



First Session - Thirty-Seventh Legislature

of the

Legislative Assembly of Manitoba

**DEBATES
and
PROCEEDINGS**

**Official Report
(Hansard)**

*Published under the
authority of
The Honourable George Hickes
Speaker*



MANITOBA LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
Thirty-Seventh Legislature

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ASPER, Linda	Riel	N.D.P.
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PENNER, Jim	Steinbach	P.C.
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TWEED, Mervin	Turtle Mountain	P.C.
WOWCHUK, Rosann, Hon.	Swan River	N.D.P.

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Thursday, December 2, 1999

The House met at 1:30 p.m.

PRAYERS

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

TABLING OF REPORTS

Hon. Greg Selinger (Minister of Finance): I would like to table the following reports, all are from the '98-99 year and all have been previously distributed: the Department of Finance Annual Report; the Special Operating Agencies Financing Authority Annual Report; the Fiscal Stabilization Fund Annual Report; the Debt Retirement Fund Annual Report; the Manitoba Foundation Annual Report; the Hospital Capital Financing Authority Annual Report; Financial Administration Act Annual Report; Crown Corporations Council Annual Report; Manitoba Hydro-Electric Board Annual Report; First and Second Quarterly Reports; and the annual report covering various appropriations voted by the Legislature under the Enabling Appropriations and Other Appropriations service headings.

Hon. Diane McGifford (Minister of Culture, Heritage and Tourism): I am pleased to table the following reports, copies of which have already been distributed: the Manitoba Seniors Directorate Annual Report; Manitoba Liquor Control Commission, three-month report from April 1 to June 30; Manitoba Liquor Control Commission, six-month report from April 1 to September 30.

I am also pleased to table the following report: the Manitoba Women's Advisory Council Annual Report.

Hon. Jean Friesen (Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs): I beg to table the Annual Report of the Canada Manitoba Infrastructure Works for 1998-99; and the Canada-Manitoba Economic Development Partnership Agreement for 1998-99.

Mr. Speaker: Notices of Motions, Introduction of Bills.

Hon. Drew Caldwell (Minister of Education and Training): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to rise today to table the following reports—

Mr. Speaker: Is there willingness in this House to revert to Tabling of Reports? [agreed]

Mr. Caldwell: Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to rise today to table the following reports, copies of which have been previously distributed: the Manitoba Text Book Bureau Special Operating Agency Annual Report 1998-99; Education and Training Annual Report 1998-99; Council on Post-Secondary Education Annual Report 1998-99; Red River College Annual Financial Report 1998-99; Assiniboine Community College Annual Report 1998-99; Keewatin Community College Financial Statements June 30, 1999; the University of Winnipeg Financial Statements for the year ended March 31, 1999; the University of Manitoba Annual Financial Report 1999, and Brandon University Annual Financial Report for the year ended March 31, 1999.

Introduction of Guests

Mr. Speaker: Prior to Oral Questions, may I direct the attention of honourable members to the public gallery where we have with us today fifty-five Grade 9 students from Hastings School under the direction of Mr. Barry Witterrongel. This school is located in the constituency of the honourable member for Riel (Ms. Asper).

Also we have twenty-four Grade 5 students from Archwood School under the direction of Mrs. Connie Stanley. This school is located in the constituency of the honourable Minister of Finance (Mr. Selinger).

We also have fifty Grade 9 students from Sisler High under the direction of Mr. Ken Corley. This school is located in the constituency of the honourable member for Burrows (Mr. Martindale).

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

* (1335)

ORAL QUESTION PERIOD

Health Care Facilities Bed Openings

Mr. Eric Stefanson (Kirkfield Park): Mr. Speaker, during the 1999 election campaign, Today's NDP announced that they would immediately open 100 new acute care beds, and for many months now—and the Winnipeg Hospital Authority will certainly confirm this—a number of hospitals have received notification from the WHA that 120 beds being used as interim personal care home beds were to be shifted to acute care beds no later than the spring of 2000.

Can the Minister of Health confirm that the 100 beds promised during the election will be in addition to the 120 beds resulting from these shifts that are taking place when people move out of these interim personal care home beds?

Hon. Dave Chomiak (Minister of Health): Mr. Speaker, I thank the member for that question because it allows the House and the province to clarify something that was not clear to us, going in, during the regime for which the minister was responsible, and that was the fact of whether or not the government would be funding those beds.

I found out from briefings with departmental officials, and I found out from briefing materials provided to me that, in fact, there was no funding for those hundred. There was no funding provided by that government for the 120 beds. Further, I found out from departmental briefings that in fact the government did not carry through and have funding for even the so-called swing beds that they had talked about maybe opening.

Further, I confirm that a letter written to the previous minister indicated that a whole series of programs announced by the government were unfunded and unable to be implemented, and we have done that. We have funded those programs.

Mr. Stefanson: Well, Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Health is both wrong and, of course, did not answer the question.

I want the minister: will he now confirm for this House that he is confused about these numbers and that he is now contradicting the promise that he made on September 7 on CJOB when he promised, and I quote from that member: We said 100 new full-time nurses and 100 beds in addition to the shifts that are taking place when people move out of the personal care home beds. Will he keep his commitment and promise?

Mr. Chomiak: Mr. Speaker, I think that the former minister and the member ought to take a close look at the press release that we put out on November 22, some 50-odd days after we had been in office. For the first time in my memory, actual beds were going to be opened in this province. For the first time physician bed managers would be funded at every institution. For the first time geriatric assessment teams would be put in place at five different centres. For the first time a fast-track emergency program for emergency rooms that had been recommended since 1993, recommended again in 1995 and was not put in place, has been put in place and funded by this government.

Not only do we make available a hundred beds, a hundred beds after December 1 would be available as an interim to carry us over, but we funded and said funding would be available for those beds. In addition, we are going to be announcing a comprehensive nurses strategy because nurses and people to provide the services are very difficult to acquire in the last 11 years of failure under this government, and it is a big job for all of us, Mr. Speaker, to try to deal with that issue.

Mr. Stefanson: Mr. Speaker, I will ask the Minister of Health, which I think he has just done, but I will ask him again whether he will now confirm for this House and all Manitobans that his promises on health care during the election are now amounting to nothing more than phantom beds, beds that he knows that he cannot and he will not deliver on?

Mr. Chomiak: Mr. Speaker, you know, it is interesting, when we came into office and I went to departmental officials, many of whom were the same officials appointed by that minister and the previous minister and the previous minister, I said tell me about these swing beds that were opened up. I was told not only were the swing beds not opened up over the past three or four years but they were not funded, and they were not funded for this year. That is why, for the first time in Manitoba history, we announced funding for specific beds that we would be opening up in conjunction with the hospitals.

Mr. Speaker: Order, please.

Point of Order

Mr. Marcel Laurendeau (Opposition House Leader): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker, Beausiesne 417: "Answers to questions should be as brief as possible, deal with the matter raised and should not provoke debate."

Mr. Speaker, the question put by the honourable member was nowhere near what the member is trying to say right now. We want to know: will you add 100 more beds than we had committed?

* (1340)

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

Mr. Chomiak: I wonder if the Opposition House Leader will clarify whether he wants me to answer his question or the previous question posed by the member, because it is clear they are different questions, Mr. Speaker.

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

Mr. Laurendeau: It is on a new point of order.

Mr. Speaker: I have to deal with the first point of order first.

May I remind all honourable ministers that answers to questions should be as brief as possible, should deal with the matter raised and should not provoke debate.

* * *

Mr. Speaker: On a new point of order?

An Honourable Member: Let him answer the question.

Mr. Chomiak: Mr. Speaker, as is evident in the press releases we put out November 22, we provided for the direct funding of a hundred beds to be opened up.

I might add that the Conservative commitment is contained in the document that was released in a press conference which indicated the Conservatives were going to open swing beds possibly during the flu season. We committed to have beds open that carry us over and permanent beds in the spring—138.

Mr. Speaker: The honourable member for Kirkfield Park, with a new question?

Personal Care Homes Bed Openings

Mr. Eric Stefanson (Kirkfield Park): Yes, Mr. Speaker, a new question.

In light of the fact that the Minister of Health admitted on CJOB on September 7 that the 100 new beds promised by Today's NDP were not a part of the 120 new beds being added as a result of the shifts that are taking place when people move out of the personal care home beds, can this minister today confirm for this House that in excess of 850 net new personal care home beds will be added to the health care system? Can the minister confirm that he will be following through on the plans to do just that, Mr. Speaker?

Hon. Dave Chomiak (Minister of Health): Mr. Speaker, what I can indicate to the member is that when I came into office I asked whether or not any funding arrangements were in place to fund beds that the government had talked about, and there were no funding arrangements. In fact, the funding arrangements were in deficit this fiscal year to even fund the beds that are in place now. The former government cannot put out a document saying we are going to open 60 to 80 beds and now say, oh, no, we really planned next year to open 120 beds. We know about those claims for beds being opened for the past six or

seven years, of dismal line-ups in the emergency wards of hospitals.

Mr. Stefanson: Well, Mr. Speaker, the broken promise is pretty apparent.

Can the minister confirm that, in the next few months, with the opening of Calvary Place, a hundred new beds; Concordia, 80 new beds; and Misericordia, 100 new beds, that some 280 new acute care beds could be freed up? Will he be providing the specifics and expected dates of the openings of those personal care home beds? I believe some are to be opening very, very shortly.

Mr. Chomiak: Those personal care homes will be opening in the near future. Mr. Speaker, I understand that unfortunately they are five years too late as a result of the government cancelling the capital plans for 1995. Unfortunately, some of them are a month or two behind, and I will undertake to provide to the member the update in terms of the scheduled openings of those particular sites.

*(1345)

Health Care Facilities Bed Openings

Mr. Eric Stefanson (Kirkfield Park): Mr. Speaker, will this same minister please state for the record that none of the current capital projects, including the 280 new beds that he just confirmed will be opening imminently, that none of those projects will in any way be used to fulfill what is now obviously a hollow promise, a broken promise for the hundred new phantom beds for our hospitals?

Hon. Dave Chomiak (Minister of Health): Mr. Speaker, we have done something that has not been done in this province for a long time, and that is we announced in November that we would make available a hundred beds to be provided to the citizens of Manitoba. In addition to that, we provided for 165 additional patients to receive I.V. to keep people out of the hospitals. We provided for geriatric assessment teams at all the sites; we provided for physician bed managers at the site; we provided additional millions of dollars to Home Care to provide home care to people in their own homes, and in

addition we provided fast tracking in emergency rooms, things that have been recommended year after year after year and were unfunded by the government, in order to deal with the issues of hallway medicine for which the people of Manitoba spoke I think quite soundly last election.

Winnipeg Regional Health Authority Board of Directors

Mrs. Myrna Driedger (Charleswood): We understand the Winnipeg Hospital Authority and the Winnipeg Community and Long Term Care Authority were legally merged as of yesterday. I wonder if the Minister of Health could inform this House and the people of Manitoba of the names and occupations of the board of directors that he has put into place.

Hon. Dave Chomiak (Minister of Health): Late yesterday afternoon, the board, the two boards of the two health authorities were formally merged together, and a CEO was appointed to merge the two authorities together. We found that there was duplication and difficulty in communication between the two entities, and we thought it would be in the interests of Manitobans to have these boards merged as one. There is an interim board that has been appointed, and I might add that the chairperson of that board was the same chairperson of the board that undertook the merger of the colleges under the former government, Mr. Rick Dedi. The other individuals are all administrative individuals who are officials of the Department of Health, and I will provide a list of those members to the House.

Mrs. Driedger: Well, if the minister will not tell us the names of the people he has put on the board, would he confirm that he has put into place his own departmental staff to run the board, including Sue Hicks, the Assistant Deputy Minister of Health; Sue Murphy, the Assistant Deputy Minister of Health; Heather McLaren, a lawyer in the department, and that he has no faith in putting experienced community people on the board despite his party's throne speech commitment to do so.

Mr. Chomiak: Mr. Speaker, I indicated in my first response that I would provide the

honourable member with a list, so her preamble was incorrect. I might add that, in fact, what we put in place is an interim administrative board, and if the member had a chance to read the press release that came out today, we indicated a permanent board would be established in the new year that would have representation from previous boards as well as from the community.

Mrs. Driedger: Can the minister also confirm that he has appointed Dr. Brian Postl, vice-president of the Winnipeg Hospital Authority, to be the new CEO of the new Winnipeg Regional Health Authority?

Mr. Chomiak: Mr. Speaker, I believe I indicated that in my first response to the question from the member, and I believe it is indicated in the press release that went out earlier, I can confirm that in fact Dr. Postl has been appointed the CEO of the new health authority.

Winnipeg Regional Health Authority Dr. Postl Appointment

Mr. Darren Praznik (Lac du Bonnet): My questions are for the Minister of Health. During our tenure of office, we were most pleased to secure the services of Dr. Brian Postl as vice-president of clinical services for the Winnipeg Hospital Authority.

My question to the minister is: does he and his colleagues have complete confidence in Dr. Postl, and will they accept his recommendations that he does make to the minister?

Hon. Dave Chomiak (Minister of Health): Mr. Speaker, I thank the member for that question. I think it was very important, for the purposes of continuity and for purposes of administrative purposes, when we made this significant change that was recommended by Manitobans to this particular board, that there be some sense of continuity, and that was one of the reasons why we chose Dr. Brian Postl to be head of this particular merged authority. The other two issues are he is obviously respected and admired in his field and probably by all members of this Chamber, and second, he also has a very significant commitment to the

community and to community-based health care, which is something that is very significant and is an area that we intend as a government to be very proactive in.

* (1350)

Mr. Praznik: Mr. Speaker, I am glad the minister now has such confidence in Dr. Postl. I gather he will confirm to the House then that his party has reversed positions it has taken in the past that Dr. Postl recommended to the previous government and the WHA, actions such as the closure of the Misericordia Hospital as an acute care facility that was opposed by the member for Wolseley (Ms. Friesen); the closure or consolidation of the breast care program and its removal from Misericordia that was recommended by Dr. Postl; the closure of obstetrics at Grace that was opposed by the Minister of Industry (Ms. Mihychuk), that were recommended by Dr. Postl. I am telling the House today that you have reversed—

Mr. Speaker: Order, please.

Point of Order

Hon. Steve Ashton (Deputy Government House Leader): Mr. Speaker, Beauchesne Citation 410 is very clear in terms of preambles to questions, that they should be brief and that supplementary questions require no preambles. I would suggest that the member for Lac du Bonnet was actually closer to a speech than a question. This is not speech period; it is Question Period. I would ask you to bring him to order.

Mr. Speaker: The honourable member for Lac du Bonnet, on the same point of order.

Mr. Praznik: I just think, Mr. Speaker, it is important to establish that they have confidence in Dr. Postl, who recommended all of those actions that they opposed when they were in opposition.

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. May I remind all members that a preamble to supplementary questions should not be allowed.

Mr. Chomiak: We were opposed to so many things that were done by the previous government, including, Mr. Speaker, the disastrous SmartHealth contract that cost over a hundred million dollars that we asked the members not to enter into, including the frozen food experiment disaster that we asked the members not to enter into, and the former minister, I recall, the former, former, former minister who brought together recommendations to close Seven Oaks Hospital, et cetera, we strongly opposed.

Mr. Praznik: Mr. Speaker, my supplementary to the Minister of Health: will he then say to the House today that he will accept and his government will accept other recommendations made by Dr. Postl in his role as vice-president of clinical services, such as the consolidation of the cardiac surgery program at Health Sciences Centre and its closure at St. Boniface Hospital? Will the minister accept that recommendation made by Dr. Postl or does he have no confidence in Dr. Postl?

Mr. Chomiak: Mr. Speaker, as a minister who was formerly responsible for the Department of Health, I am quite surprised at that type of question. You know, I do not want to go down the road of attacking or going after individuals. It has not been my practice in this House and it is not going to be my practice to start now.

I want to indicate, Mr. Speaker, that one of the things that always impressed me about Dr. Postl were his recommendations in the 1995 Health of Manitoba Children, one of the finest reports ever implemented. I can remember standing up in this House on many, many occasions, day after day, asking why the government did not implement so many of these recommendations as they affected the health and the lives of children in the province of Manitoba. So I am quite surprised that an experienced former member of Executive Council would come down with those lines of questions.

Winnipeg Regional Health Authority Faith-Based Facilities

Mr. Frank Pitura (Morris): My question is also for the Minister of Health. Another important issue raised by Dr. Postl and many

administrators in the Winnipeg Health Authority was the need to have more direct control over the operations of each hospital in the Winnipeg system. Will this minister tell the House today whether he and his government will stand by the faith-based agreement signed between the province and the four Winnipeg faith-based facilities or will his government take action to end that agreement?

Hon. Dave Chomiak (Minister of Health): Mr. Speaker, I have already met with individuals from faith-based institutions and given those assurances.

* (1355)

Mr. Pitura: Well, Mr. Speaker, my supplementary to the same minister is: will the minister then confirm to this House and to the faith-based community that their facilities will be treated by him and his new Winnipeg Health Authority as autonomous and independently governed institutions.

Mr. Chomiak: As I have indicated, I have already met with those representatives of those bodies and indicated that in fact that is the case.

Department of Intergovernmental Affairs Staffing Ratios

Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights): My question is for the Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs. One of the claims of the former government was that they maintained a balance between their investments in rural and urban Manitoba. I would ask the minister: to what extent was there a balance when she came into power between the number of people and the investments in rural and urban Manitoba, and what are her efforts and objectives in her managing of the department?

Hon. Jean Friesen (Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs): Mr. Speaker, I think the honourable member is referring to the staffing nature of the department. The Department of Urban Affairs, as you know, used to include Housing which has several hundred employees in addition to the 14 members who came over to the Department of Intergovernmental Affairs. Housing, of course, affects both rural and urban

Manitoba, but it certainly has a great applicability to the city of Winnipeg. So the staffing allocations in the new Department of Intergovernmental Affairs are, as I said at the AMM meeting, in the region of 300 people in the Rural Development section of the department and 14 people came from the Urban Affairs section of the former Urban Affairs and Housing.

It is the intention of this new department that we do get beyond the Perimeter, that we do intend to create a balance between rural and urban Manitoba. I think, as I listened to many of the very eloquent speeches over the last couple of days in this House about the agricultural crisis in Manitoba, that one of the points that was made over and over again is that we are all in this together, that this is not an issue which ends at the Perimeter line. I think that is the intention overall of this government in creating the new department.

Mr. Gerrard: My supplementary to the Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs. The ratio of 300 to 14 hardly seems like balance. The previous government made the claim that they had expended all the money in the WDA agreement. Was this in fact true? Had they made major investments, and was there any money left in the WDA Agreement?

Ms. Friesen: I am afraid I did not hear all of the question, but I do understand what the member was referring to was what he sees as an imbalance between 300 and 14. I want to assure the member for River Heights that in fact what we have here is a situation where the many strengths of both departments can be applied to the issues of economic development into the future of the citizens of both rural Manitoba and the city of Winnipeg.

Mr. Gerrard: My supplementary to the Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs. Can the minister, given her 14 people dedicated to urban affairs, tell us what she is going to do for major problems in the inner city, including arson and other issues?

Ms. Friesen: I thank the member for River Heights for that question. Of course there are many departments across this government,

including Health, including Education and many, in fact most departments do have an application to the issues of the city of Winnipeg. I will not go into it at this point; I assume I will have many other opportunities in the House to talk about the 10 years of neglect of the inner city of Winnipeg, the closing of grants to friendship centres, the number of boarded-up houses that we see in the city of Winnipeg and the reduction in the housing programs of this government. I will have many other opportunities, as I have had in the past, to talk about the causes of the deterioration in the city of Winnipeg.

