



Second Session - Thirty-Seventh Legislature

of the

Legislative Assembly of Manitoba

**DEBATES
and
PROCEEDINGS**

**Official Report
(Hansard)**

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The Honourable George Hickes
Speaker*



MANITOBA LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
Thirty-Seventh Legislature

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

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Wednesday, December 13, 2000

The House met at 1:30 p.m.

PRAYERS

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

PRESENTING PETITIONS

Health Centre

Mrs. Myrna Driedger (Charleswood): Mr. Speaker, I beg to present the petition of Lori Ludmar, Kara Christenson, Gord Faithfull and others, praying that the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba request that the Minister of Health (Mr. Chomiak) and the First Minister (Mr. Doer) instruct the Winnipeg Regional Health Authority to end its plans to remove the Health Centre at 108 Bond Street from Transcona and to consider finding existing space in downtown Transcona.

READING AND RECEIVING PETITIONS

Health Centre

Mr. Speaker: I have reviewed the petition of the honourable Member for Charleswood and it complies with the rules and practices of the House. Is it the will of the House to have the petition read? *[Agreed]*

Will the Clerk please read.

Madam Clerk (Patricia Chaychuk): To the Legislature of the province of Manitoba. The petition of the undersigned citizens of the province of Manitoba, humbly sheweth:

THAT the Health Centre, located in downtown Transcona at 108 Bond Street, is an important government service to the community of Transcona and surrounding areas; and

THAT the said Health Centre is centrally located, close to major bus routes, and therefore convenient to the people, with its community based services of Pre-natal and Post-natal care,

Public Nurse consultations, Immunizations, Vaccinations, and Mental Health services; and

THAT the said Health Centre also contains the administrative support for home care in the area, with home care workers reporting in and out of the centre; and

THAT the loss of the Health Centre would be a major economic set back to the commercial well being of downtown Transcona and the entire Transcona community; and

THAT the people of Transcona were not consulted prior to the Provincial Government making the decision to relocate the Health Centre and that the plan for its relocation to a 'strip mall district' runs contrary to all concepts of community development; and

THAT there is plenty of space in downtown Transcona for the construction of a permanent facility or for the leasing of new space or for the expansion and renovation of the existing facility.

WHEREFORE YOUR PETITIONERS HUMBLY PRAY THAT the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba request that the Minister of Health and the First Minister of Manitoba immediately instruct the Winnipeg Regional Health Authority to end its plans to remove the Health Centre at 108 Bond Street from Transcona and instead direct the WRHA to consider finding existing space in downtown Transcona, since much space exists, for both their short term and long term facility needs.

PRESENTING REPORTS BY STANDING AND SPECIAL COMMITTEES

Standing Committee on Industrial Relations First Report

Mr. Daryl Reid (Chairperson of the Standing Committee on Law Amendments): Mr. Speaker, I beg to present the First Report of the Committee of Industrial Relations.

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

Some Honourable Members: Dispense.

Mr. Speaker: Dispense.

Your Standing Committee on Industrial Relations presents the following as its First Report.

Your committee met on Monday, December 11, 2000, at 7 p.m. in Room 255 of the Legislative Building to consider bills referred.

At that meeting your committee elected Mr. Aglugub (The Maples) as the Vice-Chairperson.

Your committee has considered:

Bill 3—The Civil Service Superannuation Amendment Act; Loi modifiant la Loi sur la pension de la fonction publique

Bill 4—The Manitoba Employee Ownership Fund Corporation Amendment Act; Loi modifiant la Loi constituant en corporation le Fonds de participation des travailleurs du Manitoba

Bill 6—The Pension Benefits Amendment Act; Loi modifiant la Loi sur les prestations de pension

and has agreed to report the same, without amendment.

Your committee has also considered:

Bill 2—The Employment Standards Code Amendment Act; Loi modifiant le Code des normes d'emploi

and has agreed to report the same with the following amendment:

MOTION:

THAT the following be added after section 5 of the Bill:

5.1 Subsection 60(1) is amended by striking out "12 consecutive months" and substituting "seven consecutive months."

Mr. Reid: Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the honourable Member for Brandon West (Mr. Smith), that the report of the committee be received.

Motion agreed to.

**Standing Committee on Law Amendments
First Report**

Mr. Doug Martindale (Chairperson of the Standing Committee on Law Amendments):

Mr. Speaker, I beg to present the first report of the Committee on Law Amendments.

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

Some Honourable Members: Dispense.

Mr. Speaker: Dispense.

Your Standing Committee on Law Amendments presents the following as its First Report.

Your committee met on Monday, December 11, 2000, at 7 p.m. in Room 254 of the Legislative Building to consider bills referred.

