quote from the former member for Brandon West, Mr. McCrae, about blaming the previous government and then finding out there was actually a surplus. I think Mr. McCrae maybe is a little bit—well, I had better be careful what I say here. Let us say that he let the cat out of the bag. Now that he is not in office, he is free to say things that maybe he could not say when he was in office, but now he is telling the truth and saying—and it is in print. Well, he is not here so I can say that. If he were here, I could not say it, it would be unparliamentary. But now that he is not here, he is admitting that the NDP government left the Conservatives a surplus in 1988, and now that we are a government again, the Tories are leaving us a deficit. Shame on you.

So with those few remarks, I am happy to be back in a new session of the Legislature and look forward to many good things happening. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Peter Dyck (Pembina): Mr. Speaker, it is indeed a pleasure to rise in the House to address the most recent Speech from the Throne.

I would like to begin, Mr. Speaker, by echoing many of the sentiments that have already been expressed by the members of this Legislature regarding your historic election as the Speaker of this Assembly. Having had the opportunity to work with you since my election in 1995, I feel very confident in your ability to represent your high office with honour and dignity, and I am sure your stewardship will be of benefit to all members of this House.

As this is my first extended opportunity to address this Legislature since the election, I would like to take this chance to thank the residents of the Pembina constituency for electing me to the second term of office. As many members have already expressed in their address, it is a unique honour to be elected to this Assembly. It is perhaps even sweeter the second time.

After my initial election in 1995, I felt that the residents of my constituency had given me a chance to see what I could do. This election, however, I had to stand on the merit of the work that I had done over the previous four and a half years. I am very honoured and humbled that the residents of my riding have seen fit to send me back to this House to continue this work.

As many of the members of this House are aware, the Pembina area is known to be home to residents of integrity, dedication and hard work. I believe that residents elected me to represent those same values and I am looking forward to doing so. Of course, as many of the members have expressed, the success of elected representatives is largely dependent upon the strength of the family that supports them. With my wife, Irene, and my children—and I will not name them all here this afternoon but they certainly were supportive—and my grandchildren, I do not believe that I could be blessed with a stronger family base. I believe that this is the appropriate season to mention that family is truly a blessing. Those members who have served in this Chamber know well of the demands that elected life places upon not only us as individuals but on our entire families. As I enter a new term, I would again like to extend my endearing thanks to my family for their steadfast support and devotion to myself and our province.

Before I turn my remarks to the recently delivered throne speech, I would like to take this opportunity to welcome and congratulate the many new members of this House. It was not so long ago that I made my first address to this Assembly as I helped move our government's throne speech in 1995. In fact, the member for Lakeside (Mr. Enns), with his many years in this House, would certainly tell me that in many ways I am still a new member of this House having served for only four and a half years. However, looking back over my past term, I believe that I have some experience and perhaps advice to offer members of this House. If there is one key thing that I have learned is that we do not come to this House or this building to learn how people feel or how they are thinking. We come to this House to represent how our residents, our constituents are feeling. It is certainly a very impressive place to work and a

very unique role we play, but as members of this House I feel that we must collectively remember that we do not always find our best advice in the hallways of the Legislature but rather in the homes, on the farms and in the businesses of our communities.

As we go about our day-to-day work in this Assembly, I would challenge all members, new and experienced, to remain focused on who elected us and the reasons they did so. With that, I would like to express a hearty welcome to all new members in this Legislature. I would like to also congratulate the new government on their recent election victory, and while they are still in the midst of experiencing the usual post-election honeymoon that accompanies any new government, I suspect that they are also just beginning to realize the many challenges of government that come with their new responsibilities. It will be a mighty task for members opposite to balance the many different and competing demands of their office, and I also suspect that they are beginning to discover that there are not as many quick-fix solutions to challenges as they may have believed as they sat on the other side of the Chamber. As the months proceed and they reluctantly shed the role of opposition to begin making the difficult decisions that go with governing the province, that reality will become even more clear, I am certain.

I would like to address this new government's throne speech by examining the amendment put forward by our leader the honourable member for Tuxedo (Mr. Filmon). In its initial part, the amendment notes that this throne speech lacks a plan or vision for Manitoba to ensure that we continue to enjoy the economic success of the last decade. The fact that there was so little mention about our economy or its future in this government's first address has been well dissected by our media and local business groups, but as a member who represents a region that has undergone enormous growth and development over the past decade, it was particularly alarming to me that the residents of the Pembina constituency—Mr. Speaker, the facts that have well been documented in this Chamber over the past days, consistently one of the lowest unemployment rates in Canada, more people working than ever

before in Manitoba, economic growth above the national average.

The Manitoba success story has been well documented, but perhaps it has not been as well noted as how we have got to this point. The wheels that were put in motion to bring Manitoba to this point in history where it is enjoying unprecedented growth were not put in place two months ago, as some members across the way would like to believe, but began in 1988.

They began with the new government, under the direction of our current Leader, who saw the need for debt reduction, who saw the need for lower taxes, who saw the need for a diversified economy, and who, as Premier Mike Harris recently stated, blazed a trail that many others have since followed.

Mr. Speaker, today we have an economy that is the envy of many provinces in Canada. Today we stand as a province, not labelled a have-not province but as a standard of how to achieve economic success. New members should not be fooled into thinking that it was always so. In fact, I remember clearly the days when we borrowed money on the backs of our children. I remember when talk of tax increases was an annual occurrence.

Many of the residents in my area remember those days, too, and they have sent me to this Chamber to help ensure that those days do not return again. I trust that the member for The Maples (Mr. Aglugub) is listening.

An Honourable Member: No. Burrows.

Mr. Dyck: Burrows. Yes. Okay.

Mr. Speaker, what members across the way should remember is that it took 10 years of difficult decisions to reach the point where we can say that our children have a quality future in this province. Ten years of difficult decisions, of tightening our belts and ensuring that their money was invested in a way that a long-term benefit would be realized.

Mr. Speaker, members across the way should also be aware that while it took 10 years of good fiscal management to reach this point, it will not take 10 years for a government that is not committed to fiscal responsibility and that does not have a vision for the economic future of this province to undo all the good that has been done.

Indeed, Mr. Speaker, judging by the lack of mention and vision presented by the throne speech, one impression might be that the government is simply hoping to ride the economic accomplishments of the past administration—

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. When this matter is again before the House, the honourable member for Pembina (Mr. Dyck) will have 32 minutes remaining.

The hour being 12 noon, I am leaving the Chair with the understanding that the House will reconvene at 1:30 p.m.

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

December 7, 1999

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