I would like to remind the honourable member—I am sure he has recognized—that both the Department of Labour and the Department of Justice have made considerable initiatives in the fight against arson in the city of Winnipeg, that they have committed additional fire commissioners, first of all, two fire commissioners when the city first requested assistance and an additional one since then. We have also made a number of initiatives in the Department of Justice, putting together a special prosecution team and working with the City of Winnipeg to deal with an issue which has both immediate consequences, of which I know every member in this House is very concerned, as well as, of course, its long-term causes.

Health Care System Hallway Medicine Reduction

Mr. Jim Penner (Steinbach): Mr. Speaker, during the recent provincial election, Today's NDP said they would end hallway medicine in six months, that is by April 5, 2000. My question to the Minister of Health: does the minister still stand by this promise to all Manitobans?

Hon. Dave Chomiak (Minister of Health): I thank the member for that question because it clearly is something that has affected all Manitobans. To that end, the honourable member might know that, on November 22, after six weeks in office, we announced a comprehensive plan to deal with that particular issue, which included the 138 new permanent beds opened by the end of April 2000, improving admission discharge procedures, extended community-based services like the

Community Intravenous Therapy Program, strengthening prevention programs like putting in an additional \$300,000 into the flu immunization program, increasing the capacity of home care, as well as the Adult Day Care Program.

To that end, we also made available, effective December 1, 100 beds to be in the transition stage. We also expanded fast-tracking in emergency wards. We also put in place geriatric assessment teams. We also put in place a whole series of measures that had never been approached, that had only been announced in some cases, that had not been funded by the government, in order to deal with this very serious problem in Manitoba.

* (1400)

Mr. Jim Penner: I need to ask that question somewhat again because I did not think I caught any answer there. A supplementary question to the same minister: does this promise mean that on or after April 5, no patients will be found in any hallway of any hospital in Manitoba?

Mr. Chomiak: Mr. Speaker—

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. The honourable member for Steinbach.

An Honourable Member: He did not answer yet.

An Honourable Member: He sat down.

Mr. Speaker: I had called for order, that is when he sat down. The honourable Minister of Health, please answer the question.

Mr. Chomiak: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I appreciate your asking the House to be called to order because I could not respond otherwise.

The issue of hallway medicine in this province has become a chronic situation on a year-round basis ever since the former government closed over 1,400 beds in the acute care sector, laid off over a thousand nurses, cut back

programs, and day after day the hallways in this province have been clogged and clogged.

Mr. Speaker, we were elected to office to—

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

Point of Order

Mr. Marcel Laurendeau (Opposition House Leader): On a point of order, Beauséjour 417: "Answers to questions should be as brief as possible, deal with the matter raised and should not provoke debate." Mr. Speaker, a yes or a no. Will there be any hallway medicine, April, as you promised?

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

Hon. Steve Ashton (Deputy Government House Leader): On the same point of order, the question was asked on the hallway medicine, and after sitting here for 11 years watching this government create hallway medicine, this minister is not only going to give an answer in terms of the questions raised, but he is putting a plan right now, a plan of action to deal with hallway medicine, one of the worst legacies of the 11 years of neglect of our health care system under that government.

Mr. Speaker: On both points of order, answers to questions should be as brief as possible and should deal with the matter raised and should not provoke debate.

* * *

Mr. Speaker: The honourable Minister of Health, continue. Would you please finish your answer.

Mr. Chomiak: Mr. Speaker, as was indicated, after 11 years of disastrous Tory management of the health care system, we came into office and after six weeks announced the plan in the short term to deal with hallway medicine; and secondly, I might add that what is required in this province is proper management of the health care system. We will have in place a long-term plan that will not result in the legacy of people

being in the hallway day after day after day year-round in the hospitals of Manitoba.

Minister of Health Resignation Request

Mr. Jim Penner (Steinbach): Will the Minister of Health do the honourable thing and resign, if what they call hallway medicine is not eliminated by April 5, 2000, or is he going to behave like the Minister of Education (Mr. Caldwell) and avoid the question?

Hon. Gary Doer (Premier): A person who has been in less than 60 days, who has visited more hospitals than all the ministers of Health put together since he has been elected; a minister who has listened to more nurses than all the other ministers of Health over 11 years is sitting right beside me; a Minister of Health who listens to patients and is coming forward with short-term and long-term plans for the people of Manitoba, Mr. Speaker. We are not only going to deal with the short-term deficiencies of health care; we are also going to come forward with long-term plans to deal with the fact that members opposite fired a thousand nurses. This minister is going to give hope for Manitobans in health care again by training nurses and getting our health care straight.

The answer is no.

Education System Reading/Writing Standards—Grade 3

Mrs. Joy Smith (Fort Garry): I would like to address my question, Mr. Speaker, to the Minister of Education. During the provincial election, Today's NDP stated that every child would be reading and writing fluently in their Grade 3 year. This was what we called the Grade 3 guarantee. This makes pressure, puts tremendous pressure on teachers across Manitoba.

My question: I would like to ask the Minister of Education to explain in detail, to please define this guarantee and explain to us how teachers can make this happen.

Hon. Drew Caldwell (Minister of Education and Training): It will not be by cutting funding

to the public school system; that is a cinch, Mr. Speaker. It will not be by ignoring outcomes and benefits for students by making a standardized test at the end of the school year providing no opportunity for growth and future development of the students. It will be by working closely with parents and teachers with the children in the school system to develop programs to help the child grow in terms of literacy throughout the school year.

Mrs. Smith: Mr. Speaker, I would like to ask the Minister of Education in the event this guarantee is not reached, and parents and teachers find themselves with students who, indeed, cannot read and write: what is your plan to make this guarantee come to pass, and what financial supports, specifically, are you going to be putting in?

Mr. Caldwell: Mr. Speaker, it will be by working very hard and very diligently and closely with parents and teachers in the public school system, continuously working with people in the public school system, to create the best and most excellent system that we can have in the province of Manitoba.

Mrs. Smith: Mr. Speaker, I will rephrase my question. I would like to know what the plan is, like where is the beef? What is the plan to bring forth the guarantee that all Grade 3 teachers will have the ability to ensure that all students read and write by the end of Grade 3?

Mr. Caldwell: Mr. Speaker, yet again, we will be working closely in contact with parents and with teachers. We have made a commitment to Grade 3 literacy for all students. The Grade 3 test will be replaced with a diagnostic that will take place at the beginning of the school year, so that we can work with students throughout the school year to develop literacy.

Post-Secondary Education Tuition Fee Policy

Mr. Leonard Derkach (Russell): Mr. Speaker, my question is also to the Minister of Education.

A few days ago in the House the Minister of Education confirmed for all Manitoba university and community college students that they would

receive a 10 percent cut—not a rebate, but a 10 percent cut—in their tuition fees. However, the Minister of Education has stated in his own home town newspaper, and I quote: It does not make much sense to give a 10 percent rebate and then schools will increase tuition fees by 11 percent. That is defeating the purpose.

My question to the minister is: can the Minister of Education explain to Manitoba students what steps he has taken to ensure that Manitoba universities and community colleges do not simply increase tuition fees but indeed there will be a cut of 10 percent in tuition fees?

Hon. Drew Caldwell (Minister of Education and Training): Mr. Speaker, it is kind of ironic after the 80 percent increase in tuition that we have had over the last decade that the members opposite would suddenly be concerned about affordability of the public.

* (1410)

Point of Order

Mr. Marcel Laurendeau (Opposition House Leader): Mr. Speaker, Beauchesne 417, the answers to questions should be as brief as possible, deal with the matter and not provoke debate. Each and every time this minister rises to his feet, he is attempting to provoke debate.

I ask you to bring the member to order.

Hon. Steve Ashton (Deputy Government House Leader): Mr. Speaker, on the same point of order.

The very preamble from the member who asked the question talked about tuition fee increases, and indeed coming from the same party that jacked up tuition fees by 80 percent over the past 11 years. The Minister of Education was not only responding to the question but pointing to the hypocrisy of anybody on that side getting up and having the gall to talk about tuitions in this province.

Mr. Speaker: I have been very lenient with both questions and answers and preambles and answers to questions. So could you please answer the question.

* * *

Mr. Caldwell: Mr. Speaker, we are working right now with student leaders and administrations at the post-secondary level, and we will have in due course in the budget that will be presented in the spring the answer to the honourable member's question.

Mr. Derkach: I am asking the minister if he will fulfill the commitment which he stated in this House a few days ago, that students will have a cut of 10 percent in their tuition fees. That means if a student's tuition fee had been \$3,000, on September 1, 2000, that student's tuition fee will be \$2,700.

Mr. Caldwell: Yes.

Mr. Derkach: Mr. Speaker, once again, can I ask the Minister of Education, is he then telling us today that there will be a freeze on tuition fee increases by the universities and colleges of Manitoba?

Mr. Caldwell: That is what we are working for, Mr. Speaker.

Education System Advertising Policy

Mr. Ron Schuler (Springfield): Mr. Speaker, my question is to the Minister of Education. Two days ago, the Minister of Education in his very partisan and political way avoided the entire issue of advertising within our public school system. However, the issue of advertising in our schools will not simply disappear, and Today's NDP must deal with the issue and stop passing the buck.

What steps has the minister and his departmental commissars undertaken to guarantee that absolutely no curriculum time is being used at Smith-Jackson School and their involvement with AT&T, McIsaac School and their collecting of Kellogg's UPCs and any school involved in Wal-Mart's adopt-a-school program? Would he please answer that question?

Hon. Drew Caldwell (Minister of Education and Training): Mr. Speaker, very clearly this government is committed to excellence in education, excellence in the public school

system. We are not going to dedicate any classroom curriculum time for the viewing of commercial television or having corporations buying our children.

Mr. Schuler: Question. What are this minister's plans in relation to setting a provincial policy for all aspects of advertising in Manitoba public schools, so that our kids are not captives of advertisers? Mr. Speaker, where is the plan, is what we would like to know.

Mr. Caldwell: Mr. Speaker, the plan is that no curriculum time shall be used for advertising or selling of commercial products in the classroom.

Education System Funding

Mrs. Joy Smith (Fort Garry): Mr. Speaker, I am addressing this question to our Minister of Education (Mr. Caldwell). Gary Doer, at the state of the province address at the Winnipeg Convention Centre today said funding for education would be at a reasonable level.

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. When we refer to all members in the Chamber, they are all honourable members. The member for Fort Garry, please.

Mrs. Smith: I am sorry. My apologies. Earlier they said at the rate of economic growth. Then they were saying that they were trying to define what they meant by economic growth. Please define once and for all what you mean by economic growth. The funding for education at the rate of economic growth, please define what you mean by that.

Hon. Gary Doer (Premier): Mr. Speaker, we have committed ourselves to funding public education at the rate of economic growth. I reiterated that today at the Chamber of Commerce. We are now working on all the budgets, including the challenges left behind by the previous government. We are expected to make an announcement early in the new year. I want to assure members opposite that in 1996, the announcement was minus two. The announcement in '97, I believe it was again a minus, and then it was a zero and then a plus two.

We are going to stop playing politics with the future of kids. We are not going to have cuts after an election and a little bit of money just before the election. We are going to invest in our kids every year, so they have hope and opportunity for a good quality education here in Manitoba. That is our policy.

Mrs. Smith: Mr. Speaker, I would like to ask Premier Doer, the honourable—

Mr. Speaker: First Minister.

Mrs. Smith: —the Premier, to please address the question more succinctly. You said that funding for education would be at a reasonable level. You were trying to define what you meant by that "by the economic growth." Define what you mean specifically about economic growth.

Mr. Doer: Mr. Speaker, what we mean is that kids should get the absolute benefit of a growing economy. The growing economy produces revenues and opportunities for our public school system. The previous government built 2 percent, I believe, into their base although they did not have the total when you look at the other deficits in other departments. It is really questionable where you are going to get the money. I would like the member to define where they are going to get the billion dollars. We still have not been able to find that either. We are obviously going through December for the completion of numbers for the economic growth in 1999, and I am confident that we will be investing in a reasonable and achievable way for kids. When we make our announcement, you can challenge it, but I would ask you to look in the mirror on what your commitments were over the last four years.

Mr. Speaker: Time for Oral Questions has expired.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

Untendered Contracts

Mr. Edward Helwer (Gimli): Mr. Speaker, throughout the 1999 general election, Today's NDP unveiled proposals to help renew public faith in Manitoba democracy and politics. The Leader of the NDP (Mr. Doer) was quoted as

saying: Public confidence in Manitoba politics has declined. It is time to renew some faith in our democracy. We will ensure that money and influence do not speak louder than the voices of everyday Manitobans.

Mr. Speaker, it is interesting that within days of the election of members opposite, Frontline Associates, which is a company cloned by long-time organizer Carmen Neufeld, landed a juicy untendered government contract. The company received almost \$4,000 for the extravagant swearing-in ceremonies that occurred at the Pantages Playhouse Theatre. I guess that money and influence does speak louder than the voices of everyday Manitobans. Neufeld is the former party president and was the NDP's 1999 election campaign co-chair. Clearly, this is a conflict of interest.

The NDP does not hesitate, upon their victory, to pay off their friends. More accurately and more cynical is the fact that Today's NDP had the people of Manitoba pay off the friends of the NDP, since the bash was supported through government funds rather than party funds. Even more interesting is the fact that the primary concern of the Premier of Manitoba (Mr. Doer) was his image in the paper rather than that of his party's integrity. When asked by reporters if he was concerned about the public perception of handing out a contract to a party organizer, he said: I am concerned about what you are going to write.

Mr. Speaker: The honourable member's time has expired. Order.

* (1420)

Assiniboia Community Organizations

Mr. Jim Rondeau (Assiniboia): Mr. Speaker, I would like to take this opportunity to recognize a number of events that have occurred in our community. The first one is that the Literacy Partners of Manitoba had their annual general meeting in Winnipeg over the weekend, which I attended. This group has worked very, very hard over the last 12 years, bringing a lot of support for literacy instructors, material and a library for

resources for those involved in literacy. They bring information and also conduct a lot of professional development sessions. This group has worked throughout the province, recognized and helped adult learners and children throughout the province learn how to read, write and do numeracy.

I would like to recognize Marg Rose, the executive director, and all the board members and, of course, the membership, the Literacy Partners, for a wonderful AGM and tireless efforts on behalf of a very important sector of our society.

I would also like to bring the members' attention to the efforts of the Grace Hospital volunteers. I attended their Breakfast with Santa, and it was great. There were about 500 people there. There were lots of grandchildren, parents, children having fun, lots of clowns from a number of community support groups. It was great. I was really particularly impressed that they raise over \$150,000 a year on volunteer efforts on behalf of the community and for efforts in that regard. This money has been given for beds, equipment, and worthwhile causes in the hospital. So I would like to recognize that group.

I would also like to recognize the children's centres in Assiniboia, which I attended over the last few days. We have been doing a blitz of children's centres where we provide candy canes.

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

Charleswood Seniors Organizations

Mrs. Myrna Driedger (Charleswood): I am pleased to rise in the House today to congratulate the seniors of Charleswood for the efforts they have taken this year to mark the International Year of Older Persons.

Last fall, I brought seniors from Charleswood together, and we established the Charleswood Seniors Advisory Committee. That committee has been incredibly active, taking part in Charleswood in Motion Days, publishing a quarterly newsletter, and holding a sold-out

seniors' barbecue at the Charleswood Legion in August.

I would like to take this opportunity to commend the Charleswood Seniors Advisory Committee for one of their most outstanding achievements: the creation of a seniors centre at Royal School in Charleswood that will be opening soon.

As the International Year of Older Persons comes to an end, so, too, does the Charleswood Seniors Advisory Committee. The committee will give way to a new committee, Charleswood Seniors in Motion. I am pleased that Age and Opportunity will be stepping in to replace my facilitating role with this group of talented, motivated individuals who show their commitment to their community with everything they do.

I want to personally thank all of the members of the Charleswood Seniors Advisory Committee for their outstanding efforts over the past year. They have truly fulfilled the spirit and intent of the International Year of Older Persons in Charleswood. Thank you.

Manitoba Junior Hockey League

Ms. Bonnie Korzeniowski (St. James): Mr. Speaker, so often in our society we put aside time to recognize the super heroes and to deal with those who seem to be problems, but we rarely take the time to say thank you for a job well done to the folks who, day after day and year after year, voluntarily work with our young people in a spirit of community involvement.

Last week I had the opportunity to attend a junior league hockey game. It was especially exciting to watch my home team, the St. James Canadians, handily defeat the Dauphin Kings in our home rink, the civic centre on Ness Avenue, St. James. Mr. Speaker, I am anxious for them to trounce the Winkler team when they come to town.

Mr. Speaker, I was very impressed with the quality of hockey these young men demonstrate. Our Manitoba Junior Hockey League offers the highest level of amateur hockey in Winnipeg.

They play a competitive 62-game schedule, with 12 teams in two divisions.

Sadly, the game was not as well attended as it might have been in the past. One of the parents commented that at one time, if you did not get there early, you did not get a seat. When I commended these parents on their efforts, well knowing the time and cost commitment required to encourage their children to be involved, a father said: I always knew where my kids were.

Mr. Speaker, this government knows time invested in our children clearly has a payoff. Young people develop a sense of commitment to their community when their community demonstrates a commitment to them. I urge my colleagues here in the Legislature to also demonstrate our commitment to the people who put in such tireless hours coaching and leading, cheering and training. I further urge my colleagues to support the youth of Manitoba by attending their hockey games, their science fairs, their concerts and the like.

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

Balanced Budget Legislation

Mr. Ron Schuler (Springfield): Mr. Speaker, throughout the election campaign, yesterday's NDP told Manitobans they would not change things that Mr. Filmon got right. They said that he got balanced budget legislation right and correct they were. They said they would keep balanced budget legislation. That means balancing the budget each and every year.

What I would like to know, Mr. Speaker, is how can the NDP on the one hand say that they will keep balanced budget legislation and on the other hand say that they will be running a deficit this year. How can the members opposite just throw their hands up, run around like Chicken Little, telling Manitobans that the fiscal sky is falling, while at the same time salivating over their Christmas wish list?

As the Minister of Education (Mr. Caldwell) chose to remind the House, the NDP won the election. Well, I would like to remind the NDP that winning an election means they actually

have to govern. We would like to see them start doing that. Step up to the plate and do what it takes to deliver a fifth consecutive balanced budget to Manitobans. That is what they were elected to do. That is what they promised they would do.

As well, I would remind members opposite of what their illustrious Leader said in this House back in 1988, something that fits uncannily with their inaction today: if you are not willing to make the tough decisions today, you will not have the money to deliver the services tomorrow.

Mr. Speaker, the NDP should stop creating crisis and get on with the job of governing this province. Thank you very much, Sir.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

THRONE SPEECH DEBATE (Third Day of Debate)

Mr. Speaker: To resume debate on the proposed motion of the honourable member for St. Vital (Ms. Allan) and the amendment thereto moved by the honourable Leader of the Official Opposition (Mr. Filmon), when this matter was last before the House the debate was open.

Mr. Jim Penner (Steinbach): Mr. Speaker, it is my distinct pleasure to rise in the House today and offer a reply to the throne speech, as well as give my maiden address as an elected representative to this House.