At that meeting, your committee elected Mr. Schellenberg (Rossmere) as Vice-Chairperson.

Your committee heard representation on bills as follows:

Bill 5—The Helen Betty Osborne Memorial Foundation Act; Loi sur la Fondation commémorative Helen Betty Osborne

*George Muswaggon, Private Citizen
Chief Ron Evans, Assembly of Manitoba Chiefs
Cecilia Osborne, Private Citizen
Justine Osborne, Private Citizen
Grand Chief Whitebird, Assembly of Manitoba Chiefs
Ms. Sandra Delaronde, Private Citizen*

Your committee has considered:

Bill 5—The Helen Betty Osborne Memorial Foundation Act; Loi sur la Fondation commémorative Helen Betty Osborne

and has agreed to report the same without amendment.

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

Motion agreed to.

* (13:35)

TABLING OF REPORTS

Hon. Oscar Lathlin (Minister of Conservation): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to now table the following annual reports, copies of which have been distributed intersessionally: Manitoba Conservation Pineland Forest Nursery; Manitoba Habitat Heritage Corporation; Sustainable Development Innovations Fund; the Venture Manitoba Tours Limited and the Manitoba Product Stewardship Corporation.

Hon. Tim Sale (Minister of Family Services and Housing): I am pleased to table the Annual Report 1999-2000 for the former Children and Youth Secretariat, now Healthy Child Manitoba, and the Department of Family Services and Housing Annual Report '99-2000.

Hon. Becky Barrett (Minister of Labour): I am pleased to table the following reports, copies of which have been previously distributed: the Quarterly Financial Report for the Six Months ended August 31, 2000 for Manitoba Public Insurance; the Annual Report for the Department of Labour for the year 1999-2000; the Annual Report for the Office of the Fire Commissioner for the year 1999-2000; the Civil Service Commission Annual Report for the year 1999-2000; the Public Service Group Insurance Fund Benefit Summary and Auditor's Report and Financial Statements for the year ending April 30, 2000.

I would like to also table the following report: the Manitoba Labour Board Annual Report for 1999-2000.

Hon. Jean Friesen (Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs): I would like to

present the Annual Report of the Department of Intergovernmental Affairs for '99-2000.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

Bill 8—The Mines and Minerals Amendment Act

Hon. MaryAnn Mihychuk (Minister of Industry, Trade and Mines): I move, seconded by the honourable Minister of Aboriginal and Northern Affairs (Mr. Robinson), that leave be given to introduce Bill 8, The Mines and Minerals Amendment Act (Loi modifiant la Loi sur les mines et les minéraux), and that the same be now read and received a first time.

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

Motion presented.

This bill confirms the Government of Manitoba will not assert its right to one-half interest in the minerals on reserve lands. This step was suggested in the report of the Aboriginal Justice Inquiry in August 1991 and in the report of the Aboriginal Justice Implementation Commission in March of 2000.

Motion agreed to.

* (13:40)

Introduction of Guests

Mr. Speaker: Prior to Oral Questions I would like to draw the attention of all honourable members to the public gallery where we have with us from Maples Collegiate eight Grades 9 to 12 English as a Second Language students under the direction of Mrs. Janet Hilderman. This school is located in the constituency of the honourable Member for The Maples (Mr. Aglugub).

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

ORAL QUESTION PERIOD

Budget Tax Reductions

Mr. Stuart Murray (Leader of the Official Opposition): Mr. Speaker, according to a new survey done by the Canadian Federation of Independent Business, the degree of optimism that Manitoba's small businesses have in terms of economic prospects for next year pales in comparison to that of the rest of the country. One of the main things the CFIB attributes to the lower Manitoba optimism is our higher personal income tax. My question is to the First Minister. Will he stand up for all Manitobans and commit today to cutting personal income taxes in his Government's next Budget?

Hon. Gary Doer (Premier): Mr. Speaker, the member may not be aware but there is a \$68-million personal income tax reduction effective January 1, 2001. Ironically, a larger amount of money than the member opposite was displaying in his so-called 50-50 plan in the election campaign with his visuals that looked very, very familiar in terms of its computer programming.

Secondly, some of the concerns we have and legitimately have in rural Manitoba for small business, I note the economy in rural Manitoba and the retail sales information for the first part of this year is much more positive than 1999. That is not to deny that there is not difficulty. I am pleased, even since the survey was conducted by Mr. Kelly, that we have had the Nexen announcement of some \$50 million expansion in Brandon, because of the lower hydroelectric rates. Yesterday we had a \$120-million announcement by J.R. Simplot. The week before we had an announcement by Albchem of a \$45-million new plant in Virden, and that is because of the lower hydroelectric rates. I hope that Mr. Kelly is successful in fighting the 30% increase in hydroelectric rates in Alberta due to deregulation.