As this is my first chance to address this Legislature, I would like to take the opportunity to introduce myself to my colleagues in this Chamber and perhaps provide some background on how I became the MLA for the Steinbach constituency before offering some remarks on my constituency and the recent Speech from the Throne.

As an initial order of business, Mr. Speaker, I would like to congratulate you on your recent election, and the Deputy Speaker. Being newly elected myself I have not had the opportunity to work with you, but from all the reports I have heard from my colleagues on this side of the House I am confident that you will handle your

duties very ably and bring honour to your office. I look forward to working with you for the betterment of all Manitobans. I also notice that there are a number of young people joining us in the Chamber to fulfill the role of pages, and I am very pleased to see them.

* (1430)

In my previous occupation as a grocer, I took a great deal of pride in the young people I had the opportunity to employ. There were literally thousands. I look forward to working with and learning from the young people in the House here.

Mr. Speaker, I would also like to offer my thanks to the many members of this House on both sides who have made me feel welcome here and who have offered me advice and direction. A special thanks to the office of the Clerk of this Legislature, who has provided a substantial amount of reading material and words of advice in an effort to help reduce the embarrassment of new members in this Chamber.

It has been a few years since I took on what could be called a new job or a new form of employment. I would also like to offer my congratulations to all the members of this Chamber for their recent election victory. Having just completed my first provincial election campaign, I have a new appreciation for the challenge of running for elected office. I am only beginning to learn of the responsibilities and challenges of being an elected representative. Regardless of which side of the House we stand on, the party we represent, I believe Manitobans have elected each of us to ensure that their best interests are served, and I look forward to working with each of you to strengthen our great province.

Mr. Speaker, I believe also that all those who ran and were unsuccessful deserve recognition for their efforts. It takes a tremendous amount of courage and conviction to place your name on a ballot, and it is those individuals that are truly the engine of our democratic system. In fact, with this in mind, I would like to offer my thanks to Mr. Peter Hiebert, who ran for the New Democratic Party, and Mr. Rick Ginter, who ran for the Manitoba

Liberals in the Steinbach constituency for allowing their names to stand and for ensuring that democracy was well served.

One of the great challenges I have as the new MLA for the Steinbach constituency is trying to fill the shoes of the former MLA from my riding. I have had the good fortune of getting to know Albert Driedger well over the past years, and I have come to admire his unique style and keen political mind, as you probably have. For those of you who served with Albert for the past 22 years in this Chamber, this will come as no surprise. The respect that he developed among the residents of my region and throughout Manitoba is impressive, and it makes my role as successor a challenging one. I have appreciated his guidance over the past year, and I suspect I will rely on him again in the future.

Mr. Speaker, I would also like to say a few words in regard to our Leader, Gary Filmon. It is largely due to Mr. Filmon's leadership and stewardship and the work that he and his government have done over the past 11 years that I came to be a member of this Legislature. While I will go into greater depth at a later point, suffice it to say that the work of our Leader has made Manitoba a better place to live than it was 11 years ago, and I look forward to working with him and our entire caucus to ensure it remains a province of strength and opportunity.

When I was considering running for public office, I spent a great deal of time seeking the advice of friends and colleagues about what makes the mark of a successful representative. What are the common characteristics of a good representative? Perhaps the most frequent response I receive, Mr. Speaker, is that to be a successful representative over the long term, an individual needs the support of a strong family. During the lead-up to my nomination and during the election, I came to understand exactly what that meant. Without the support of my wife and family, I do not think I would be here today. The commitment of time and energy that is incumbent upon an elected representative is not, I am learning, limited to those who put their name on the ballot. Indeed, it extends to the entire family.

I suspect that when I sold my business last year, my wife, children and grandchildren

expected that I would be home a lot more, for better or for worse. As it turns out, I will be as busy as I was in business, and I will rely on and continue to rely on the support of my family.

Mr. Speaker, it is a humbling experience to be here today. It is so, first and foremost, because of the tremendous area that I represent to the people who call it home. There are many others who could quite ably serve in this position, and I am honoured that I have the opportunity, and with their support and strength I believe many things can be achieved. It is also humbling to stand in a Chamber where so many men and women of immeasurable calibre have served their province. I think of Premier Duff Roblin and the long-standing benefit his administration has been to our province. I think of the many issues that have been brought to this House and the conviction with which they were debated. To stand here today and to be able to serve is truly an honour.

I would like to spend some time giving this House some background in terms of how I came to be the representative for the Steinbach constituency. As I am sure some members know, up until the spring of '98 I was quite content being a grocer serving as president and CEO of Penner Foods until that time. The 36 years I spent in business, while somewhat unexpected I must admit, were great years of learning and development. Having a challenging occupation for 36 years helps to differentiate between theory and practice. The most important part of those years, however, was the opportunity it gave me to work with people: staff, customers, young people, seniors, a wide group of society. Ultimately, Mr. Speaker, it was people who made our company successful, and the customers and the staff were everything to me. In fact, I often felt that my job was working for the staff and for my customers; nobody was working for me.

While it was the joy I received from serving people that led me to seek office I now hold, the interest I have in public service is not a recent development. As with many in this Chamber, my first taste of elected office came at the civic level when I served the town of Steinbach as an alderman and deputy mayor. It was during those days on the frontlines of public service, so to

speak, that my interest in the public policy grew. I spent time here in the Legislature lobbying for a library for Steinbach, for recreation facilities, for a senior centre, but the demands of a growing business led me back into business and away from politics. However, I still had time to be partly responsible for the election of Mr. Jake Epp, who served us so well on Parliament Hill for so many years.

As a businessman, I often found myself in the Legislature in Ottawa to meet with our elected officials on a variety of issues that affected the nation's grocers. More than once, I was at the door of what is now the Minister of Consumer and Corporate Affairs. It is interesting and probably almost ironic that the current Minister of Consumer and Corporate Affairs in this House is an acquaintance of mine from when our paths crossed in business, and I look forward to working with him to ensure now that our businesses and consumers find Manitoba a place where their mutual interests are protected.

Indeed, I can tell this House from first-hand experience about the importance of government and business working closely and in a co-operative manner for the betterment of all Manitobans. While I was pleased that the topic received some mention in the recent throne speech, it will be incumbent upon the present government to put words into action. The co-operation of business and government, the continued reduction of red tape for all business, and the areas of business and individual taxes are ones which are of importance to my constituents and ones which, I am sure, I will return to time and time again as a member of the Chamber here.

* (1440)

In addition, Mr. Speaker, part of my willingness to serve in the Legislature stems from my desire to ensure that the youth of Manitoba inherit a strong and vibrant province and that my grandchildren will find opportunity in their home province.

One of the true pleasures of my previous occupation was the opportunity it gave me to work with young people. I take a great deal of pleasure in seeing young Manitobans succeed

and become leaders of their community and their country. It was the desire to see young people succeed that led me to be a member of the board of governors of Trinity Western University in B.C. for the last 19 years, one of Canada's leading Christian universities and my alma mater, a school frequented by many of the young residents of my constituency. My association with the university has only helped to strengthen my belief in strong education and faith as the foundation for personal and professional success.

Mr. Conrad Santos, Deputy Speaker, in the Chair

I was also motivated to seek office because of the opportunity I had to observe other cultures. Over the years, I have had the opportunity to serve with the Mennonite Economic Development Association and CIDA and make visits to India and Russia. I made a speech in Russia in 1990 with a hammer and sickle on one side and the statue of Lenin on the other side at a time when it was probably not legal or wise to do so. But I have encouraged the free enterprise system in the Soviet Union, and I can say without reservation, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that the best part of each of the trips I have made was coming home to this great province of Manitoba, coming home to a free and democratic society.

I might disagree strongly with the views of another individual, but believe just as strongly in their right to express those views. In such a country, I believe that we as citizens all have a responsibility to participate in the democratic system that was paid for with the lives of our young people, whether it be through voting expressing our views, working with a political party, or, as I ultimately chose to do, running for office.

Perhaps, the greatest influence I had in running for office was the opportunity to serve a constituency such as the Steinbach constituency. While last Thursday's throne speech touched on the heritage of our province, I would like to speak directly to the nature of the region I represent. With the changes to the electoral boundaries which came into effect last year, the Steinbach constituency is really comprised of the

R.M. of Hanover. It encompasses the communities of Grunthal, Mitchell, Pansy, Blumenort, Kleefeld, Niverville, Sarto, New Bothwell, and, of course, Steinbach.

It is probably a phrase which is overused, Mr. Deputy Speaker, but I believe that mine is the best constituency of any in all of Manitoba. I am certain that each member would echo those same sentiments about their riding. However, I am prepared to make a case.

From the pure standpoint of representation, the good people of Elections Manitoba have made my job somewhat easier by allowing me to represent such a wonderful, compact constituency. From one mile east of Steinbach to the boundary of Niverville is not much more than a half-hour drive. So with redistribution, the constituency only became smaller. The downside to that, however, Mr. Deputy Speaker, is that with redistribution I lost the chance to represent residents in the La Broquerie area, who I came to know well as a businessperson and who I looked forward to working with.

My predecessor, Mr. Driedger, spoke very well of his relationship with representatives from the Rural Municipality of La Broquerie and Reeve John Giesbrecht. I would like to thank them publicly for the contribution they made to our constituency. I know also that they will be represented ably by my colleague and namesake the honourable member for Emerson (Mr. Jack Penner).

On that same note, I also want to make a special point of acknowledging the local representatives of our area and the work that they do in our region: Mayor Clare Braun and his council in the town of Niverville; Mayor Les Magnusson and the council of Steinbach; and Mr. John Driedger, the Reeve of the Rural Municipality of Hanover, just to name a few and their respective councils. Each of these individuals and their respective councils have been very accommodating as I settle into my new position. I have appreciated not only their help but also their friendship.

Of course, a compact riding in and of itself does not make it special, Mr. Deputy Speaker. A constituency is more than a series of lines on a

map that mark a set of boundaries. A constituency is defined by the individuals who live and work within it.

The provincial election was truly a unique experience for myself and my wife. You see, as a grocer, I, of course, had the opportunity to meet thousands of people each week as they came to my store to shop, but during the election the dynamics were reversed. Instead of them coming to me, it was incumbent upon me to go to them, door to door, to listen to their concerns and understand what they wanted from their elected representative.

During the lead-up to the writ being dropped, it was driven home to me by Albert Driedger the importance of going door to door and listening to individual's concerns. Seeing that I am often told that Albert was among the best constituency MLAs in this Chamber, I feel I should listen. In fact, I did listen, and in five weeks that we went from home to farm to business, I never regretted it except maybe a couple of times when I had a run-in with a dog.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, there were a number of common themes that I heard as I went door to door, themes that perhaps were not stressed enough in last Thursday's Speech from the Throne, or maybe they were left out entirely.

The first that I would like to remark on is the tremendous respect that I heard for our health care and educational professionals. Almost universally I heard praise for the teachers in our classrooms and the caregivers in our hospitals and our care homes. I want to acknowledge those individuals at the outset.

I also heard a great deal of support for our local hospital system in our region. I think that it is a credit to the South Eastman Regional Health Authority and the members who serve as directors. Those who receive care at our regional hospital, Bethesda Hospital, almost to the individual were impressed with the level of care they received.

Of course, the election was fought at a time when students were just getting geared up to head back to school or had just started attending. As I spoke to them and their parents, I was

impressed by the tremendous support they offered their teachers and schools and for many of the reforms the previous government implemented in the way of standards testing and information technology. This support I think is a strong indication of the good work that is being done by our teachers and administrators. I would like to acknowledge all of their efforts.

One of the common sentiments I heard, Mr. Deputy Speaker, and I really believe it to be a remarkable testament to the nature of our communities in southern Manitoba, relates to the role they expect government to play in their day-to-day lives. Over and over it was expressed to me that residents of my constituency expect their government to manage the tax dollars responsibly, to continue to provide quality services in the field of education and health and to help create an attractive environment for investment and job creation. Yet the message was clear that government cannot be everything to everyone and that tax dollars are better left in the hands of those who earn them.

Those sentiments were strong and bear noting on the occasion of the most recent throne speech, which lacked any clear direction on the issue of tax relief.

The self-reliant nature of our residents is as strong today, I believe, as ever before. We are still very much a group of communities in the southeast that believes that neighbours have a responsibility to neighbours. We care about one another. When somebody has a funeral on your street, you go over to help out with meals. We are warm, small communities, to some extent rural communities.

I heard recently that Steinbach was second in all of Manitoba for charitable contributions in 1998 on a per capita basis, second only, I believe, to Winkler. This is not a surprise, Mr. Deputy Speaker. In fact, I think it is almost a regular occurrence but speaks well of the generosity of our region and the caring nature we feel towards others in need.

Of course, Mr. Deputy Speaker, the ingrained work ethic and caring nature of the residents of the southeast has been well reported over the years, but it does warrant mention,

however, that 1999 marked the 125th anniversary of the east settlement reserve in Manitoba, which we recognize today as essentially the R.M. of Hanover. The arrival of immigrant Mennonites in 1875 at the junction of the Red and Rat rivers after a long voyage from the Ukraine marked a new beginning for them as well as beginning an important chapter in the history of our great province.

As we close out the century and prepare to embark upon a new one, it is interesting to note how far our communities have advanced and changed, and yet how, 125 years later, the core values of these early settlers still remain today with their children and grandchildren.

* (1450)

As I mentioned previously, it is the individuals in an area who truly define its characters. I remember meeting a lady in a Grunthal coffee shop who had fostered over 80 children. She had dedicated her entire life to trying to make a difference in the lives of young people. I have met farmers who continue to work on their ancestral land despite some of the economic hardships that have befallen many farm families today.

During the election, I had the chance to meet with groups of seniors, and they all spoke passionately about the province that they helped to build and the importance of protecting its future. In fact, seniors really would like to be able to retire in retirement homes in their own communities.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, it also became clear as I went from home to home that ours is an area of leaders. I truly believe many of the leaders who will make their mark in the new century will come from the young residents of my constituency. Today we have young people participating in our councils and local governing boards, leading our Chambers of Commerce, working as missionaries at home and abroad and becoming leaders in the farming community. The list is endless.

It is their commitment to Manitoba and to their communities that gives me confidence in the future of our province and region. One thing

above all else was clear during my campaign, Mr. Deputy Speaker, the residents of my constituency believe strongly that the Filmon government was on the right track and voted overwhelmingly to ensure that our province continued in the direction that it was going.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, some of the record has been mentioned in this House before, but it bears to be repeated on the occasion of this government's first throne speech: four straight balanced budgets after 22 years of deficit budgets, the lowest unemployment rate in Canada, more people working in our province than ever before and an economy that outpaced the national economy in '96, '97 and '98. Manitoba today boasts one of the lowest-cost governments in Canada on a per capita basis and has—this is particularly important to the residents of my area—frozen major tax rates since 1988.

These are accomplishments that have been achieved despite massive reductions in federal transfer payments over the past decade and one of the worst recessions in Manitoba's history in the early '90s. History will show the accomplishments of the previous government were many.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, members of this Legislature would only have to drive to my area to see the results of bringing together an industrious population with a government like the previous one that is dedicated to ensuring Manitoba is an attractive place to invest and do business. My constituency is home to one of the largest window manufacturers in all of North America, Loewen Windows. The biggest obstacle they have faced in recent years is finding enough people to fill the orders they have. I think a trucking firm like Penner International, the Barkman Concrete firm and the growth that they have undergone over the past decade and the impact it has had on our local economy is really worth mentioning.

These are companies that started and have flourished as family-run operations and simply ask that their government ensure that the province is on equitable and solid ground in terms of taxes and its financial sector, a direction that was absent from this government's address on Thursday.

Even in the face of adversity, we seem to have overcome. Most of you will remember the unfortunate closing of Schmidtke Millwork in Steinbach last year and the loss of many jobs that resulted. For many communities, such a loss would have been devastating, but in less than a year and with the help of the successful Grow Bond issue from the previous government, I am happy to say that the former Schmidtke Millwork plant is busy again manufacturing, creating employment, thanks to the arrival of Mid Canada Millwork and Julius Schellenberg. It speaks to the resiliency of the people of the area and to the entrepreneurial spirit that thrives in my region.

In fact, while it has only been just over two months since my election, and that was previously mentioned here in the House, the invitations continue to come in steadily for openings of new businesses, expansions of existing businesses and developments of the agricultural sector. I was invited to three ribbon cuttings last week. It is a region that has flourished because of the entrepreneurial spirit of its people and because of a government over the past 11 years that has implemented policy to enhance that spirit. Of course, the successes are not limited to my constituency or to my region; indeed, throughout Manitoba there are signs of growth and development. Development such as Maple Leaf Foods and the growth of Monsanto Canada come quickly to mind.

Resident after resident reminded me that governments need to stay committed to balanced budgets and that they need to look at reducing the tax burden that they and their children face. Overwhelmingly, they told me that they felt we were right on the track and that while we had challenges to face, they wanted us to keep moving forward.

I have seen the results of the previous government's strong commitment to prudent fiscal management and to the development of rural Manitoba. I saw the results in my own business and in others. In recent years, one of the difficulties we had was attracting sufficient staff. Some of our businesses in southeastern Manitoba are continually advertising for staff because we just seem to have a lack of population. While this was a challenge to be

sure, it was also a tremendous source of pride for me to see so many young Manitobans finding opportunity in our province. My constituents were clear that they want us to continue to live within our means and not mortgage our children's future, but rather ensure that they continue to have the opportunities they enjoy today.

I have listened with great interest to the debate that has gone on inside and outside this Chamber regarding projected deficits and the validity of reports, and I note it was again alluded to in the throne speech. As the former president of a company that had a fairly significant payroll and budget, I can tell you that there is nothing simple or easy about deciphering a company's or a government's financial picture in midstream. There were many times during our company's history that we looked at a mid-term report and, unsatisfied with the projections, made the necessary corrections to ensure that at the end of the year we finished where we had hoped, at least better than it appeared we might. These are not easy decisions, but that is why people have a degree of authority to make difficult decisions.

Whether you are a farmer or the head of a business, the director of a charitable organization or the government of a province, difficult decisions need to be made. More importantly perhaps a willingness to make those difficult decisions needs to be present. It is the willingness of the current government to make the difficult decisions that are inherent in running a province which will ultimately determine, I believe, the success our province will have and the future of our young people in Manitoba. It is time that the members across the Chamber step away from their roles of opposition, begin the difficult work of governing this province and assume the responsibilities that come with it.

My constituents elected me to the Legislature with a mandate to ensure that our province continues to grow, continues to cut taxes, continues to foster an environment for job growth, continues to pay down its debt and continues to balance its budget. As a member of the official opposition, I intend to work to ensure that the gains of the past 11 years are not

squandered away and that the future of the province remains strong.

In relation to that, Mr. Deputy Speaker, it was certainly a pleasure, as one of my first legislative acts, to sponsor a private member's resolution which called upon the new government to continue to take measures to encourage and aid in the development of business in our province, measures which I was looking for in the last week's throne speech. Initiatives such as lowering the small business income tax rate, continuing to reduce the amount of red tape business must endure, or ensuring that businesses have the resources to help develop a market in Manitoba are all part of building a strong tax base which will help fuel the programs Manitobans value.

We have a province that is the envy of many others in Canada. As the Premier of Ontario, Mike Harris, said in a recent address in Winnipeg, many of the policies that were developed in Manitoba such as the balanced budget, the taxpayer protection act, were revolutionary and were copied in other regions such as his. As a member of the official opposition, I believe we need to ensure that the new administration does not forget what has made us successful over the last 11 years, even if it means making some difficult decisions.

It is also my intention to work to ensure that the new government remembers that rural Manitoba remains a vital part of the success of this province. I was certainly hoping to hear more specific information in the throne speech about what rural Manitobans, particularly in the southern part of the province, could expect from their new government. There is no doubt that southern Manitoba plays an important part in the economy of our province, but it also makes a unique and important contribution to the culture and to the heritage of Manitoba. Those contributions need to continue to be recognized and encouraged.

The development of programs such as the Rural Economic Development Initiative, which is to provide \$21 million in funding this year to rural communities, need to be maintained and strengthened as well as continued support for farmers who have been affected by poor growing

conditions and market turndowns and environmental problems. It will be incumbent upon the honourable Minister of Consumer and Corporate Affairs, the MLA for La Verendrye (Mr. Lemieux), to bring the views of not only his constituency but the entire Eastman region to his cabinet and caucus. I will certainly help in his effort by ensuring he and his colleagues are aware of the concerns of the constituents of my region.

* (1500)

Over the past 11 years the government, under the direction of the former Premier, was responsive to the interests of my constituents, and I believe the results show today and are being paid back many times over. The occasion of a throne speech by a new government is, I believe, an appropriate time to mark the local accomplishments of the previous administration. Initiatives like the development of twinning Highway 52, Main Street redevelopment project in Steinbach, have become valuable infrastructure assets in the growth of the economy in our region. A new water reservoir has ensured that the community's growth will not be restricted, and new industrial parks provide that development will continue to be the benefit of all Manitobans.

In addition, one of our province's finest museums, the Mennonite Heritage Village Museum, where I operate a steam engine, continues to preserve the heritage of our region and is on solid financial footing thanks to the aid of Mr. Filmon and his government. A new school in Kleefeld has provided many young residents in my area with a learning environment that will benefit them for years to come. In Niverville, the community continues to develop ways of attracting new residents and with a council that has vision and drive has become one of the fastest growing communities in all of Manitoba. In Grunthal, the dairy capital of Manitoba, the livestock industry continues to help drive the economy, and growth has also allowed for such community projects as a youth drop-in centre in which the previous administration played a key role.

New Bothwell remains the home to one of the most successful and advanced cheese production companies, appropriately named

New Bothwell cheese. I have taken people from other countries who have visited Manitoba to see these facilities. Mr. Deputy Speaker, the record must show that the southeast embraced the policies of the past 11 years and with initiative, hard work and dedication that have undergone a period of perhaps unprecedented growth, in turn they have provided jobs, revenue and leadership to the benefit of all Manitobans.

I know there are many other members in this Chamber on both sides who could stand today and tell similar stories of the successes of their communities over the past decade. It will be the challenge of the new government to continue to build upon those achievements and, to use an old adage from football, do not drop the ball. Throne speeches are generally accepted as vision documents, and it is uncertain if this government is yet able to develop a vision that is in line with the hopes and goals of Manitobans. Sometimes we are still acting like we are on opposite sides of the House.

Talk of a return to the days of deficit financing does not provide the confidence my residents are looking for that Today's NDP have grown past yesterday's ideas. While I encourage the members across the House to seek new ways of approaching challenges, I would also implore them to not forget all that has worked so well over the past 11 years. I believe that history will be very kind to our former Premier Gary Filmon. His administration presided over some difficult and challenging times and yet more than just that, hang tough, they managed to transform Manitoba and how others think about our province. In fact, we need not even wait for history, some of the judgments are already in.

The Investment Dealers Association of Canada noted that Manitoba had the distinction of having the best-managed public finances during the 1990s. Nesbitt Burns gave the province full marks for fiscal integrity. Mr. Deputy Speaker, perhaps the greatest legacy of our previous government today is that Manitoba is a place where people come to seek opportunity and prosperity for themselves and for their children.

This is a historic time. A century from now, Manitobans will look back to see what their

province was like in 1999-2000, just as we today are turning and looking back over the past century. What they will find is a young province that had come into its own. They will find a province that was filled with optimism, that was poised for even greater things. They will see the many achievements that were accomplished in the lead-up to the new century and the many steps that had been made.

It is my hope and my prayer that, as they look back, they will be able to say that we took advantage of our opportunities going into the new century. It is my hope that they will see that the right decisions were made and that they benefited from them. The decisions we make in this House will, ultimately, impact others far more than they will impact upon us as individuals. It is the next generation that is left to deal with many of the decisions of today. May we as legislators always be mindful of our past successes, while staying focused on the future. Thank you.

Ms. Bonnie Korzeniowski (St. James): Mr. Deputy Speaker, it is with tremendous pride and humility that I stand in this House today. As a child, I spent much time with my grandmother who lived across the street from this building and enjoyed many hours of play on the grounds and exploring the halls and stairwells of what seemed a castle. That little girl is skipping, twirling and smiling in me now. Never did she dream she would be one day standing here addressing you, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

I would like to congratulate the Speaker as having the honour to be the first elected Speaker in the House. Once again the democratic process has given us the people's choice. It must feel reassuring that the majority of the people he will be holding responsible in this House wanted him in this honourable position. I, for one, know he will be fair, just and keep his marvellous sense of humour.

I would also like to thank the Clerk of the House, Mr. Remnant, Binx, for the honour of being the last of the rookie MLAs to be oriented to the basics of the rules of the House. I feel privileged to have met such an experienced and knowledgeable person. He and his staff, with their calm, available and friendly manner, did

much to allay some of the anxieties of the first few days of overwhelming stimulation and information overload. His proficiency in introducing us to the intricacies of the House business was much appreciated. I wish him a happy retirement and thank him for years of service to the House and the people of Manitoba.

Thank you in advance to the pages, who, I understand, play a critical role in keeping the House running smoothly.

My congratulations and gratitude also to my fellow rookie MLAs of all parties for sharing their uncertainties and insecurities—misery does love company—as well as the jubilation. Thank you especially to the opposition rookie, Joy Smith, for our encounter in the equalizing environment of the washroom where we agreed that we should try to remain considerate of each other, because we all bleed.

Thank you to my worthy opponents during the campaign for the moments of humour in our encounters and their graciousness after. As wished, I am enjoying the moment. To my seasoned colleagues, thank you, thank you for your warm welcome, constant and continuing support. This is going to be one steep learning curve which I am counting on you to help me through with the least amount of embarrassment to any of us. I am especially pleased to see you enjoying the privilege of serving in government after serving as the critics in opposition for so long. I am certain, though, that the experience will serve you well in your new roles. Humility is a great teacher.

To Wesley Stevens for nominating me, my eternal gratitude. To my family, I would not be here without you. No one can or should undertake such a gruelling task, which cannot help but impact on family, without their unconditional support and encouragement. My husband, Gerald, said go for it. My daughters said: of course, we always wondered when, not if. My mother was willing to slide down a play structure at Linwood School at age 80 to help promote me. My special friend, Marion Parisien, heretofore known as the guardian angel, came to take care of me and my family. I cannot imagine how I would have survived without her. I am forever indebted. To my dream team during the

campaign I cannot believe how lucky I was to have had the quality and quantity of help I did. Many thanks to all you paid and unpaid volunteers, including Wolseley and Minto, for your shared support, emotional and physical, true community spirit.

Last, but certainly not least, thank you to those in St. James who supported and voted for me to bring me into this very honoured position. It is humbling to realize how many put their trust and faith in me to represent them. I vow to do my best to live up to that trust. A special mention and tribute to Grade 5 teachers of Linwood School and of George Waters for their wisdom and efforts in helping our grade schoolers understand the electoral process through a mock election. My granddaughters are in each of those classes, and their excited call with, Grammy, you won, was as rewarding for me as the real win. For any other teachers that I am unaware of who did this also, I congratulate you and invite you to follow up with a visit to the Legislative Building, a tour and a talk with their MLA. I have spoken to parents who have expressed their surprise and pleasure to have their youngsters interested in talking about the elections during the campaign. With the seed planted, I am certain the interest will grow, contributing to a new generation of responsible citizens.

* (1510)

I cannot continue without acknowledging my assistant, Barbara Teskey, without whom I would not have found the time to write this speech. Her assistance has been invaluable.

Before talking about my encounters during the election and discoveries about my constituency, I would like to talk about my motivation to run in this last election. I had been a social worker in the health field for 20 years. Simply put, my job was to assess client needs and advocate for services to meet those needs. For the past 12 years, my clients have been the elderly and primarily those with dementia or another mental health problem. Over the past few years, I was finding it more and more frustrating trying to have their needs met. It felt as though the government was pulling further and further away from the people providing

direct service. Where I had once been able to go to administration when I felt helpless or frustrated and felt heard, I was starting to feel the administration's own sense of powerlessness. When conferring with other line workers in the community, it was discovered that they experienced the same type of frustration. Their caseloads were becoming more complex and difficult to service, but these changes in level of need were not being addressed in service revisions.

It appeared that the government was not sensitive to the real problems. The elderly were becoming resistant to going to emergency for assessment when workers felt that they were at risk for fear of being left in hallways or of languishing, if admitted, due to staff shortages. There were stories about having to wait until the clients slipped into a state of confusion or unconsciousness before sending them for treatment. Pretty scary stuff.

Another problem I frequently encountered was, despite our having built one of the best home care systems anywhere, there was a tremendous gap in meeting the needs of many. The services offered were just not appropriate or flexible enough, especially for those families dealing with dementia where each situation is so individual and unique. The people needed to be more involved in defining the kinds of service required. What I have learned in my work is that help is not always help unless it is defined and/or requested by the recipient; otherwise, it is much like unsolicited advice.

I was struck by a quote at a caregiver conference I attended. Dr. Nora Keating stated that help is not help if you do not want it, do not need it or get it from someone or somewhere that makes you feel bad.

Caregivers need to have more of a say. We had many square solutions but too many round holes, a very patronizing system of government deciding what the people need.

In reading some of the speeches from the Tories, I was struck by one comment that helped me realize what a big part of the problem in health care was. One former member of the former government suggested that the members

of the governing party did not have the expertise to make decisions in health care and, therefore, must look to the higher authorities for direction and answers. That was the problem. Too much looking up and not out or down.

In these times of change, both formal and informal caregivers need to redefine their role and involvement in health care. The challenge for policymakers is to provide avenues to allow inclusion and involvement of those caregivers in determining how best to meet the range of needs identified. I know from the remarks in the throne speech that this is the government to resolve these issues.

The final straw in terms of frustration and helplessness was the frozen food fiasco. How anyone could impose this on the weak and vulnerable was beyond me. I challenge the then Minister of Health to justify personally, before going to bed, his government's decision. It was simple, money, not people, being considered.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I worked with the people this impacted on, the veterans at Deer Lodge who laid their lives on the line for our country and at this stage of their lives have little else to look forward to than a good meal. I worked with the staff who had to deliver and serve and feed these people. It was as difficult for them as for the families to have to deal with this issue.

I worked with another family who was facing a decision of facing financial ruin or depriving their father, a veteran who also laid his life on the line, of a drug not yet approved for coverage that tremendously enhanced his quality of life. The government three times turned down an appeal to cover the very costly, expensive Aricept until a few weeks before the election.

Even then, what is not well known to the public is how difficult the process is made for eligibility. The number of assessments, paperwork and costs daunt and dismay many already emotionally and financially drained elderly caregivers.

For me to work under this callousness became unbearable. Our seniors—actually I agree that the term "elders" commands more

respect sometimes—deserve more and can contribute more than they are allowed. This throne speech indicates that this government will give them this respect.

It was for these reasons and a need to be in a position to make change that in most part I agreed to run and worked so hard to see this government come to power, a government which I knew could and would turn these injustices around.

Having worked with our Premier over 20 years ago, I had good reason to put my faith in his leadership skills. I am honoured to once again be working with him in this role he is so capable and worthy of.

I would like now to share with you some of the wonders I discovered in the very beautiful constituency of St. James. Perhaps St. James pockets may be more accurate, as there is such a diversity and range of lifestyles from one boundary to the next. The eastern boundary begins on St. James Street across from Polo Park. The area north of Portage extends to Notre Dame and is as different from the south of Portage Avenue to the Assiniboine River as it is from its western neighbours ending at Moray Street.

The pocket from St. James to Notre Dame to Albany, where the old boundary used to extend is the old original St. James. There is a high-density population there of older homes on narrow lots. There is some renewal and infill housing. There is also considerable diversity in the population. Some have lived here all their lives and others are the young transients, renters and working poor. Still others are young families, first-time homeowners struggling to become part of their community and contribute to making improvements. Nonetheless there is a strong sense of community throughout.

One of the richest constituency boasts is the number of parks and open spaces, 25 to be exact, and this area is no exception in hosting several for the children and families to enjoy. Several small spaces, empty lots turned into playgrounds dot the area. Truro Creek winds through, offering its wondrous bounty and beauty and enjoyment year round.

The Bord-Aire Community Club in the Britannia School field north of Ness offers opportunities for residents to build and promote community spirit and provide a connectedness. This area also boasts an industrial area which defines much of the working class there. One young lady in this area, mother of two babies out in her yard, shared her dreams of going back to school and making something more of herself one day. She said we need a government who will not make it difficult for people to fix bad choices they make when they are young. This government is the one she was speaking of and hoping for.

The other commonality the residents of this area share is the problem of airport noise. There are few in St. James who do not live with and adapt to noise from the airport, but those in this area tend to live closer to the end of runways and flight paths. I remember talking to one resident over the telephone in regard to this when an airplane was coming in. It was rather excessive noise to endure, making conversation not merely difficult but just impossible. I can count the rivets, he said. On the other hand, having the airport so close is an obvious advantage from a practical view. For business travellers living in the area or those who just love to travel, it is a definite advantage to have such easy access to flights. Our 24-hour airport is one of Manitoba's gateways to the world.

With the continuing expansion of the airlines utilizing our airports, such as Fast Air, and hotels currently under construction, the inevitable economic growth can only serve to help St. James continue to grow and prosper as a community. However, the current uncertainty in regard to ownership of the airlines has impacted on the many employees who reside in this constituency, creating much angst.

Another hub of activity in socializing is the Legion No. 4 on Portage Avenue. It has the largest membership in Winnipeg with around 3,000. The veterans are very active and maintain a high profile, particularly on Remembrance Day. They organized an event at Bruce Park which drew around 2,000 people. They are a very disciplined, dedicated and loyal collection of men and women, a solid foundation in the history of St. James.

* (1520)

On the south side of Portage, on the eastern border, there are more affluent residents. There is the consistent mix throughout St. James of seniors and young families. Local residents are loyal to the area, making residential turnover in St. James lower than the city average. Two large towers accommodate many seniors living independently, as well as the newer life-leasing housing complex offering alternative housing for independent living for seniors.

There are elegant and genteel homes which grace the banks of the Assiniboine River and many family residences nestled in this cozy, well-treed area. They are mainly populated with either older or long-time residents or young professional couples, usually both working. There is a tremendously strong sense of community here also. The Bourkevale Community Centre has just celebrated its 50th anniversary and has a strong and loyal membership. Bourkevale Park walkers with dogs have formed an ad hoc group just this summer. The Lawn Bowling Club behind the community centre pays tribute to the vibrant and active senior component of the community.

The biggest issue in this area has been around a creative resident who paints fire hydrants in cartoon character themes. The locals love it, but the city has had concerns. They are working on a compromise, I understand, between beautifying the area and maintaining safety regulations. This is a very cohesive neighbourhood.

We also have elementary, middle and high schools in this stretch. There is a high level of involvement of parent councils in these schools. The close proximity of the St. James library complements this fertile ground for the use of St. James. A big issue here is that George Waters Middle School and St. James Collegiate share a gym. This is clearly an unreasonable situation. As stated in the throne speech, this government puts high value on team sports and recreational activities.

Still south, but a little further west, is Bruce Park, a small but well-used and well-preserved park. Residents in this area are very active

conservers and have formed a club which preserves the banks of the Truro Creek and protects the wildlife which dwell there, as well as beautifying surrounding areas with foliage and flowers. On that note of beauty we move on to the entrance and footbridge to Assiniboine Park which, of course, draws thousands regularly over the warm seasons and significant numbers throughout the year. Our small businesses, especially the ice cream stores, coffee shops and restaurants, profit from the traffic to this area.

North again, we have the Deer Lodge community. Once more we have diversity from one street to the next, sometimes one side of the street to the next. The neighbourhood is well established with mainly long-term or lifelong residents. The elderly lady across the street from my home on Overdale was born, grew up and lived her whole life in that home. There are many family residences with young children now almost grown and new young couples and families just beginning. The Assiniboine Golf Club, Deer Lodge tennis courts, St. James Civic Centre and Deer Lodge Curling Club all separate residences from the airport to the north. The curling club has been very successful in recruiting young curlers to the game. I understand they have 27,000 people scheduled to curl this new year.

The civic centre is home to our excellent junior hockey team, the St. James Canadians, who could use more support. Attendance is lacking. The Deer Lodge community centre is central and a strong focal point, well used year round. Again committed residents of the area maintain a strong sense of community pride in organizing and developing many sports, activities and events. Deer Lodge centre is at the centre of St. James, providing the best range of health care for seniors in the most densely populated area of seniors in Winnipeg. They have an active resident council in Deer Lodge centre. It is also a hub of activity, inviting and involving members of the community of St. James and the city as a whole. The St. James Assiniboia Senior Centre housed beside it is focused on keeping the well seniors active and productive members of the community. The Wellness Centre within plays an active role in preventing unnecessary or premature deteri-

oration in health. Having these complementary services offers a level of comfort to seniors and their families in the area. These are the kinds of services which help keep our seniors able to live independently in their own homes longer to great relief of the health care system.

Upper middle-class homes and condominiums continue to spread across the south and riverbank properties on Portage Avenue with apartments and working-class occupants interspersed. The north side of Portage and the beginning of Silver Heights is lined with apartments. Here are the very young transient students, working singles and couples. I recall one young couple with a baby hesitating to go to the polls on election day. With the offer of a ride and sitter service, they agreed, and it was then discovered that it was not lack of interest but lack of knowing what to do that was the real problem. They were walked through the voting process by Elections Manitoba workers and emerged quite proud of having participated—another lesson on how much we take for granted and should not. We need to do more to include and motivate our young families in how to participate in shaping their environment and their future.

Silver Heights is clearly residential with cozy bays, no lanes and adjoining backyards, conducive to establishing neighbourhood identities. There is a sense here that most people know who their neighbours are and maintain a respect for each other and a vigil over each other's property. Sturgeon Creek Community Club is the hub of this area's activity. It is located right behind the convenient mall. There are also two elementary, one middle and one high school. French immersion is offered at all levels. The high school, Silver Heights, also boasts one of the best bands in Canada which has toured in Europe, a source of great pride. St. James has two fire-halls, a police station, numerous churches, its own Chamber of Commerce, soon to celebrate its 70th anniversary, and a museum. There is little this constituency does not offer its citizens for good living.

This area on the western-most part of the constituency near the boundary of Moray also provides two major areas of alternate housing for

seniors. The Kiwanis Club provides small bungalows and an apartment complex for independent seniors at affordable cost. This complex also has a very active board and social life. The other complex on Ness, also near Moray, is a supportive housing unit to allow independent living for seniors in need of some assistance or services. There is a list of 85 or a four-year waiting period for apartments in the existing building. Phase two with a 72-unit addition is just getting underway but without extra funding will not be as affordable as the existing building. There is a severe shortage of these types of housing options for seniors, let alone at an affordable rate. We must take care to ensure that it is not only our wealthy seniors who have the opportunity to live independently and in dignity longer.