Mr. Murray: Mr. Speaker, I know that the First Minister loves to be there to cut the ribbon but he must acknowledge if he has any sense of honesty that those plants were started under this former government and members on this side.

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Speaker: Order. Before recognizing the honourable Leader of the Official Opposition, I would just like to take this opportunity to ask the co-operation of all honourable members. The word "honesty" is an extremely touchy word, and I would ask all honourable members to be careful with how they use that word. I just ask the co-operation of all honourable members.

* (13:45)

Mr. Murray: Mr. Speaker, I am sure members opposite are delighted to listen to my question. The CFIB survey revealed that some 70 percent of Manitoba's small business community believes that the economy will either stay flat or in fact get weaker next year. That does not bode well for the future of our province. It causes us great concern about the continued weakening of Manitoba's ability to remain competitive.

Mr. Speaker, can the First Minister commit today that his next Budget will not increase any taxes and will not create any new taxes?

Mr. Doer: Mr. Speaker, the next Budget will include reductions in revenues based on the tax decrease announced in last year's Budget which exceeded our election promises and flows \$68 million in personal income tax reductions effective January 1, 2001. They are particularly targeted to families. We will have the second most generous, the second highest family tax credit for children anywhere in Canada. This was a family friendly budget which we are proud of.

Secondly, this upcoming Budget will reflect an increase in spending to accommodate the decrease in property taxes with a property tax credit. All the way through the 1990s, the individuals paying property taxes had their property taxes for the education portion double under Tory administration. We certainly believe that the property tax credit is a very positive idea.

Thirdly, the Budget we presented last year, and of course the Budget that will be presented in the year 2001 will also reflect our commitment for January 1, 2002, to further

lower income taxes by some \$34 million. They have to be incorporated in the revenue numbers that will be presented to this Legislature, but on all three accounts, the property tax credit, the income tax reduction of \$68 million targeted for families and the \$34 million in the subsequent year, all three measures are ahead of the so-called Tory 50-50 plan announced by the member opposite.

Mr. Murray: The First Minister talks about having to spend money. Let us hope for all Manitobans that they do not go on the free spending campaign of spending \$8 for every \$1 of tax saving.

The facts are that just 14 months after this Government came into office, the tide is turning in Manitoba. Optimism is getting weaker, and out of Manitoba's small businesses surveyed—

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Murray: Well, you know, all they have to do is look at the facts. I know it is difficult. But out of all small businesses surveyed, Mr. Speaker, only 3.2 percent said they are planning to create jobs next year. That is the third lowest of any province in Canada.

Will the First Minister tell Manitobans, if he can, why tax reductions are not a key component to his Government's long-term strategy?

* (13:50)

Mr. Doer: Our strategy is to have a balanced approach in every budget we present to this Legislature. We do not invent a half-billion-dollar tax cut on the back of an envelope one week into the election campaign when it is not even in their four-year fiscal Estimates that were presented in this House in 1999. The member opposite comes forward in an election campaign and invents numbers that were not even part of the Budget presented by the honourable Member for Minnedosa (Mr. Gilleshammer) in this Legislature in 1999.

We will not invent promises. We will not invent numbers. We have a long-term strategy. The eight to one ratio that the member opposite has used is totally inaccurate with the Budget.

The tax cuts we brought in last year are higher than the invented numbers of the Tories opposite. A consumer survey that was released and the same business sections of the many newspapers a couple of weeks ago indicated that the consumer confidence was very high. I would point out to members opposite the retail sales tax revenues are very positive indicating positive consumer confidence.

I would point out an independent body, a conference board on November 22, 2000: Manitoba's economy is humming. Manitoba's economy is going to grow in real terms in the 2000-2001 year above 1999.

The conference board, an independent body with no political agendas, forecasts that federal and provincial tax cuts will result in rising personal disposable income and an increase in retail sales tax in the province of Manitoba. Personal disposable income is expected to rise 5.9 percent, partly due to the tax cuts made by this side. I suggest to the member opposite he will not find a better year all the way through the previous government's administration.

Steve Courchene Employment Status

Mr. Darren Praznik (Lac du Bonnet): My question is for the Premier, and it is on a matter that is of great concern to my constituents and to I think many Aboriginal peoples who are in need of treatment at solvent abuse centres. I ask him today some very serious questions. His Government announced, today we learn that they have ended funding or withheld funding now from the Sagkeeng Solvent Treatment Centre in Sagkeeng, Manitoba, and we would concur with their actions, given the revelations that have come to light and the audits that have been done over the last while.

My question to the Premier is I would like him, for the purposes of the record today, to confirm that his Government did in fact hire a Mr. Steve Courchene who was a member of the board of directors of that particular centre, who owned a company that did contract work with that centre. I would ask him to confirm to the House that he did in fact hire that individual as an executive assistant to the Minister of

Aboriginal Affairs (Mr. Robinson) and as a staffperson this October, I believe, for a Cabinet committee.

I would like to table at this time copies of the annual returns for the Sagkeeng alcohol rehab centre, the Virginia Fontaine rehab centre, listing Mr. Courchene as a director. I would also like to table copies of the Orders-in-Council bearing the Premier's signature for both appointments. I would also like to table a copy of the New Democratic Party Web site that lists Mr. Courchene as a member-at-large of their provincial executive.

Hon. MaryAnn Mihychuk (Minister of Industry, Trade and Mines): The individual that the member has asked about does work for the Government of Manitoba and is doing a competent job in his position. I would suggest that the member give individuals a fair process, a due process and that all of us must be judged on evidence and go through a process which is fair and accountable. So I would ask the member across the way to be judicious and allow the process to work.

Mr. Praznik: My supplementary is to the Premier (Mr. Doer) who is responsible for Cabinet committees. I would ask him today if he could please tell us what duties Mr. Steve Courchene, again, whom he has brought into government, a prominent member of the New Democratic Party, is performing for the Cabinet committee for the \$68,000-a-year salary that he is currently earning.

Ms. Mihychuk: Mr. Courchene fulfils a duty as a researcher and liaison and is fulfilling his duties in a satisfactory manner.

* (13:55)

Mr. Praznik: I would ask the Premier again, who is responsible for the appointment, whose signature is on the Order-in-Council appointing Mr. Steve Courchene, if he has satisfied himself that Mr. Courchene's involvement and actions are beyond reproach.

Ms. Mihychuk: I think that the question is out of scope and the issue of Mr. Courchene's activities is in fact being reviewed by the Civil

Service Commission, which is a standard procedure, one that was implemented by the previous government, one that we have conducted. It is an independent body that will be reviewing this situation and the activities and seeing if there is any potential conflict or what further steps may be required.

Mr. Speaker: The honourable Member for Lac du Bonnet, on a new question.

Mr. Praznik: Yes, on a new question. My question again to the Premier (Mr. Doer): Given that Mr. Courchene is not a civil servant, he was not hired through the civil servant process, that he was in fact a political appointment, a political staffer hired by Order-in-Council, that he is also a ranking member of the executive of the New Democratic Party, I would like to ask—in fact at this time I would like to table for the House a copy of the Health Canada report and audit for 1995-96 that was done on the Sagkeeng centre. I would like to ask the First Minister today if he is satisfied that this audit report that indicates that Mr. Courchene was in receipt of \$50,000-a-month payments on buildings that he neither owned nor were paid for, if he as Premier is satisfied that Mr. Courchene's actions in this matter are beyond reproach.

Ms. Mihychuk: As I have previously indicated, any potential conflict or problem with Mr. Courchene's past relationship with Sagkeeng has been referred to the civil service review commission. In fact, if the member opposite has any additional information, I would suggest that without leaving these innuendoes on the table he present any further information that he may have.

Mr. Praznik: Mr. Speaker, I am not bringing innuendo to this House. Given that the auditors of Health Canada found that Mr. Steve Courchene, who he hired, who is a prominent member of the New Democratic Party, that he and the brother of the president of the centre were receiving 25 percent of the centre's revenue in consulting fees and payments for trailers and vehicles they did not own, I ask the Premier what standard does he set for his political staff? Is he satisfied that Mr. Steve Courchene's actions are beyond reproach?

Ms. Mihychuk: I would like to inform the House that when a vacancy became open in Community Economic Development Committee, a search was done nationally with individuals who were screened and interviewed from across the country. Mr. Courchene was a successful candidate and is completing his duty satisfactorily in his role as a researcher.

Mr. Praznik: Mr. Speaker, I would ask again the Premier, on behalf of all of those people who expect that those dollars would have been spent on their treatment, Aboriginal people who need that help, if, given that the Health Canada audit has clearly indicated that Mr. Courchene has been in receipt of money from that centre when The Corporations Act of Manitoba prohibits directors from profiting from their work as directors of non-profit corporations, is the Premier satisfied that Mr. Courchene's actions, which the evidence is there, are beyond reproach and should be working in his Government?