To the north of Ness on this western boundary lies a very diverse community. We have the Canadian Air Command base housing complexes which continue to be residences for military families transferring in and out of Winnipeg. This community is easily isolated by the vast area of airport landing fields surrounding it. As an army brat, I understand the sense of transience and uninvolvement in provincial issues these people feel.

We also have a neighbourhood of homes previously used as military residences but sold to Qualico homes for low-income renting after downsizing of the armed forces. They are now being renovated and sold. This new community is drawing people from all areas of the city, as well as military families. There are many St. James royals but a sprinkle from all areas drawn to the newness and affordability for young families. There is a challenge here to establish a fresh new identity as a neighbourhood. An unfortunate problem voiced by several people while I was canvassing was that of struggling poorer people renting these low-rental houses who are being displaced. Some were quite distraught as to where they would be able to relocate.

* (1530)

The prevailing presence of community spirit and involvement in St. James as a whole speaks for itself not only in the absence of gang activity

but in the high profile of teen accomplishments and activism, the most recent being the Teens Against Drunk Driving St. James Collegiate group hosting the Addictions Awareness Week at the Legislature, November 15. There are also the Silver Heights Collegiate teens who collaborated with the St. James Assiniboia Senior Centre in a project to celebrate International Year of Older Persons. Bravo. St. James has good reason to be proud of their youth and to continue to invest in promoting the enthusiasm and positiveness they exude.

I would like to tap into this age group and encourage political interest through discussion groups, perhaps through school council representatives, youth advisory councils, YAC, an appropriate name for a teen group, do you think not? Perhaps, this could be a joint venture with all parties participating.

The absence of gangs is not to say that St. James is without any problems of criminal activity, just to a much lesser degree than most areas. Car theft and vandalism seems to be the most frequent offence. I know I have experienced a few episodes of Autopac claims myself. Recently, there has been an arson which is sparking a concern, and we must address and curb this aberrant activity with swiftness and firmness. We must ensure the safety of our children and our seniors, of us all.

One young man I encountered while canvassing particularly impressed me. It was going to be his first time voting. He was a most engaging young man with a lot to say about youth and crime and solutions. Most of them you have heard here in the throne speech. I was impressed with his enthusiasm and believe he will one day be someone we read or hear about. I asked him to keep in touch and let me know of his future accomplishments. He thanked me and said: by the way, you have my vote just for taking the time to listen to me. A lesson not to be forgotten.

I know this government will not let him down, and I certainly will try my very best not to. Thank you.

Mr. John Loewen (Fort Whyte): It is with a great deal of pleasure and a great sense of pride

that I rise to speak in this Chamber today. I would like to begin by offering my congratulations to you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, on your appointment to that position, and I would also like to offer my congratulations to our Speaker; for the first time, we are going to have the benefit of an elected Speaker. My congratulations go out to him.

I would also like to congratulate all the members of the House on their election and re-election. I would particularly like to recognize the new members of the House. It is always nice to know you have company when you are trying to learn on the fly. In addition, I would like to add congratulations to our Sergeant-at-Arms and his deputy on their reappointments, and I would also like to welcome the pages and the six legislative interns. I hope that your experience here in the Legislature will be enjoyable and rewarding. I would also like to thank the Clerk and his staff for providing the new members with an orientation to try and get us up to speed as quickly as possible on the operations of this House. I, and I know the others, found it very useful.

I am very grateful to the people of Fort Whyte for this opportunity to serve as the first elected representative from this new constituency. I am looking forward to representing their interests and concerns in the Legislature as their full-time MLA. I also want the people of this great province to understand that I have concerns about issues that affect all Manitobans, regardless of where they live.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I was born in Elkhorn, Manitoba, where my family has had roots dating back to the 1800s. My parents are third-generation Manitobans who continue to have deep roots in rural Manitoba. Like many Manitobans, my parents moved to Winnipeg to take advantage of opportunities that were available to them in the city. I was young at the time, but I consider myself very fortunate to have spent a good deal of my summers as a youth visiting with my great-grandparents, my grandmother, my aunts and uncles on their farms near Elkhorn, Pilot Mound and Crystal City. From these visits, I learned first-hand the joy and challenges of operating a farm and raising a family in rural Manitoba. I also learned a great

deal about hard work and the co-operative effort between family members and neighbours that helped build and sustain communities.

I was raised and educated in Winnipeg. As a child, I actively participated in many extracurricular activities. I have always remained grateful to the many teachers and neighbours who gave freely and generously of their time as coaches and organizers to ensure that young children and teens could participate in a wide variety of activities.

Although I am new to political life, there is a long history of political involvement in my family. Both of my parents were involved politically, and political issues have been a part of our family discussions for as long as I can remember. Both of my parents have sought elected office.

I would like to make special mention of my mother, Win Gardner, who is with us in the gallery today, and her involvement, as it has had a significant impact on my life. As a young woman, she chose to stay home and be with her four children. This did not stop her from contributing to our community in other ways. Whether it was as president of the parent-teacher association, church work or promoting women's issues, my mother was always involved. She was the first woman to be elected to the position of president of any political party in Manitoba, and during her career she worked hard to promote women's rights. I recall her making a presentation on politics and public life to the Royal Commission on the Status of Women in 1968. She was instrumental in the reform of the family law act in Manitoba, and after winning the battle in Manitoba, she carried the argument forward on a national level. She was also instrumental in putting forward the argument for women to have equal pay for work of equal value and ensuring that was entrenched into the Canadian Human Rights Code. I would like to thank her and the women of her generation who inspired their children through their efforts both in and outside their homes.

After graduating from the University of Manitoba in 1973, with a computer science degree, I began to work for a small business called Comcheq Services. My uncle, Bill

Loewen, founded the business in 1968. Over the course of the next 25 years, we were extremely fortunate to be a part of a dynamic, growing organization. We had the good fortune of working with some very dedicated people over the years and, with the support of many loyal customers, were able to see the business grow and grow. By the time I left the business in 1998, we had revenues of over \$70 million and employed over 1,000 people from coast to coast.

During my years at Comcheq, I formed many beliefs based on the success we enjoyed. Over and over again, the notion of hard work and co-operative effort towards a common goal would create the desired result was reinforced. At Comcheq, there were always lots of challenges to overcome. On a regular basis, individuals rose above and beyond the call of duty to ensure that our clients received the best possible service. As you can appreciate, ensuring that payrolls are processed accurately and on time every time can create a significant amount of stress. It never ceased to amaze me how individuals would turn this stress into positive energy to get the job done. I remain grateful to the employees who worked so hard to ensure Comcheq's success.

At Comcheq there was always a vision of what we wanted to achieve as a company. There was also a detailed plan of what we had to accomplish to reach our goals. While the vision remained constant, the plan always changed. The key to our success was anticipating changes, reacting proactively to change, and managing our business accordingly.

I am disappointed that the throne speech showed no vision for where the new government will try to take this province. It seems apparent that the members opposite have no vision where they want to take the province.

One of our most closely held beliefs in operating Comcheq was the value of honesty. Whether it was with customers, staff or suppliers, we believed that honesty was essential. We always found that, if you were truthful in your dealings with people, not only would you earn their respect, but they would work willingly with you to help you overcome your own limitations.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, for over 20 years, the company of Deloitte and Touche, formerly Touche Ross, were our auditors. Over the years, we received some very sound advice from our auditors. In addition to my past experience with Deloitte and Touche, I also had the pleasure of serving as a lay member on the board of the Institute of Chartered Accountants of Manitoba.

* (1540)

I want to assure this House that I have come to understand fully the significant difference between an audit and a review. I would be happy to spend some time with the honourable First Minister (Mr. Doer), as well as with any members opposite who would like to take advantage of this knowledge, to explain to them the difference between an audit and a financial review. I say it is unfortunate that there does not seem to be anyone on the other side of the House who has enough business or management experience to provide the First Minister with the necessary advice as to the significant difference between the two terms.

I would hope that, in the spirit of dealing honestly with Manitobans, the Premier (Mr. Doer) would refrain from referring to the financial review being undertaken by Deloitte and Touche as an audit, which he has done on numerous occasions on radio, at least two separate occasions at the AMM meeting in Brandon, as well as in this throne speech.

I am also confident that the advice Deloitte and Touche would give to any client, whether it was public or private, would be to put in the required effort to ensure that their revenues exceeded their expenditures.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I feel very fortunate to have had the opportunity to work with so many wonderful people over 25 years that I worked at Comcheq. I was extremely fortunate to have my uncle, Bill Loewen, as a role model and a mentor. Bill and Shirley's good works are well known in this community, and they have been a source of inspiration to me for many years—
[interjection]

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I hear members opposite also giving congratulations to Bill and

Shirley. As I said, they are well known in this community and deserve a tremendous amount of respect.

I was also fortunate to have a wonderful executive team to share the responsibility of ensuring that the business remained successful during my term as president from 1984 to 1988. I would like to express my gratitude for their support. One of the many strengths at Comcheq was the balanced mix of our employee base. We always had a significant number of female employees. In fact, our senior management team had more females than males. Of five vice-presidents, three were female. My experience at Comcheq gave me an appreciation for the perspective that a balanced group can bring to a discussion, and how it positively reflects on the decisions taken. As I look around this Chamber—not at this particular time, I might add, but when it is full during Question Period—I cannot help but think that this institution and our province would benefit from more participation by women as elected MLAs. I would hope that in the not too distant future and with work by all political parties, the current imbalance will be corrected.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I would like to take this opportunity to describe the new constituency of Fort Whyte to this House. Fort Whyte is a predominantly urban area in the southwestern part of Winnipeg. Most of the housing has been developed over the past 20 years, and indeed most of the new home construction has happened in the last 10 years. The constituency is comprised of four distinct housing developments: Waverley Heights bordered by Pembina Highway on the west and Waverley on the east started to be developed approximately 30 years ago. Waverley Heights is well known for its community spirit as is evidenced by the activity at its schools and its community centre. Approximately half of Waverley Heights falls in the constituency of Fort Whyte.

Lindenwoods, the community where my family and I reside, is a community that has developed during the last 20 years. It is situated west of Waverley and north of McGillivray Boulevard. The other two communities have sprung up during the last 10 to 15 years. Whyte Ridge borders the original municipality of Fort

Whyte, and Richmond West runs between Pembina Highway and Waverley from Bison Drive to the Perimeter Highway. There are approximately 5,000 households in this constituency, and this constituency is filled with predominately single family homes.

The people of these communities have a great deal in common. I learned this first-hand after visiting virtually every household during the recent election campaign. The people of Fort Whyte are people who have chosen to live where they live because they see this constituency as a good place to raise their families and enjoy the benefits of life in a strong community. The constituents of Fort Whyte are individuals from all walks of life who understand the rewards of hard work, and who are willing to put a great deal of energy into their families, their work and their community. They understand what it means to live within their own means and to balance their incomes and their expenditures. They also understand the commitment it takes, both financially and personally, to ensure their children have access to recreational activities.

The Whyte Ridge Community Centre and the Linden Woods Community Centre have recently been constructed. In both cases, significant dollars were raised from within the community to supplement the public funds available. Community associations in each area, who put in a tremendous effort to provide recreational facilities for the families of their communities, are to be congratulated.

Fort Whyte also has places of worship of many different religious groups, including the Winnipeg South Sikh Temple on Scurfield Boulevard. Fort Whyte is also the home to a growing business community. The constituency benefits from a mix of light industry, a variety of small business and professions, professional offices and fertile farmland.

The residents of Fort Whyte raised several issues of importance to them during the election campaign. Of primary importance is the need for sound, fiscal management. People are very concerned about the rates of taxation from all levels of government. As with most individuals, they are hopeful that the tax burden will decrease in the coming years. They understood fully the

Filmon government's focus on balancing the budget and decreasing the debt. With the economy continuing to grow and the province's revenues increasing, they now believe it is time for taxpayers to share the rewards in the form of reduced property and income taxes.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, one of my reasons for entering public life was to contribute in some positive way to the sound fiscal management of this province. From 1982 to 1988, Manitoba's net general debt tripled and Crown corporations racked up hundreds of millions of dollars in losses. During that time the NDP government raised taxes a total of 16 times. For too many years there were shameful abuses of the money that the people of Manitoba worked so hard to earn. The Pawley-Doer government was clearly addicted to taxing and spending.

Under the previous government led by then Premier Filmon, the principles of accountability and fiscal responsibility were reintroduced. Gone were the days of credit card financing and encumbering future generations with the debts of today. I am thoroughly disappointed that the current NDP government is so anxious to retreat to the past to become yesterday's NDP, as is strongly evidenced by this Speech from the Throne.

I would like to introduce yesterday's NDP to a novel idea: give the money back to the people who earned it. After all, it is their money. Today we live in an age where politicians are often held in low esteem. The public is cynical at worst and build on that best when it comes to the motives of individual politicians. I believe collectively we have a responsibility to do our utmost as individuals to raise the public's perception of elected officials. We need to do our best to make politics a noble profession. Perhaps by doing this we can ensure that we are able to attract the best and brightest of our women and men to this profession. I believe one way to accomplish this is through honesty and openness. Surely this is no less than the public deserves.

I am disappointed that this government is off to such a poor start in this regard. If they intend to audit the books, they should be prepared to be truthful about the results, and they should be

prepared to take sound advice and act quickly to ensure their commitment to balanced budget legislation is kept. They should get out of the blame game and get on with managing the affairs of this province.

My childhood experience gives me a first-hand perspective of what farmers contribute to Manitoba. Farming and related agricultural activities are the lifeblood of Manitoba's economy. The crisis facing many of our province's farmers is acute and must be addressed by the federal government. We all need to work toward a solution to the farm crisis, one that keeps Manitoba's farmers in business over the long term.

I was pleased that with the agreement of all members of this House we are able to set aside two days of debate on this very important issue. Our farmers need our support in this struggle to survive. In particular, the federal government needs to be convinced of its responsibility in this regard. They have abandoned the farming community and this is unacceptable. Our farmers are a proud group of people. They do not want handouts, but they do need support in this time of crisis.

I must say that I was disappointed that the new government and the Minister of Agriculture (Ms. Wowchuk) did not consult with the considerable knowledge and experience on this side of the House prior to submitting the resolution to this Chamber. Fortunately, after two days of debate, we were able to strengthen the resolution and vote unanimously to send a message to Ottawa—

An Honourable Member: Point of order, please.

Point of Order

Hon. Rosann Wowchuk (Minister of Agriculture and Food): Mr. Deputy Speaker, I would like for you to ask the honourable member to correct the record when he said that I did not consult the opposition. If he will consult with his Agriculture critic, his caucus did in fact have that resolution for several days before the debate and did want the opportunity to put an amendment forward rather than having to put an

amendment on the floor. We in fact consulted with the opposition before we went to Ottawa. We invited them to join us and we did send the resolution ahead of time and ask them for their input into it.

* (1550)

Mr. Harry Schellenberg, Acting Speaker, in the Chair

Mrs. Louise Dacquay (Seine River): I would just like to draw attention to the House that that is not a point of order. The honourable member is disputing the facts.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Schellenberg): The honourable member for Swan River does not have a point of order. Thank you.

* * *

Mr. Loewen: Mr. Acting Speaker, fortunately after two days of debate we were able to strengthen the resolution and vote unanimously to send a strong message to Ottawa that they need to provide support for the farmers caught in the natural disaster caused by flooding in Manitoba and both short- and long-term support for this valuable industry and way of life.

It is more than a little ironic that this motion was put to this House by members of two parties who claimed in the recent election that they would be able to work co-operatively with the federal government. If their understanding of working co-operatively with the federal government is to simply accept what they say as gospel, then I guess those statements were very accurate.

It is interesting to note that the Minister of Agriculture (Ms. Wowchuk) went to Ottawa, declared victory and then got nothing. This may be her idea of co-operation but it does not do much for Manitobans. I would hope that the next time the minister visits Ottawa she will not simply piggyback on our neighbours from Saskatchewan or simply rely on numbers arrived at by the federal bureaucrats. Instead I would hope she would build a detailed plan backed with accurate numbers so that the senior level of government has a thorough knowledge of the

shortcomings of the AIDA program. Their plan should also ensure a thorough understanding on the part of the federal government of their responsibility to Manitoba's farm community.

Standing up for Manitoba farmers means fighting on their behalf until a victory is won. It does not mean declaring victory when nothing is won.

This throne speech also gives us a very poor indication of the government's commitment to the Manitoba business community. I am particularly appalled at the lack of understanding this government has displayed for the role of the private sector in building a healthy society. Our challenge for the next century will be to keep Manitoba's economy healthy. The hard work of the previous government has allowed Manitobans to enjoy one of the highest economic growth rates in all of Canada. Manitoba has consistently outperformed the predictions of independent economic forecasters. More Manitobans are working than ever before, and our unemployment rate is one of the lowest in the country. Today we have a Manitoba brimming with jobs and full of opportunity for our young people.

Mr. Acting Speaker, we, the members of this Legislature, ignore the economy at our peril. A strong economy allows us to afford the things that matter, like accessible health care, quality education and programs that provide hope and opportunity for our young people and for the disadvantaged.

The people of Fort Whyte place a high priority on the quality of education provided to their children. They give freely of their time and energy to support the schools in their neighbourhoods. They are involved in their children's education and have a clear understanding that education will have a significant impact on their children's ability to succeed in the next century. Time and time again the issue of accountability in education was raised during the campaign.

I would also like at this point to expand a little bit upon my father's background, who for most of his working career was involved in education. And at the time he was working with the Manitoba Teachers' Society, one of his

greatest ambitions was to see that there was accountability in the system and that the teachers that were providing our children with an education were held accountable for their actions. This was at a time when the society was truly concerned with advancing the professionalism of teachers as opposed to just being a union. It is also a great pleasure for me that my father is able to be here in the gallery today.

Parents want to know that their children are challenged and encouraged to excel in their school. They know that their children will need access to technology to prepare themselves for the jobs of the future. Most importantly, parents are fully prepared to be part of the solution.

Mr. Acting Speaker, the citizens of Fort Whyte understand the need to invest in health care, in education and in infrastructure. They understand that in order for Manitoba's economy to remain robust, all sectors, including agriculture, need to be healthy. They understand fully that in order to provide the services necessary to help those in Manitoba who need assistance, the economy must continue to grow. One of their biggest concerns is that the new government will increase program spending without a true understanding of the concrete effects of that increased spending. While they recognize the need for providing services, the constituents of Fort Whyte want to know that positive, measurable outcomes will result. I, for one, do not think that this is too much to ask of one's government, and I will be here to hold this government accountable on behalf of the constituents of Fort Whyte.

One of the benefits of having a strong management team at Comcheq was that I was allowed to spend a considerable amount of time working with volunteer organizations. For over 10 years, I have been pleased to contribute my time and effort to the United Way. This organization provides advice and funding to over 60 social service agencies in the city of Winnipeg. Many of these agencies provide much needed services to the inner city. Through my work with the United Way, I have become more familiar with a number of these agencies. We are all aware of the challenges facing our inner city residents.

I am disappointed that this throne speech does not deal with any concrete ideas to revitalize our inner city or our downtown. The government's approach is to direct others to solve the issues. During Question Period responses, we keep hearing of the government's desire to take a consultative approach. What we see in reality is the issuing of directives, directives to our school divisions to cancel contracts, directives to our school divisions to open schools for longer hours, directives to our health care system to take hospital beds when they are not requested. This approach will not work.