Ms. Mihychuk: I would like to just respond to the member by saying that each individual deserves a fair chance and a due process. The member who was once the Minister of Labour and head of the Civil Service Commission, and presumably a lawyer, should understand that fair process is proper and due for every individual, even the one that he is citing.

* (14:00)

Shawn Kocis
Employment Status

Mr. Leonard Derkach (Russell): Mr. Speaker, my question is to the Minister of Industry, Trade and Mines. I would like to ask the minister whether she can confirm that a Mr. Sean Kocis, who was a senior manager at the Sagkeeng solvent centre in 1996 during the period of the Health Canada audit, was hired as a consultant or retained as a consultant by her Government to work for the Community Economic Development Committee of Cabinet, the same committee that employed Mr. Courchene.

Hon. MaryAnn Mihychuk (Minister of Industry, Trade and Mines): No.

Mr. Derkach: I would like to ask the Premier then whether or not he can confirm that a Mr. Sean Kocis has been employed by this Government in the past 12 months.

Ms. Mihychuk: As the Minister responsible for the Community Economic Development Committee, the individual that the member is raising is not employed in that committee or in the department in any way.

Mr. Derkach: Can I ask the minister or the Premier (Mr. Doer) then to correct the Citizens' Inquiry line which lists Mr. Sean Kocis as being employed by the Government of Manitoba?

Ms. Mihychuk: I think that it is appropriate to check out this kind of information. I will be glad to review the situation and get back to the House.

Shawn Kocis
Employment Status

Mr. Darren Praznik (Lac du Bonnet): This is a very serious matter for the minister and the Premier. The minister is responsible for that committee. The Member for Russell and myself and our staff have both made calls to the Citizens' Inquiry and to the committee, today, offices. We were informed that a Mr. Sean Kocis who was, on his resume, a senior manager of the Sagkeeng Solvent Treatment Centre in 1996, was in fact employed by the minister's committee over some time in the course of this last year.

I ask the minister again who was running her committee when her staff in that committee were acknowledging today to both of us as members of this Legislature that Mr. Kocis had been employed by the provincial government in a contract role advising that committee.

Hon. Tim Sale (Minister of Family Services and Housing): I would like to take the detail as notice, but I would just offer to the member that I am aware that in a mediation issue between the residents of Kekinan centre and the board of Kekinan, Mr. Kocis was employed by Manitoba Housing on a consultant basis to do a mediation. I can arrange to find out how much it was, but it

was a very small amount and a very small amount of time. He was employed in his status as a lawyer, experienced in mediation, and someone from the First Nations and Aboriginal community that might be able to help in that particular regard. That is the only reference I am aware of. If the member feels that is what he is talking about, I will try to find the specifics for him and respond in due course.

Mr. Praznik: I would ask the minister again if she will undertake today to go back into her department and find out why, when our research staff and ourselves made calls, we were told by her secretariat that again Mr. Sean Kocis, who had been executive director of that Sagkeeng centre or had some senior management role in 1996, was in fact employed by that department. We would ask her to undertake with her colleague to provide this House with copies of all contracts that their Government has entered into with Mr. Kocis.

Hon. MaryAnn Mihychuk (Minister of Industry, Trade and Mines): I thank the member for the question. I truly do not have a definitive answer. I would be glad to go back and look at what contracts. If the individual was hired on a short-term contract, I am not aware of it. He is not a member of committee. I would be glad to get back to the member with any information that I can find.

Mr. Praznik: My last supplementary is to the Premier (Mr. Doer). Again, given that this is not the case of a civil servant, this is a case of an Order-in-Council appointment of an individual who is on the executive of the New Democratic Party of Manitoba, I want to ask the Premier if he will take responsibility as Premier for the people he hires and brings into Government. I want to know if this Premier is satisfied that the actions of Mr. Courchene meet his standards for involvement with public money and serving needy individuals.

Ms. Mihychuk: It is important that we ensure that all members that are serving the public are working to their capacity and meeting the requirements that are set out by their job classifications. The individual that the member raises is fulfilling his role as a researcher in the

committee, in the secretariat, and we are satisfied with his performance.

Knapp Dam and Pump Station Contractor's Certification

Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights): The Minister of Conservation yesterday admitted that there is a problem with the Knapp Dam and Pump Station, has indicated that it is serious enough to warrant his personal on-site inspection and that if he finds serious deficiencies in design, he will hold the contractor accountable, a contractor who is not certified by the Manitoba Ready-Mixed Concrete Association. Now, the City of Winnipeg puts in their specifications that companies providing concrete for contracts under the City of Winnipeg must be certified with the Manitoba Ready-Mixed Concrete Association.

My question for the Minister of Conservation: Why is his ministry using a lower standard than the City of Winnipeg, and why was the minister derelict in his duty to ensure that the project was done by a certified company?

Hon. Oscar Lathlin (Minister of Conservation): Again I would like to advise the member that I am not derelict in my duty as a Conservation Minister. In fact, I have repeatedly told him in this House that I take this issue very seriously, and I do not know what else I can tell the member because I have already indicated to him that this weekend, when I get back to my home in The Pas, I am quite prepared to go and have a look at the pump.

By the way, it is not a dam that he is talking about. It is actually a pump that was installed to pump water out of the Carrot Valley area. So, again, I want to assure him that I am going to go in and inspect the site myself and satisfy myself that the small problem that was identified, as, again, I told him earlier, that being rectified that it will not lead into a bigger problem.

Information Tabling Request

Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights): I am pleased that the minister is going to go up, and he will find that it is a Knapp Dam and Pump

Station. I would ask the minister why he will not table the test results that I asked for yesterday, and why he will not come clean and tell more about the precise nature of the problem which he has identified.

Hon. Oscar Lathlin (Minister of Conservation): Again I want to advise the member that, yes, a problem had been encountered. The problem is being rectified, and again I want to assure the member that the structural integrity of the project itself will not be compromised. That I am being assured of by staff who are working with the project.

Cost Overruns

Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights): My supplementary to the Minister of Conservation. I ask the minister if he can tell this Legislature if there will be any cost overruns on this project and what is the reason for such cost overruns if they will occur.

*(14:10)

Hon. Oscar Lathlin (Minister of Conservation): The final thing that I can advise the member is that if, during the course of my investigation, it has been determined that the contractor may have been deficient or at fault in any way whatsoever having to do with the project in The Pas, then I will hold that contractor accountable.

Immigration Statistics

Mr. Cris Aglugub (The Maples): Mr. Speaker, immigration built Manitoba into a dynamic and prosperous part of the global community. Could the Minister of Labour indicate how changes to the Provincial Nominee Program have benefited Manitoba?

Hon. Becky Barrett (Minister of Labour): Mr. Speaker, yes, it is with a great deal of pleasure that I answer the member's question and state that the immigration into the province of Manitoba, we anticipate, will be over 4500 individuals in the year 2000, which far exceeds the annual levels of just over 3600 in the last five years in the province of Manitoba.

So we have had an enormous increase. We look forward to an even more successful immigration in the future, due in no small part to the Provincial Nominee Program, which was begun in 1998 under the former government with an agreement with the federal government for 200 families to come to Manitoba in the first year.

We are now at an agreement with the federal government for the year 2000 of 500 families. We expect to have, at an average of three persons in a family, over 1500 new people coming into this province, all throughout the province, who have come from I believe 35 countries and who have increased our strength and diversity as a province.

Budget Tax Reductions

Mrs. Heather Stefanson (Tuxedo): Mr. Speaker, the Throne Speech talks about a welcome home campaign, welcome home and pay the highest personal income taxes in Canada. Welcome home and share the pessimism of 70 percent of small businesses. Welcome home and give us your tax dollars.

Mr. Speaker, will the Minister of Finance commit today that he will significantly cut personal income taxes to encourage people to move home to Manitoba and refrain from creating any new taxes in the next Budget?

Hon. Greg Selinger (Minister of Finance): I thank the member for the question, to get up and be able to answer this question.

Last year's income tax reform, Mr. Speaker, was the most significant reform of personal income taxes in Manitoba since 1973.

The previous government complained for 12 years about the surtax. We eliminated it.

The previous government complained for 12 years about the net income tax. We eliminated it.

We made our system more transparent and simple with three brackets, and we increased the benefits for families, people with disabilities. We increased the benefits for people receiving

charitable donations, and I will continue my answer in the next round.

Mrs. Stefanson: What will the Minister of Finance do to ensure that we do not lose more people to other provinces, like a constituent of mine who has recently moved to Alberta because for the same salary—*[interjection]*

Mr. Speaker: Order. It is very difficult to hear the honourable member. I would ask the co-operation of all honourable members.

Mrs. Stefanson: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. What will the Minister of Finance do to ensure that we do not lose more people to other provinces, like a constituent of mine who has recently moved to Alberta because for the same salary he can save \$3,500 on income taxes alone?

Mr. Selinger: Well, I think it is important to note for the record that Manitoba in the last two years has had a net increase in people coming to this province for the first time in over a decade. Any person realizes, if they take a look at the total picture, that the cost-of-living increase in Manitoba is the lowest in the country.