Our inner city is in crisis. The solution lies with the people of the community who roll up their sleeves and get in the trenches day in and day out. These are the individuals who understand that the best way to help resolve this crisis is to provide hope and opportunity by offering a hand up, not a handout. Instead of issuing directives, this government must help create a vision for renewal and support those citizens and enterprises that are willing to give of their time, energy and money to help resolve this crisis.

The people of Fort Whyte have chosen to live in this province because of the excellent quality of life. Many of them travel throughout the country on a regular basis. If the tax environment in Manitoba does not remain competitive, there is a risk that a significant number will re-examine their options for the future.

Mr. Acting Speaker, I did not take my decision to enter public life lightly. I am extremely grateful for the support of my wife, Gail and our four children, Katie, Matthew, Mark and Nicholas. Gail has made the decision to be at home for our children, a noble and daunting task. I would like to publicly thank her for the contribution she is making to our family and, through her volunteer work, the contribution she is making in our community. While my family recognizes the decision that we have all made will have a significant impact on their lives, they are fully supportive of me and my work as an MLA. For that, I am grateful. The only disappointment was for my young son, Nicholas, then age eight, who, on the day after the election, was disappointed to learn

that just because I won did not mean he would get to change the light in the top of the Golden Boy. Hopefully, we will get an opportunity at least to get up and see it close.

* (1600)

As I was contemplating the decision to seek elected office, I was reminded of my grandfather. Throughout his life he carried very strong political opinions. He was an avid writer, expressing his opinion frequently to politicians and editors. As a young man, he chose on two separate occasions to enlist in the armed forces to serve his country and fight for our country's freedom. Reflecting on his decision to risk his life for his country put my decision to enter the political arena into a proper perspective for me.

Mr. Acting Speaker, I have been fortunate during my lifetime to have enjoyed good health, benefited from an affordable quality education system, and enjoyed success in my chosen profession. I was fortunate to grow up in an era when hope and opportunity were abundant. I understand fully the responsibility I have to assist those less fortunate to achieve a higher standing. I would like to quote from the philosopher Joseph Addison: There are three grand essentials in this lifetime. The three grand essentials in this lifetime are something to do, something to love and something to hope for. I am grateful for all three of these elements in my life.

I am honoured to represent the people of Fort Whyte as their first elected MLA. I am committed to working diligently on their behalf, and I am hopeful that by applying my experience and values to this task I can repay in some small way the debt I owe to this great province for the opportunities that have been made available to me. Thank you.

Mr. Conrad Santos (Wellington): One time I was out in the hallway and I overheard a visitor from the gallery being asked by his friend: what did you observe when you were watching the proceedings in the Legislature? The visitor said I saw one honourable member who stood up and spoke for 30 minutes and said nothing. Nobody listened, and then when he was done, everybody hollered and disagreed.

An Honourable Member: What was his point?

Mr. Santos: The point, I do not know.

Mr. Acting Speaker, I would like to focus my remarks on government, on the authority and power of government to rule over their citizens, and in response to the honourable member for Fort Whyte (Mr. Loewen) to try to attempt a vision of the NDP government for the next millennium. It is a big order, but I will try.

Have you ever wondered why there are governments everywhere? In every country, every nation, every province, every city, every school board, there is a government. How can this be explained? In every society, there is a scarcity of material and nonmaterial resources that the members of that society consider desirable to have. Material resources, of course, include land, real estate, personal property, cars, houses and bank accounts, all the material things that satisfy and make life convenient. Non-material resources include status, respect, freedom and other intangibles that make life worthwhile.

Every member of society, every natural person possessed with the will to power strives to mobilize resources at his or her command in order to promote personal advantage or benefits. This personal desire we call self-interest. No human being is immune from this longing to achieve some type of advantage or benefits. When there are other people similarly situated and they find some commonality in the things that they desire, they find some kind of co-operative effort among themselves working towards the same goal or the same objectives, what we call group interests.

There is a potential for actual conflict of interest among individuals and among groups of individuals in society trying to promote their self-interests or their group interests. There is the potential for conflicts. Unless the conflicts among the members of society can be contained, can be settled in a peaceable way, there is a potential for violence.

Therefore, society in its wisdom had evolved certain normative rules of conduct. It might have reasoned out of customs, out of

unwritten usages in the community, written or unwritten laws and regulations. These rules are recognized by the members of the community in order to guide them in their behaviour so that these conflicts can be contained and can be settled amicably among themselves. But there is also the imperative necessity for some mechanism by which these rules can be pronounced, these decisions can be made and, after they are made, can be implemented authoritatively, effectively. That mechanism evolved, and that is what we call government.

There is government in any group, in any tribe, in any nation. Even among a number of provinces or states there is national government, there is the local government, and even among national sovereign states there is now evolving what we call world order, which is potentially world government. The question is: is this government a mere human creation, or is there some kind of divine intervention in the evolution of the mechanism of government and of laws and rules in society? I do not know, but I believe in what is written that there is no authority except from God, there is no government unless it is ordained by God. I believe that; otherwise, it would not have been universal because it is present everywhere. This is the order of things as it was intended for us as members of society and as members of the community.

* (1610)

The organizational and structural arrangements and the corresponding rules that they enforce give us some kind of order in our society, and political scientists usually call them political order. Hence, in our BNA Act, the Constitution written in 1867, we have heard peace, order and good government as the basic objectives of establishing this nation we now call Canada. According to the sociologist Max Weber, it is not enough that there be such a mechanism. This must be manned by people in continuous organization, the administrative arm of that institution we call government, and we call it the governmental bureaucracy. These are groups of administrators and bureaucrats at all times there with the unique authority and power to carry out the decisions that are made by the political segment of that mechanism, by the

judicial segment of that mechanism, to carry out this decision and make it effective among all the people in that society or in that community.

In nontotalitarian societies like ours, aside from governmental organizations, there are other organizations as well. Indeed, there are primarily two sectors of our society, the so-called private sector and the public sector, and in between a commingling of the two, what they call semipublic or semiprivate, whichever terminology we may want to use. In that private sector of society, there also evolved other organizations with their own rules of conduct. One basic model is what we call the private business organization. The corporate is, in nature, usually operating in the private sector and governed by their respective rules and having its own private bureaucracy to carry out their objective. They are engaged in the exchange of values, sale of goods, services and other needs of society, so that the members of society can be supplied with all this basic need for food, for lodging, for security, safety and other things that they need to make life convenient.

These are the material economic resources that are being exchanged by these various entities in the private sector, but their primary purpose for being is to make money. They will not be there unless they can have some kind of a balancing of the input and the output, the costs as against the proceeds of their sales, and they must always make a margin. We call that the bottom line. They derive the revenues from the difference between what they spent producing and what they acquired or obtained by selling and exchanging. This includes financial institutions like banks, credit unions, whatever. They provide either basic goods or basic services or even luxury goods, but all the while their primary purpose for being is to make profit, to make money. That is the *raison d'être* of the existence of any private business corporation from the small firm to the national company to the multinational corporations.

In contrast, governments evolve certainly not to make money but to render essential public services to their people. Where do they get their money to buy and acquire input so that they can render the service? They are granted by the

constitution of their being the power of taxation. This is the power to levy tributes, taxes, tariffs, so that the government will have the resources to provide the essential services that the people need or demand from their government; therefore, two different types of organizations on the basis of purpose can be distinguished. At the private sector, the purpose is to make money. All other things are subsidiary to that primary purpose of making money.

At the government sector, the public sector, the purpose is to provide services. All other things should be subordinated for the provision of public services to its people. There is also a different way of evaluating their activities and their operations, their performance. In the private sector, a business organization will always be evaluated, is it making money? Are its proceeds greater than its costs? If they do not achieve this margin, this profit, they will cease to exist. That is the very nature of the business organization. Of course, they can float bonds; they can borrow money. But then, if they cannot repay the interest on the borrowed funds, they will have to declare bankruptcy, and they will also cease to exist. Witness Eaton's. What happened when they cannot pay all their debts, they will have to declare bankruptcy. They will cease to exist.

Is that the same case with government? Would government cease to exist if it could not produce any more money to pay for the resources that the people need? I do not know, but it seems to me that because there is this basic power to collect taxes from citizens in order to provide essential services, that power which we call one of the sovereign powers of the state will never cease to exist. They can always collect through taxes, but then they will have to be reasonable also. Is the kind of services they are providing commensurate with the kind of taxes that they are taking?

In the private sector, the test is efficiency of operation. Efficiency is the relationship between what comes in and what goes out, what they spend and what they acquire as proceeds. Unless the business firm is efficient, it will not make money, and if it does not make money, it will cease to exist. It will declare bankruptcy.

In government, it is not the test of efficiency that should be the criterion; it should be the test of effectiveness. Effectiveness means is the government achieving what they promised they will do? Are the program objectives of the government, the policies they set out, are they doing those? Satisfying the same needs of the people, but not from the point of view of money. If money becomes the standard, then you will formulate your policy within the constraints of your monetary resources, and the demands and necessities of the people cannot be met.

Budgetary constraint, although part of the financial plan of government is not the policy. It is not the framework. The framework is the satisfaction of the basic objectives for the promotion of the general public good of all the people, including the general public health of all the people, education for the youth, the security of person and property. Whether the money is there or not, it is the obligation of government and the reason for their existence to provide all these basic and essential services.

In the semi-public or semi-private area there is confusion in what is being done there. Sometimes the structure is governmental, but the function is private; for example, a Crown corporation established by the government yet doing primarily commercial or a business function. Example: Air Canada or any other Crown corporation that makes money. On the other hand, there might be nongovernmental organizations and structures, but they are forming primarily governmental functions; for example, hospitals. They may be private hospitals, as in the United States, or community hospitals, but they are performing governmental functions. Private schools, they are private and yet they are performing education, a function of the state to educate its citizens. So in this gray area, you can see governmental structures performing nongovernmental functions, or, vice versa, nongovernmental structures performing governmental functions. Yet all of them operate as the service-providing institutions in our society in that gray area where we do not know whether it is government or not.

* (1620)

We can see then that pure governmental organizations perform purely governmental functions like the provision of national defence. That cannot be undertaken by any private organization. It has to be a governmental organization. The provision of the court system, litigation, sometimes it is contracted out, but then they are now trying to apply criteria or standards in the private sector to be applicable to the governmental organization which is inappropriate.

When the government adopts the tool of the private business management in the corporate business sector in the private sector of society, such as establishing, let us say, in our province what they call special operating agencies. These are like business units. They have to make money or else they cannot do anything, because there will be no sustenance, no appropriation from the budget. So these are governmental units. What are we doing to government? When we apply the test of the private sector to the governmental sector, we are slowly and gradually engaging in undesirable activities that will result in the withering away of government. The slow diminution of functions of government such that in the ultimate, if you push it to the extreme, there will be no government left. That is what is the consequence. That is what will happen.

When we apply standards like efficiency as the highest value in government, if you do not make money you do not provide the service, this is applicable in the private business sector but not in government. Then you will have to cut down programs of government, you have to lay off people in government and what is left of government, an emasculated operation that can no longer sustain itself. In the long run, this is the withering away of the state not because of the Marxist or leftist activities but because of the corporate managers that are taking over the functions of government.

Let me give you an example. The banking system in Canada, the chartered banks, how many are there? Well, let us name them: Royal Bank, Toronto-Dominion, Canadian Imperial Bank of Commerce, Scotia Bank, Montreal, National—there are only six of them. Okay, how much profit did they recently make? Seven to

nine billion dollars. That is a lot of money. Do you know how many dollars in a billion? How many dollars in a billion? [interjection] A million million, yes, but they make approximately \$9 billion profit. That is margin. How did they achieve such an enormous amount of money? How? Two ways, primarily. They cut off jobs, lay off people, approximately from 15,000 to 20,000 employees to make that amount of money, because they do not have to pay their salary if they cut them off, cutting costs.

The other way, close all the rural banks like the banks in the north end, unprofitable little banks that are needed by the citizens, they closed them all. Insensitive, nonsensitive, no consideration whatsoever for human needs because they worship one thing: money. Lucre. [interjection] Filthy lucre, according to one of the members.

Nul ne peut servir deux maîtres; car ou il haïra l'un et aimera l'autre, ou il s'attachera à l'un et méprisera l'autre. Vous ne pouvez servir Dieu et l'argent. Vous ne pouvez servir Dieu, le peuple, et l'argent.

No man can serve two masters. Either he hates the one and loves the other, or else he will hold to the one and despise the other. We cannot serve God and money. Mammon is lucre. That is the idol of the banks, the idol of the multinationals. This is the one they worship. Everything else is subordinated to this idol, even human beings.

What happens now to these people who are laid off? Let us analyze. They cannot pay their mortgages. They lose their houses. To whom? To the banks. Their children cannot be educated. They have no money to pay tuition fees. There will be a breakdown in the family, divorces. Some of the children will probably run away. All the social consequences follow because of this devotion to making of money at the expense of human welfare. That is the culture of business, the multinational corporations. It is now affecting even national units. For example, the Ethyl Corporation in the United States had the additive in gasoline, but Canada as a country said: we do not want to distribute that; we do not want to sell that in this country because of environmental consequences. The Ethyl Cor-

poration threatened to sue the federal government of Canada for lost profits, and the federal government of Canada succumbed and paid them some kind of settlement.

What are we witnessing here? Multinational, private corporations, established primarily for profit telling government what to do, how they will formulate policy, what kind of policy they will undertake, all to the benefit of this multinational corporation. The loss of sovereign power is the loss of the power of the people, the loss of the power of this Legislature, the loss of the power of Parliament. That is the consequence of what is happening, and that is why I say the withering away, the strangulation slowly but surely of governments and public welfare networks and all other governmental functions.

Why does this happen? Why are we allowing this? Notice the constant indoctrination of the general public. The public reads the newspapers, the editorials. Who owns the editorial pages? The media, Conrad Black and Lord Thompson. What are these strings of newspapers? They are also private corporations. What are they after? Money. Profit.

* (1630)

There is this series by Robin Leach, the life of the famous and the rich. These are the kinds of people there that enjoy this kind of life. But they get their profit by indoctrinating the people. They say globalization is inevitable, cannot be prevented; the deficits of government, unavoidable. All these debts must be repaid, and now they are demanding tax cuts, tax cuts. At whose benefit and at whose expense? For the benefit of those who have to pay taxes because they have too much income. But at whose expense? At the expense of everyone who pays taxes, mostly the working people of this country.

Every time there is a move, you have to ask two questions: who benefits from this and at whose expense? So you could see now the penetration of governmental structure by doctrines and manager of tools applicable only to the private sector. But everybody says: oh, yes, we will also balance the budget; we will also cut expenses; we will also cut our programs

so that we can only operate within the resources available to us, forgetting that the government has the ultimate power granted by the people for the promotion of the general welfare, peace, order and good government. Good government means you formulate policies that are beneficial to everyone in the community. That is good government.

Now, when they fired these bank employees, 20,000 of them, the banks fired them, where will they go? Where will they collect? Unemployment insurance. Who pays for those pools of money that are accumulated by the federal government for unemployment insurance? The workers of this country. They suck this money to the benefit of the bank. So who benefits and at whose detriment? The detriment of the general taxpayer, the benefits of the owners of the banks and the multinationals. That is what is happening, and we should be aware of what is going on. We are supposed to be representative of the people. We represent the interests of our constituency. We have to act with vision, with knowledge of what is going on, and we have to deprive ourselves of any kind or semblance of too much self-interest for ourselves or for our group that we may be able to promote the general welfare and well-being of all. What the founder of the CCF, now known as the NDP, said: what we want for ourselves, we want for all. That should be our objective. We should have policies that benefits everyone, regardless of their social class, their origin, their economic status, their level of income. We have to do what is just if we are to be good rulers and good leaders of our community.

King Solomon said: When the wicked beareth rule, the people mourn. In other words, when the wicked are in governmental power, the people groan. That is King Solomon. I am not accusing anybody; I am just making a statement that King Solomon said. What are some of the indicators of the wicked rulers? What are their modes of thinking, their behaviour, their habits? They are greedy for money; they accept bribes; they are corrupt in the administration of justice; they pervert judgment. Woe to them who call evil good and call good evil, who say what is right is wrong and wrong is right, that put darkness for light and light for darkness, that put bitter for sweet and sweet for bitter. They go at

their evil deeds with both hands, and how skilled they are in using their hands. The governor and the judge alike demand bribes. The rich man pays them off and tells them whom to ruin. Justice is twisted between them. Even the best of them are prickly as briars; the straightest is more crooked than a hedge of thorns. That is the description of the evil rulers.

King Solomon also said, in contrast, when the righteous are in authority the people rejoice. In other words, when the good rulers are in governmental power the people are happy. That is the indicator. When the rulers pursue the general public interest of all, like Duff Roblin, like Schreyer, the people are happy. [interjection] I do not make a judgment until after history renders itself. Further, some of the indicators of the good rulers, their behaviour, their mode of thinking, their attitudes: he hath shewn the man what is good and what doth the Lord require of thee, but to do justly, and to love mercy and to walk humbly with thy God. Three things he mentioned to be a good ruler: you do justice. You do what is just.

What is just? What is justice? Let me quote an old maxim: *Justicia est constant et perpetua voluntas ius suum cuique tribuendi*. That is Latin saying justice is the perpetual and unceasing disposition to give to every man what is his due. So whatever is due to everyone, you give to everyone. You do not withhold what is good from some and give it to your friends only, because if you do that, you will not be doing justice. You have to give to every person what is his share, what is his due. That is what we call sharing. Whatever the benefits of life, we share it with everyone, one of the basic philosophies of good organization, good rulers, good government.

And who is a wise man and endowed with knowledge among you? Let him show out of good conversation his works, with meekness of wisdom. First pure, then peaceable, gentle, easy to entreat, full of mercy, good fruits, without partiality and without hypocrisy. That is a good ruler. What he says, he means. He does what is fair to everybody. He does not pretend, without hypocrisy. But that is a very rare kind of ruler to find the ideal model. We all fall short because we are all human and subject to all the limitations of a human being.

* (1640)

The honourable member for Fort Whyte (Mr. Loewen) accused Today's NDP as without a vision. Let me respond in this Throne Speech Debate. I am not Martin Luther King, but I also have a little vision of what the NDP government hopes to accomplish in this coming millennium starting January 1 and so on, as long as the people allow us to be in power, remembering that everyone in power is there only temporarily. Then we have to understand a vision of what we want to do.

I can foresee this Legislative Assembly becoming more and more representative, more and more responsible, more and more responsive to the needs of its people. The representativeness of government is seen not only among those who are elected to this Chamber. It is also seen to those who are appointed to the governmental bureaucracy, the public sector bureaucracy. It should be that whatever is the changing demographic composition, the changing mix in the population of this province and of this city, it should be reflected as accurately as possible in not only the elected Legislature but also in the appointed offices of government, also in the legislative and executive branches as well.

Until we can see the mirror image of a people in its institution and its government, it is very difficult to say that it is truly representative.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Schellenberg): The honourable member's time has expired.

Mr. Santos: Let me just make one statement?

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Schellenberg): Agreed? [agreed]

Mr. Santos: Until the love for power is replaced by the power of love, government by cronies cannot be replaced by government by competence.