Steve Courchene Employment Status

Mr. Darren Praznik (Lac du Bonnet): Mr. Speaker, my questions are for the Premier (Mr. Doer), and I take it they will probably be answered by the Minister of Energy and Mines.

I would like to ask the Premier: Given that his minister indicated that there was, in fact, a national search for the research position at the Cabinet committee which he is responsible for, given the fact that this individual is a high-ranking member of the New Democratic Party, I would ask the minister or the Premier if they are prepared to table us with a list of all of the candidates who did apply for that job.

Hon. MaryAnn Mihychuk (Minister of Industry, Trade and Mines): Mr. Speaker, the member across the way should know better. I would be glad to share the process that we went through, but I am not prepared to table the individuals that applied for work or present their

names to this House. I think the question is quite unreasonable.

Mr. Praznik: Mr. Speaker, will the minister provide us with the qualifications of Mr. Steve Courchene for a position that warrants a salary that could be as high as \$79,000 a year that she indicates was only a researcher? I would ask her if she could provide to this House the qualifications of Mr. Steve Courchene, if they are anything greater than having been the assistant to the Minister of Aboriginal Affairs and a member of the New Democratic Party.

Ms. Mihychuk: Mr. Speaker, I find the questions to be disturbing. Are the members on the other side going to ask for qualifications of every civil servant who works in the Government? No. He is choosing one and I find it disturbing that instead of allowing—

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Speaker: Order. It is very difficult to hear the answer. I would ask the co-operation of all honourable members.

Ms. Mihychuk: Mr. Speaker, just ask the member to use common sense, to allow a fair process to take place and to treat each individual with fairness.

Mr. Praznik: Mr. Speaker, I would like to ask the minister if she believes it is fair to those hundreds of Aboriginal people who depend on that federal support for treatment that Mr. Steve Courchene and his consulting business were receiving \$50,000 a month for trailers that were not paid for, if she thought it was fair that he was receiving \$25,000 in lease payments for a vehicle already purchased.

Point of Order

Hon. Gord Mackintosh (Government House Leader): A point of order, Mr. Speaker, on two matters. First of all, this is a supplementary question and the member is going on at length, but in particular the member is seeking an opinion and clearly that is out of order. I refer to *Beauchesne's Citation 409(11)*.

Mr. Praznik: Mr. Speaker, I am quoting from an audited report of the Government of Canada about the actions of an individual who is a high-ranking member of the New Democratic Party and who that Government hired into the service of the people of Manitoba, and now they are afraid to answer questions for their actions. That is shameful.

Mr. Speaker: On the point of order raised by the honourable Government House Leader, *Beauchesne's* Citation 409(2) advises a supplementary question does not require a preamble. I would ask the honourable member to please put his question.

* * *

Mr. Praznik: My question, Mr. Speaker is this: Does this minister find it acceptable for this individual, as the audit report indicates, to have been receiving \$50,000 a month, \$977,000 for services that this report says were provided?

Mr. Speaker: Order. The question has been put.

* (14:20)

Hon. Gary Doer (Premier): I think the question of what is fair or what is not fair is a very interesting question. Obviously we felt, on October 26, when the Government was made aware of the cruise and the fact that the centre had been closed, a centre by the way that was authorized, I believe, in 1992 by the former government, reaffirmed in '98, we wrote a letter on October 26 asking a number of key questions about the accountability for that money, for public money that we are responsible for in this Chamber and for the expenditures of those monies. Because if the centre is closed down due to a cruise, it is unacceptable to this Government, and therefore we subsequently suspended the payments that were authorized by the previous government and reconfirmed in our budget to that centre.

On the issue raised by the member opposite, the police have investigated as they should. A forensic audit, regrettably, has been cancelled, and we believe it should have proceeded. The issue of the individual employee and his or her activities prior to that individual working for the

provincial government, we have asked, Mr. Speaker, the Civil Service Commission to have a fair and independent review of those facts and factors to evaluate, independent of Government, independent of the Opposition of what the status is. This is not dissimilar to what we have asked Elections Manitoba to do when we felt that there were allegations that should be investigated. Somebody independent of the Government, and the Civil Service Commission is independent of the Government, should look at these issues to make sure that both the allegations and our findings are fairly arrived at.

Mr. Praznik: Now that the First Minister is prepared to answer questions and take responsibility for the actions of his Government, I want to ask him: Given that Health Canada has done a report, that it has been provided, many of these have been out in the public, is the Premier satisfied as the leader of this Government that this particular individual whom he just recently appointed is beyond reproach in this matter? I ask him that, given that this was an Order-in-Council appointment that he made.