Mr. Glen Cummings (Ste. Rose): I always appreciate the opportunity to rise on the occasion of the throne speech and participate in the debate but, first of all, at a time like this when there has been a change in government and a change in staff and personnel and elected members within

this Chamber, I also want to take the opportunity to congratulate all members who have achieved re-election and those who have for the first time achieved election. I like to remind myself, when I think it is appropriate, that we all consider the fact that to serve as an elected representative of our society is both a privilege and a responsibility and, hopefully, we each in our own way are smart enough to recognize the difference between those two responsibilities.

Mr. Speaker in the Chair

Mr. Speaker, I want to congratulate you on your election to your position. Having worked with you in this House over the last few years I know you will do a good job, and I trust your judgment will always be fair.

The opportunity to say a few words about the constituency of Ste. Rose should never be overlooked at a time like this. While I do not need to provide the history that I did when I first came to this Chamber, I want to recognize that under redistribution that constituency has changed. I now have the privilege of representing the community of Gladstone and the R.M. of Westbourne, which were an extension of the boundary of the Ste. Rose constituency. I certainly intend to do everything I can to make them feel that they are being adequately represented over the next number of years.

Also, it would be remiss if I did not extend congratulations and best wishes to the pages who have taken up the challenge of working in this Chamber for the current and upcoming session. I am sure you are going to look back and consider this to be one of the most interesting and I hope challenging opportunities in your lives, because it is again an opportunity where very few people ever actually have that opportunity. I congratulate you on putting forward your names and being chosen, because I think it will go a long ways in your memory and provide background and experience that will be irreplaceable.

It would be something less than proper for me if I was to address the throne speech without first considering how it reflects on my constituency and on the people that I represent.

Mr. Speaker, I think it is pretty thin gruel. I am not surprised that that is so in the sense that the present government, and I do congratulate the ministers that are taking over the new role, and their Premier, but it is not that long since the election. During the election, frankly, my view was that the promises that were put forward were in fact thin gruel. Nevertheless, that is now reflected in the throne speech and the legislative plan that is going to be put forward within this Legislature. I consider my responsibility to make sure that the government recognizes that it now has the responsibility to provide the leadership and the direction that will have a lot of impact on every person living within this province.

Coming from a constituency that has an extensive agricultural community and a large dependency on natural resources and rural economic development, I will continue to be searching for leadership and for direction that this government would be providing in those areas, because when I talk about rural economic development, I am not just talking about rural agricultural development. The constituency that I represent also had, at one time, a record of having one of the lower income levels in the province. We do have a buoyant cattle industry that is starting to offset a fair bit of that, but I also have the privilege of representing three First Nations communities, which do have too high a rate of unemployment, which do have too little opportunity for development and progress within their communities. I will be looking to see what it is that this government thinks they can offer that will help to continue with opportunities for these people.

We have to look at this however in the light of what we have seen from the reorganization I think that this government has already undertaken. Certainly I am not going to pass judgment on whether or not the reorganization that they may have undertaken will have a positive or negative impact on the constituents that I represent or the larger population of Manitoba, but I am worried about the signal that it seems to send, because what we have in a large portion of the province outside of the urban centres, we have a tremendous dependency on the vulnerability of world markets in commodities. When I talk about commodities, I am not just

talking about agricultural commodities, I am talking about mining, forestry and all of the other commodities that we are so dependent on to impact on the gross revenue to this province.

* (1650)

I see and I am pleased that the minister responsible for Intergovernmental Affairs is listening as I make these comments, because I certainly intend to be watching closely that some of the initiatives that have been put in place over the last 10 years or more to encourage what we thought would at one time be a lack of opportunity and a lack of attention that was being paid to rural economic development and opportunity outside of urban centres does not get lost. I know that she will take that responsibility seriously, because the fact is that there are a lot of people out there who are quite prepared to give this administration an opportunity to prove what they can do, but eventually they are going to have to demonstrate that they are willing to put their shoulder to the wheel and continue those efforts to make sure that there is a diversification across the face of this province, that that diversification means that there are communities out there of modest size that can expect to have stability in their communities. They can expect to have opportunity that is economically viable developed within their region and within their communities.

Interestingly enough, right now, as we sit in this Chamber, one of the larger employers within the area that I represent has found itself in the process of changing hands, that in the matter of Schwan's Canada, and I hope that the process that the new owner has put in place will be successful. I certainly want to make sure that it is viable and continues to service a large area out of what was once Canada's national headquarters for this company, that being in Neepawa.

When we talk about the buoyancy of the economy out there, and the economy has been producing revenues, revenues which I think the Minister of Finance (Mr. Selinger) will appreciate when the results of this year's income and taxable position is tallied up, I hope that he will give fair consideration to the fact that next year's revenue, when the taxman cometh, will probably be quite substantial as a result of the

buoyancy of the economy that has grown over the last few years in rural Manitoba. But that is not to say that we can stop providing tender, loving care to what are some fragile situations out there.

When I talk about the fragility of one company—and we cannot depend on one entrepreneurial enterprise in any particular area to provide the survival of that area—we need to recognize that the communities out there that are the service centres need to be encouraged to have development, more opportunities given a basic support mechanism, the development of the community bonds where they are given not just a handout but where they are given an opportunity and a mechanism to develop opportunity within their community so that their young people can stay there and prosper without going on into other areas.

Certainly we see tremendous challenges in the area of dependency on some of our renewable resources, an area where we have considerable influence through government on whether or not some of these natural resources will be developed. I would put the new administration on notice that one of the things that I will be very interested in is what are the development opportunities going to be and are they going to continue to be pursued in terms of wood fibre, in terms of mining opportunity, in terms of hydroelectric development. I think the new administration has a tremendous responsibility and probably a tremendous opportunity looking at some of the crossroads that we are approaching as a province in making decisions around the future in these particular areas.

Let me expand a little bit on that. I remember very well criticism, howls of displeasure, concern being expressed about the development of wood fibre in certain parts of this province. Concerns were raised during the development of Louisiana-Pacific, concerns raised over the opportunities that came around Manfor, now Tolko, in the expansion of the harvest of that wood fibre. The principle was always that those closest to the resources and where it is being harvested should have an opportunity to benefit from the development of that resources. I will be carefully watching to make sure that the new administration continues

to forge forward in that respect, because while we have to have a diverse economy that does not rely simply and singularly on the natural resources without the additional processing, without the value-added that goes with it, it does mean that that provides the economic opportunity that a lot of other things can flow from including opportunities in new technology, communication in areas and communities that presently do not necessarily have best opportunities in that area.

I am not going to dwell on it, but I simply think it needs to be worth flagging that the development of opportunities on the east side of the province are going to be an important challenge, and we will be watching carefully to see how the new administration intends to handle that.

There is division among the communities about whether they want access or whether they do not. But there is tremendous opportunity for communities there who have not had a whole lot of opportunity except for the most rudimentary work within the resource industries. This is an opportunity for value-added; it is an opportunity to open up area for tourism as well as simply outside communication. I remember having some of the most eloquent presentations made from people in communities on that side of the province who wanted opportunity to be able to have egress and opportunity for business within their communities, as would occur if they had all-weather communications via road, or transport via road.

So I frankly wish the new administration well in how they may handle that responsibility, but I will be watching, and I will be, I hope, encouraging and pushing you in a direction that will provide the opportunity that the people on that side of the province feel they are entitled to rather than see it pass them by once again, that the opportunity can and will be taken to enhance economic activity on that side of the province and do it with balance.

Mr. Speaker, one of the concerns that I want to bring to the table and something that is very current in terms of public debate and issues that are being discussed since the new administration took over is their view of balanced budgets, their

view of the situation of our current finances, their view of where they predict the finances of this province to wind up, their view at the end of fiscal year '99-2000, their view of whether or not they are prepared to live up to their commitment to accept balanced budget legislation, notwithstanding that there was a lot of opposition to balanced budget legislation when it was brought in. Interestingly enough, over the last year to 18 months, we have had a bit of a conversion by all members in this House, including the government, that has come around in terms of support of balanced budget legislation and adhering to the principles of that.

I have a particular view of balanced budget legislation and why it was appropriate and important that it be put in place. Because I care a great deal about public perception, public concern about the leaders, public concern about those who would commit themselves no matter what their political affiliation, no matter what their racial or financial background might be, there is far too much cynicism in society today about those of us who put our names forward in public debate and who are prepared to spend their time, sacrifice their own personal ambitions from time to time so that they can serve their own community or serve the larger community.

I always felt that the implementation of balanced budget legislation would be something that would shore up the public confidence in terms of how they viewed the political game, as the public too often refers to it.

I am afraid, and free advice, of course members of the government are going to take it being worth exactly what it is costing them at the moment but, frankly, if the public views this as the big scheme or the grand lie or whatever term they want to put to it, then I suggest that everyone in this Chamber is a loser.

* (1700)

I suggest that everyone in the public is a loser if we attempt as elected members to violate what I felt at the time this was brought forward if not the letter of the law, certainly the intent of the legislation, which was to provide assurances to the public that as there was an ongoing transition from government to government,

whether it was re-elected or whether it was a new administration entirely, the public would have some confidence that there would be less and less room for games playing, so they would have confidence in knowing that once the economy was headed in what was a generally accepted direction that there would not be wide irresponsible variations from that. That is genuinely, Mr. Speaker, how I view balanced budget legislation.

The reason I bring that forward with some personal angst frankly, because I remember very well sitting on the other side of this Chamber, people shouting across: use the rainy day fund, it is raining, use the rainy day fund. I think almost every past member of the opposition used that term at some point in referencing to the Fiscal Stabilization Fund. Yet today, within the last few days as a matter of fact, the current Premier (Mr. Doer) has said publicly: I do not intend to touch the rainy day fund because then there will be difficulties when I want to balance the budget. So he is very clearly setting up, using an opening in the legislation, an opening that says a new administration of a different political persuasion is not necessarily entirely bound by the legislation if they believe that they have grounds to run a deficit.

I do not think that I interpret that clause and its number, and its exact wording in the legislation does not really matter. What I am talking about is the spirit of the legislation that is about to be violated in my view, because there are a number of dollars in the Fiscal Stabilization Fund that were clearly intended to be used on expenditures. Very obviously the one was the farm situation that the new members representing the city of Brandon should feel very comfortable about, the city of Brandon more than almost any other community in this province that owes its buoyancy to the agricultural economy, and frankly, I think it is on one small point. But on that point alone, I think the government is going to find itself judged somewhat harshly, because I do not have a problem talking to my farmers about cash accounting, and they simply related, and you can agree or disagree with whether or not their interpretation is appropriate, but it does reflect a fair understanding of what is intended in terms of balancing budgets.

Any of those who have spent any time on cash basis on their farms know that very often the biggest difference of what your bottom line shows at the end of that year is the difference of whether it is seen to have been spent on one side of the year-end or the other. There are fiscal capabilities within this government, and I presume there are talented people there. Certainly the civil service is quite capable of demonstrating how this government can balance the budget, because if anybody in this Chamber or anywhere else thinks that I and my colleagues ran expecting to come in second and not have to pay a \$20,000 fine for not balancing the budget, then I think that alone is the simplest argument that the public is very much seized on, that whether or not the balancing of this budget is achieved this year will be a mark of where this government intends to take itself in terms of adhering to the spirit of the legislation.

I was very disappointed when we were gently, and I emphasize gently, probing the government the other day about whether or not they intended to amend the balanced budget legislation or whether or not they intended to continue adhering to the principles and the spirit of that legislation.

I simply want to put one other comment that I know almost everyone in this Chamber has probably referred to, but I want to put it in the context of what I said about adhering to the spirit of the legislation, the intent of the legislation, and why the members of the public believe this legislation is appropriate. It comes out of their own Province of Manitoba fiscal review, it says on the top of the page. But the focus on financial results, quite simply, Deloitte and Touche states in bold print that this is not an audit.

Now, the public out there probably does not too often sit back and scratch its head and say, well, was it an audit or was it a fiscal review? You hear people say it is an audit often enough; they assume it is an audit. There are people, probably including myself over the years, who might have thrown in the word "audit" when they meant review, because they had an accountant going over something—well, I had my accountant audit it. But, really, what the accountant did was review it, and that is what

happened here. It is a review much the same as your banker would do in many respects.

But if the government of the day at the end of the day if they choose not to adhere to the spirit of the legislation, if they intend to go with the focus that they intend to set up this imaginary straw man that they can flail at for the next four years, every time they have to make a tough decision in the next short while, Mr. Speaker, they are going to say, well, the books were not balanced; we cannot afford that.

If we want to know why the public is cynical, that is why they want the government of the day and the opposition of the day to deal straightforwardly with the problems that are faced day to day in managing the province. The argument is about priorities. The argument is about where are we going to put the money. The argument is about the level of taxation. You are going to raise the taxes to provide the programs, fine. Stand up and be counted. The public will judge you on that. But I think there is a broadly accepted feeling that taxation in this province is about as high as it should get. So you are faced with the challenge in governing of balancing the revenue that is out there, revenue from a solid economy and one that is now recognized across the country as being one of the better economies, given where it has come from and how it has gained momentum over the last few years.

That is widely accepted. So the argument, ladies and gentlemen, is not anything other than how you will manage within the revenue opportunities you have, how you will choose your priorities. If you disagree with the priorities that we as a previous government used, that is fair game. If you believe that the taxes are too high or too low, that is fair game. But you have a responsibility to live up to the election promise you made, to the legislation that you said was one of the things that was done right by the previous administration.

If you continue to perpetuate the myth that you cannot balance the budget, then you are going to contribute to the ongoing skepticism and cynicism with which the public views elected office and elected officers. You are going to contribute to that old adage that we as politicians all know, whether we know it by this

term or not, but you are going to contribute to the truth of the statement that your first day in office is also the beginning of your last day in office, because if we continue to perpetuate that cynicism in the public, then we will not see anything more than a cynical change and review and cynical change and review of governments year after year, and this province and this country will not be well served. I mean, we see no greater cynicism today than we see about the government of all stripes in Ottawa. It has been perpetuated and has gotten worse probably, rather than better, but it started gradually.

* (1710)

I am sure we are all roughly the same age in this Chamber. Maybe I am one of the older ones at the moment, but there is a lot of memory goes back in this Chamber. I am looking at some of the younger members. If they followed politics at all, they will remember the cynicism that has gradually built around political office in this country. Go back to the Trudeau years if you like, carry it on through from there. It is there. We watch probably too much foreign television. To be more explicit, we watch too much American television, but let us remember that if this Chamber and the members elected to be responsible in this Chamber do not start dealing with the spirit of legislation like this, then we will be contributing to our share of the cynicism, our share of the really bad feelings that the public has when they are going out to deal with their electoral responsibility in casting their ballots.

The other point that I would like to deal with in terms of this throne speech, Mr. Speaker, is that every government starts off with a lot of goodwill, and, as I said, I want to encourage the current government to build on that and do what they can to enhance opportunity within this province. But there are some difficult decisions that are coming up. Some of them are going to be made more difficult by election promises that they themselves made, and that relates to the choice of expenditures, the choice of priorities and whether or not there is a balance between taxes and expenditures that can meet the expectations of the public.

I look at the education discussion and whether or not this new government is going to

be able to meet the expectations that it has raised out there with the public in terms of funding education, and that is why I flag my concern about whether or not there is a commitment to continue with the growth and the balance that we have in rural development and whether or not that emphasis is still going to be there, as we feel it should be, to bring some balance to this province, whether or not there is an ability to balance the expenditures within this new administration that will not inadvertently disadvantage by choice someone whom they probably overlooked when they were making blanket statements during the campaign.

I suppose it is as simple as something like referring to the flood of the century in this year's throne speech and really not particularly mentioning the fact that there is a chunk of this province that had an enormous loss this spring, a loss that is going to have a greater impact on the GDP of this province, and a loss that unfortunately for the members opposite—I guess they do not have very many of what you would call elected people from what we would refer to as rural Manitoba that was largely affected by that flooded area, but I think it was a serious oversight in the putting together of the throne speech.

In an effort to pull all of the five promises that this government said they ran on, pull them into the throne speech, what we have ended up with is a document that skips lightly across the issues, somewhat like throwing a stone across a calm piece of water. It touches a little bit on areas of importance; it misses quite a few, and it looks pretty. It takes a little bit of skill to make it happen, but in the end it is possible it is going to sink.

I think until we start seeing some of the meat that is going to be proposed in legislative changes, until we see some of the direction to support the organizational changes that have been made, and I emphasize again, it is the right of this government to make those organizational changes, but very often that signals the direction. It signals the emphasis that they may or may not be willing to put strong financial manpower and thought processes into supporting. So I clearly believe the balanced budget legislation, balancing the budget, managing the resources of this province, because we have been so

consumed in many respects by the heavy debt load that this province has carried at a time when it could ill-afford to carry it.

I would not doubt that I am boring the Minister of Finance (Mr. Selinger), but I will give him a little insight into why I will not let this bone go unchewed. Oh, he is denying being bored; I did not mean to reflect on that. Why this bone needs chewing is an experience that I had shortly after coming into government, when we had a large amount of money that was borrowed in Japanese yen. The Canadian dollar moved the wrong way; the yen moved the wrong way in relationship to that loan. When it came time to pay back that loan, rehabilitate it into something that was closer resembling the value of our currency and something that could be more easily predicted, we ended up with costs that reflected into the 28 percent range. Now, I am not attempting nor would I presume to give anybody a lecture about managing finances. I have probably made my share of mistakes over my lifetime, but I will tell you that that is the type of problem that governments get themselves into inadvertently, and the taxpayer probably never realizes 10 years down the road what it is that hit him. Sometimes the politician who is responsible for making the decision does not realize what it is that bit him, because that is a decision that was made in an ill-considered way at a time when risk was not seen to be as high as it really was.

So I encourage the new administration to consider carefully the type of risk that they may be prepared to subject or expose this province to. They will give my children and my business a lot more comfort if they stand up at some point in the not too distant future and indicate clearly and strongly that they do intend to live up to the intent and to as much as possible the letter of the balanced budget legislation, because it is not just about dollars and cents at this point in their administration. It is about whether or not they are going to set the tone for debate in this Legislature, No. 1. You can rest assured that if the debate in this Legislature is not of the tone that is too complimentary that that will extend into the reflection on their administration.

I do not think the public out there, as reasonably well educated as they are becoming

through the news media and other sources and the high degree of skepticism that most of them approach politics and politicians from, I do not think they will have a very high tolerance level for an administration that continues for very long to say, well, it was them guys. You have a shorter string than most, given the time in history when you are assuming government in this province. I would encourage you to carefully consider what that means not just for—and obviously I am not here to give you advice on how to succeed politically, but I am here to tell you that you will be held accountable in a way that can become very politically damaging to your administration if you are seen not to be following the spirit of the intent of something that I think is as fundamental to the well-being of this province and to the future of our children as almost anything else that we have done in government in this province.

* (1720)

I do not talk about my administration or the government that I was part of, I meant collectively as a Legislature we recognized the risks that we were exposing future generations to when we devised the balanced budget legislation. It is recognized across North America and certainly in many other jurisdictions as being imaginative, as being appropriate, and as having enough teeth in it that those who administer it will think very carefully before they stray from the guideposts that are established in that legislation.

I would also say that people I talk to, people that I represent, the ones that express their concerns about this, are saying that if the balanced budget legislation is amended, watered down, changed to make it less effective, that in fact that will send a signal to them and to their future intentions, the equivalent to a shiver going down their spine, because they are watching, and they will hold you accountable, and on this side of the House I can assure you that we will do everything we can to make sure that you are held accountable to the spirit and the letter of that legislation.

Mr. Speaker, it has been a privilege to put a few words on the record for this throne speech. Again, congratulations and best wishes to all

members in this House over the next number of years as we do everything we can within the power of all three parties to provide solid leadership for the people of this province.

Mr. Jim Rondeau (Assiniboia): Mr. Speaker, it is a great honour for me to give this speech today. I would not have predicted this outcome of the general election six months ago. However, I am very pleased that the people of Assiniboia had the confidence to elect me to this Assembly.

First of all, Mr. Speaker, I must commend you on your election. It is of particular significance that the first elected Speaker is of Inuit descent, which honours you and a founding nation. It is also significant that you obtained a majority vote during the first ballot. This demonstrates the confidence of this House in terms of your ability, impartiality and wisdom. In the short time I have known you, I have learned to appreciate your wisdom, sense of humour, which I am sure will serve you well in the upcoming Session. I would also like to congratulate the member for Wellington (Mr. Santos) on his appointment as Deputy Speaker. His experience and knowledge of the House rules will certainly serve him well.

Finally, I would like to give my thanks to Binx Remnant, the Clerk of the House. His guidance and information certainly was very much appreciated and certainly was a guide to me, and I am sure most other new members, in our orientation to this House. Thank you very much for his patience and support.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank the people of Assiniboia for electing me to represent them in the House. During the last election, the NDP garnered 1,750 votes, and this time we obtained the support of almost 4,400 voters. This is almost a 250 percent change in level of support, and I promise to represent all Assiniboia with energy, determination and commitment and live up to this vote of confidence.

As all members know, each of us in this House are addressed as members from, rather than by our own names. I intend to take this tradition very seriously and listen to the concerns of my constituents and represent them well in

this House. I will work hard and try tirelessly to represent them to the best of my abilities.

As you know, the election was very close, and I would like to thank my spouse, family, friends and volunteers who worked on my campaign. This election showed that the efforts of a small determined group can really make a difference and that every single vote counts, especially the last three of them. Everyone who contributed to our amazing campaign and each of the voters were responsible for this amazing victory. This election demonstrates that democracy is healthy in Manitoba and that everyone can make a difference in the outcome of the election and that no election result is predictable.

I would also like to commend Joy Smith who also had a five-week delay in her election. I know that it was very nerve-wracking, and I wish her well in her sitting in the House because I know it was a long and arduous time getting there. Of particular note, I would like to thank Orma Sozansky, a long-term Assiniboia resident and NDP supporter for nominating me. I would also like to thank my constituency association for their support in the impossible task that we undertook. We were truly the little engine that could and in fact did. It is of particular note that our constituency association started out with eight people and ended up with about 25 at the end of the election. That is probably the smallest con-stituency association that won in an election. It was a hard-fought election that focused on the issues of importance to Assiniboia. I would like to thank the other two candidates and all the volunteers who worked on all three campaigns for the hard work, dedication and democratic process. I would like to thank my predecessor, Linda McIntosh for her hard work and on an election well fought on all the issues. Thank you.

Now, following the traditional talk, a little bit about Assiniboia and the Assiniboia constituency which I am proud to represent. We are located in the northwest part of the city beginning at the city limits and proceeding along Portage Avenue until Vimy, then around Ness to the airport and then north along the Perimeter until it reaches the area where Saskatchewan and

the Perimeter Highway meet. In this area, there are approximately 20,450 people and it is a very diverse area. It encompasses everything from PMQs to very affluent areas, different apartments. So it is a very unique combination of people.

In Assiniboia, there is a large amount of facilities and resources which is available to its people and individuals. One of the examples is the St. James School Division. It is responsible for the delivery of public education. It operates a number of good schools and accommodates about 9,000 people. I will talk a bit about some of the schools. Firstly, Voyageur School where I went to today as far as to their daycare. It is a wonderful school which tries to bring parents, staff and students together to enhance literacy, numeracy and to have total school development.

We have Buchanan School which is really trying to do a lot of parental involvement and is really trying to reach out to the community. Crestview School, again another daycare that I visited today which is really focusing on academic, social and behavioural skills and has a very, very active daycare program and full-time kindergarten program. Heritage School, which is working very, very hard to create an environment which fosters positive self-esteem and responsible social interactions. Ness Middle School has an excellent academic tradition. It also has a good volleyball program, and as a previous volleyball coach, I was really impressed that it actually won the division volleyball title.

Sturgeon Creek offers a unique combination of programs including plastics, a printing program, et cetera, which attracts people from across the city and across the province to participate in its programs. Hedges Junior High, this is a school where I began my educational career. I started student teaching when a Mr. Carlyle whom some of you may remember was the principal, and that was my first stint at teaching. John Taylor Collegiate has a proud history of academic and athletic accomplishments, again, another very strong volleyball program. I graduated from that school in 1976. I am proud of its continued academic excellence and its athletic abilities.

* (1730)

The School for the Deaf is also located in the constituency. I was able to go to their craft sale, and it was really impressive to note all the community participation, a lot of the development of parents into the school, a lot of outreach into the community. It is a really exciting school with great facilities, great staff, a good administration that is just really vibrant. It is nice to see how the students fit into the community itself.

We also have the Assiniboine Memorial community club, which is a curling rink which has produced a number of national champions, has produced a lot of great curlers in its time and in which I have often been beaten, so I have enjoyed that place. The other facilities include the Assiniboia West Recreation Association which has three sites and offers a lot of programs including New Year's Eve dances, et cetera, which reach out to the whole community; the Centennial Pool, where my mom exercises three times a week and I tried to keep up in the seniors aerobics, is also a neat facility. Assiniboia Downs is the centre of the Manitoba horse racing industry, and that is also within the riding. This is an area which attracts people from across the West, across the States and is attended by many hundreds of thousands of people; Red River Exhibition park, run by the Red River Exhibition Association, is host to a number of activities, including the Red River Ex and also participated in a lot of activities for the Pan Am Games. It is a wonderful site. Many thousands of Winnipeggers and Manitobans participate, and I would encourage all to come out.

Besides the wonderful facilities, the wonderful people in the area, I would also like to talk a bit about my past motivation for entering politics. I had the fortune of being brought up in an armed forces family which was able to travel different parts of Canada and the world. This foundation provided me a strong interest and appreciation of other cultures and languages. It also forced me to learn how to adapt to new environments, not be afraid to meet new people or try different things. It is certainly a great, great orientation to politics.

I spent a good deal of my youth involved in scouting at the Sixth Winnipeg group. It was a

group that did a great deal of canoeing, camping and trips. We had great leaders, including Mr. Harry Dow, who taught me a great deal about leadership and responsibility. We participated in a lot of events like the P.E.I. trip for National Jamboree. We went down to Texas. We also built a scout cabin which we used for a lot of winter camping. We also went on canoe trips, some of which were weeks long, and it taught me a great deal for the appreciation of nature and the environment. It also gave me a lot of lifelong friends. I still call a lot of these friends, even to this day. We get together, we go on canoe trips even to this day, and we also spend some time together. It is really nice because these are people who have branched out but we still remain in touch, and I really hold that part of my history very dear.

It was during this period I was involved in recycling used tires to earn money for special projects. If you note, the Metro One had a neat caricature for me in there. What we were doing was we were recycling tires. We were gathering these tires from different garages and different locations around the city and selling them to companies that made either blasting mats or doormats. This is how we funded thousands and thousands of dollars to pay for the trips and the different projects that we did, and that is how come, again, the Metro One used the newspaper article—sorry, picture. I was really appreciative of the picture, because it brought back a lot of fond memories and interesting times.

I had the pleasure of attending both of our fine city's universities during my post-secondary education. I went to the U of W to get my B. Ed. and then went on from there to the U of M. I also was involved in both universities' councils, first the education student council at the U of W and UMSU and also the education student councils at the U of M. I think this is where I started my real interest in the formal part of politics. I then had the pleasure of working as an educator for the last 19 years.

I will tell you a little bit about it. I started off in St. James as a student teacher and then as a sub. Then I went up to Norway House to teach there for three years. So from 1981 to 1983, I went up there to teach regular high school courses. I then came down to Winnipeg and

worked as both a university seminar instructor and also as an adult literacy instructor, so I worked both areas of the spectrum. For the literacy instructor, I started working in the Selkirk School Division and Friendship Centre teaching adults who were functioning below a Grade 7 level. I learned that a lot of people are excluded from society because they do not have the ability to academically compete. They do not have the ability to be informed about what is going on. I then went from there to Keewatin Community College, as literacy co-ordinator up in Keewatin Community College, and there my job was to set up literacy centres throughout the North.

After spending a short time at Keewatin Community College, I went to Frontier Collegiate. For those of you who do not know Frontier Collegiate, it is a school that serves three-quarters of the province. Students from all across the North go to stay at Frontier, and it offers a wide variety of courses. There I taught special ed. These are the kids who do not fit into the regular system. These are the kids who cannot write a standardized exam. These are the kids who would not work in the regular program. So there I developed a lot of modified programs and work-education programs.

That was really, really educational to me because I had to stretch my horizons, stretch my abilities to meet the needs of these students. It is also probably the hardest work but the most gain for me as a person. I felt the best about this time because the kids really, really did progress. I am happy to say that as of about eight years ago, almost all the students who participated in the course were gainfully employed. We are talking about 16 kids who were unemployable, had troubles in school. Then after this program—and they were my students; I had them all day—they were gainfully employed after working with them for long periods of time. It is neat to say that they also are very, very friendly. Every time I go up North, I am dragged in to have a home-cooked meal, et cetera, from some of my former students. I am really happy to see that.

After Frontier Collegiate, I then became an administrator at Frontier School Division, down in the board office in Winnipeg. There I started out as literacy co-ordinator, where we won a

national literacy award for starting out on how to teach adults to read and write. We did a number of neat programs like child reading programs, et cetera, which helped the average person become literate. Then we went from there. I became work-education and literacy co-ordinator and did a whole bunch of transition programs into the community, where what we did was we got students the ability to work and partner in communities and worksites.

This is showing how we can get people who would not normally be enfranchised, would not normally be productive, giving them abilities with a little bit of support to become productive, long-term members of society.

After this, I finally just finished as co-ordinator of adult education and high school initiatives, where I was involved in delivering distance education programs, writing curriculum for bump-up skills, et cetera, where we started again focusing on the kids who could not function right in a normal teaching environment. What we were doing was we were giving them an ability and the support so that they would be academically strong enough to survive in the system.

These experiences taught me the importance of creating a strong society where all citizens are able to go to school, have access to basic social supports and can succeed. What the trick was is to create a system that allowed people to be successful. It was not creating a bar that was not attainable; it was creating the support so that the kids could jump over the bar or the adults could jump over the bar and be productive members of society. It was not ignoring 10 percent of our society.

It is essential to assist all Manitobans to become productive members of society. We cannot afford in either human or economic terms to continue to disenfranchise any part of our society. Our aboriginal population has the highest growth rate, and long-term efforts must be made to harness this amazing potential.

All society will benefit in terms of productivity, financially, and most importantly in human terms, when we take steps to include all segments of our society, not just certain parts

of it. The high level of illiteracy in Manitoba is unacceptable. Statistics show that there is a direct correlation between education and health, education and employment, even education and crime. While the level of education rises, income and standard of living and quality of life increase.

* (1740)

While I was literacy co-ordinator, I saw how difficult it was for people who did not have the ability to read or write. Our jails are crowded with illiterate people. It is almost impossible to get a job if you are illiterate. Education does open doors, and we should be flexible to allow all Manitobans the time and opportunity to obtain the education and skills necessary to become contributing members of society. This investment will pay off both in human and financial terms.

The previous government had a system where what people could do is they could take courses for a certain segment of time, eight, 10 months, and then they would have to get jobs, or they would have to get out and do volunteer work. If you want to see long-term, meaningful increases in productivity and standard of living, what you have to do is provide the support so that they can be long-term, contributing members of society.

This brings me to the issue of child poverty. Recently I had the pleasure of attending the report card on child poverty announcement. I was appalled that, as we continue to approach the next millennium, Manitoba still has one of the highest child poverty rates in Canada. It is wrong to continue to allow children to go hungry. Children need to eat properly in order to learn and develop properly. Hungry children are unable to reach their full potential. We must be willing to share and assist others.

Poverty also contributes to a number of social difficulties, including increasing gang membership, crime, as well as the deterioration of housing which affects all Manitobans in terms of security issues and increasing taxes. It is far cheaper to educate and feed a child when they are young than to try to rectify the problem in later years. It is wrong to be penny wise and

pound foolish. The answer is to provide long-term solutions, a positive environment and real hope for the future. It is necessary to open up schools and community clubs across the province and allow youth to become involved in productive activities.

For many years, I worked as a volunteer coach of the Winnipeg Eagles, an aboriginal men's volleyball team. This is a team of about 16 aboriginal young men at 16 years old who asked me to coach them. I then started to coach them. What happened was this group became a very, very important support for each other, et cetera. What we did was that we went to the U of W. We practised twice a week, and we played twice a week. This group became very, very close. Other kids would come and practise with us. So we had 25 kids practising at the University of Winnipeg in the Community Access Program. This program was cancelled four years ago. Why? Because of decreasing funding to the universities, this program was cancelled so that other groups could use the facilities at the U of W and pay the \$50-an-hour fee. What then happened was the inner-city groups that had utilized the gymnasium were thrown out, and people travelled from the suburbs to use the U of W. What happened was this: we had a gym which was used till eight o'clock or nine o'clock. Community Access groups would use it for a couple of hours, and people from the central part of the city would have recreational facilities. We were very, very lucky to again find a school principal that would allow us to use the gym, so the group stayed together.

This group has been now around for 12 years, and I look at this group today. I see two teachers, business people; I see community leaders. Two or three are on band councils now. I see two policemen. I see a man who has just finished his master's in environmental studies. Why these educated, productive people became that way was because they could form a supportive group and kept themselves busy by taking proactive steps rather than steps to remedy the situation after it was done. What happened was, by just opening the doors of a gymnasium, by creating an opportunity for kids to be good, this group became very supportive and did a great job as far as supporting each other.

They are now part of the role-model group. So they go to other youth groups who are having difficulty and talk to kids to try to convince them of the importance of having a vision and heading there. That is what we have to do as a society and as individuals.

Manitoba has a number of basic advantages in terms of competitiveness, including expensive housing, cheap electricity, and skilled workforce. This is an excellent start, but we must continue to look for the future. It is necessary to once again begin to invest in the future. Recently Manitoba has continued to expand the area of technology. Seed capital and financial assistance continues to be a problem. By assisting small business and the raising of venture capital, we will be able to support a sector with huge growth potential. We must support the growth of our economy to ensure all Manitobans are able to be employed.

We have a commitment to drop the tax by 1.5 percent. We also have a commitment for balanced budget legislation. This is important. As a financial advisor for Summit Securities and also as a small-business person who has owned a number of small businesses, I know how hard it is for the average business person. I also know how important it is to keep taxes reasonable, but on the other hand it is a balance between reasonable taxes and support for those who need it the most. I know that our government has pledged for that.

It is also important to enable Manitobans the opportunity to earn a living wage. With a minimum wage of \$6 an hour, it would be impossible to afford to raise a family or even pay tuition for a post-secondary institution. We must give the opportunity for people to look after themselves. This means they must be able to earn a reasonable standard of living and pay for their education, if they wish to do so. We have to be able to have a system where all people have access to post-secondary institutions.

I believe that all Manitobans want a society—

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. The member for Assiniboia has the floor. It is getting very difficult to hear the member for Assiniboia.

Mr. Rondeau: I believe that Manitobans want a society where all people have access to basic needs, despite wealth, location and background. Good, timely health care is also essential. We cannot stand for hallway medicine, excessive waiting periods and inhuman working conditions for health care staff. Assiniboia is composed of over 30 percent seniors, and this segment of our population is particularly concerned about these conditions.

While I was canvassing, I was told of numerous situations where people were not treated appropriately in the health care system. Each citizen of this province must be able to trust and rely on an effective health care system. Each employee in the health care system must be able to do their job and feel like they have accomplished something. We cannot expect people in the health care system to go day after day beyond the call of duty. We have to treat them with respect.

The lack of post-secondary educational opportunities must also be addressed immediately. As Manitobans, we have the choice to compete on the world stage by heading in two different directions. The first method was being followed by the previous government which was trying to compete by creating low-wage, low-skill jobs and being the cheapest jurisdiction to operate. I propose that we invest in an educated, skilled workforce which has well-paid, long-term jobs. Many of these jobs require knowledge and skills that can be delivered by increasing accessibility to post-secondary training. By doubling the college spaces over the next five years and controlling the costs of education, we will be able to compete in a knowledge-based society. We will be able to attract companies so that they can access these skilled workers. Our people will then have the ability to stay in our province, rather than be forced to leave or take part-time, minimum wage, low-paying jobs

* (1750)

Manitoba is changing demographically and we must take steps now for the future if we are to have a future. We cannot accept short-term expensive band-aid solutions to long-term problems. As a government, we must give our citizens access to a first rate health system. And that means to have emergency rooms available. That means that we have to have staffing in our hospitals. That means that we have to have nurses and doctors on call so that they can work and have these situations. We cannot be driving our doctors out of this province because of excessive workloads. We have to take the time now. We also have to invest in community-based long-term solutions which are cheaper than institutional ones.

We must also have opportunities for youth, all youth in the province. It cannot just be centred on the city. I am proud to say that our caucus represents the entire province, geographically, culturally, et cetera. By having this breadth, we are able to represent all groups in the province and we are also able to talk about the conditions that we need to modify to make appropriate changes so all can participate. I know when I was travelling up North, just the access of a dentist, it is hard to access even dentistry. It is hard to go get specialized treatment. I know it was very, very hard when you are talking about even recruitment for teachers. It is hard because they are concerned about what infrastructure is available to them. We have to have a province where everybody has access to decent infrastructure, decent services and can afford a good standard of living.

As far as education, we really, really need a system where no matter where you are you have access to good long-term education, post-secondary and secondary. Simple things like let us work on developing distance ed, Internet technology so that all students have access everywhere, that not everyone has to leave their community to get a post-secondary education.

We also have to look at a government that is going to invest in long-term solutions. One of the things I was really concerned about is that in

education you need to make an investment. You might see a product in about six or eight years, or 10 or 12. So you have to make long-term wise decisions.

As a small-business man, I know that our focus on creation of jobs, our focus on creating skilled workers, our focus on treating people fairly will in fact pay off over and over again. People will stay in this province, people want to stay with their family if given the opportunity.

Finally, we have to also have a fair tax burden. Our government, by keeping the pledge for the balanced budget legislation, will have fair taxes. I was very pleased with the 1.5 percent reduction in the federal tax. I think that is a good start. What it is, we have taken note that there is difficulty, we will hold the balance and we will continue to keep all of our citizens in mind, including the taxpayer. We have good long-term solutions. The tax burden will decrease over time while we have more and more people enfranchised into our society.

Mr. Speaker, I thank you for having granted me the time to address this Assembly. I appreciate your patience, and I wish to thank my colleagues for having granted me the time and consideration for hearing my speech. Thank you very much.

Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights): Mr. Speaker, I wonder if there is a will of members to call it six o'clock.

Some Honourable Members: Six o'clock.

Mr. Speaker: Is there leave to call it six o'clock? [agreed]

When this matter is again before the House, the honourable member for River Heights will have 40 minutes remaining.

The hour being 6 p.m., this House is adjourned and stands adjourned until 10 a.m. tomorrow (Friday).

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Thursday, December 2, 1999

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