Ms. Mihychuk: Clearly if there is any question that was why we referred the issue to the Civil Service Commission for a fair review by an independent body who is going to be looking at the whole situation, as was done when questions were raised by the Opposition to that government about individuals. It is a process that has occurred under the previous government and this one, and it is one that is fair and equitable. We ask the member across the way to give the process a chance and allow people fair process.

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

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

New Iceland Settlers

Mr. Speaker: The honourable Member for Gimli.

Mr. Edward Helwer (Gimli): Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. It is time for members' statements, and it is very difficult to hear. I would ask the co-operation of all honourable members. It is very difficult to hear the honourable Member for Gimli with his member's statement. If members wish to carry on a conversation, they can do so in the loge or out in the hallway. The honourable Member for Gimli has the floor at this time.

Mr. Helwer: Mr. Speaker, October 21, 2000, marked a very significant milestone in the community of Gimli's history. October 21 marked the 125th anniversary of the arrival of the first Icelandic settlers who founded and governed New Iceland. Icelandic Prime Minister David Oddson marked this very special occasion by personally unveiling a brass plaque honouring New Iceland's distinctive role in Canadian history.

One of the first settlements in the Canadian west, New Iceland, existed for 12 years between 1875 and 1887. Its territory extended 58 kilometres along the western shore of Lake Winnipeg from Boundary Creek in Winnipeg Beach to the Icelandic River and included Hecla Island. The Gimli area still has the largest Icelandic population outside of Iceland.

In celebration of this event, the Town of Gimli has adopted as its new tourism slogan: Gimli, Capital of New Iceland. I would like to congratulate all of those involved in making this day of celebrating Gimli's rich heritage a tremendous success.

Seven Oaks General Hospital

Mr. Cris Aglugub (The Maples): Mr. Speaker, on November 22, I had the pleasure of representing the Minister of Health (Mr. Chomiak) as I participated in a sod-turning ceremony. This ceremony is to celebrate one of our Government's many initiatives, and it is the construction of a dialysis and oncology clinic at the Seven Oaks General Hospital.

The construction of this \$7.4-million building will house a 20-station dialysis clinic and the oncology clinic. This worthwhile project is expected to be completed by January 2002. This new facility will serve the many

Manitobans who need dialysis and oncology therapy in Manitoba. The dialysis clinic will initially provide hemodialysis treatment for up to 80 patients. The project will also include the conversion of 20 interim-care beds at the hospital to provide non-complex in-patient care for the individuals on dialysis.

The space for future expansion and dialysis teaching and follow-up clinic is included in the plan. The oncology clinic will have a space for six outpatient treatment stations, a clinic area, a pharmacy preparation area and support services.

Our Government is committed to health care, and we are excited about this latest initiative which will help improve the lives of members in the community. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

J. R. Simplot Co.

Mr. David Fauschou (Portage la Prairie): It gives me great pleasure to rise in the House today to make note of an event in Portage la Prairie yesterday which I had the pleasure of attending.

Mr. Speaker, there was an announcement that would make Portage la Prairie the French fry capital of all of Canada. Yesterday the J. R. Simplot Company announced that it will be undertaking construction of a \$120-million potato processing plant in Portage la Prairie. This announcement, I recognize, did not come overnight. This announcement was based upon a strong foundation that was created in this province by the previous administration that provided for the potato processing industry and 30 000 hectares of potato production.

Construction will begin early next summer and will translate into 1600 jobs over the course of the plant's construction and production phase. Mr. Speaker, 230 permanent jobs will be brought to Portage la Prairie with this new plant and 500 related jobs, as well, in the support industries.

Portage la Prairie's business community has seen its ups and downs over the last number of years with the loss of the Campbell Soup plant and Portage Manufacturing. However, it is a true testament to the resiliency and leadership of the

municipal leaders in Portage la Prairie to continue to attract wonderful opportunities such as the J. R. Simplot potato processing plant. This facility will help unleash the total potential of Manitoba's potato industry. At present, more than 30 000 hectares are under production in this province and with the addition of 8000 in the initial phases of additional hectares, production—

Mr. Speaker: Order. Is there leave for the honourable member to conclude? Is there leave?

Some Honourable Members: Leave.

Mr. Speaker: Thank you. Leave has been granted.

Mr. Faurshou: A further 8000 hectares of potato production in the subsequent years. This will provide for the province of Manitoba to truly take on the capital of Canada for potato production, exceeding that of Prince Edward Island.

Mr. Speaker, it was a great pleasure for me to make this announcement in the House today and indeed a great day for not only Portage la Prairie but Manitoba.

*(14:30)

FAST Program

Mr. Doug Martindale (Burrows): Mr. Speaker, I wanted to rise today to pay tribute to a program designed for family fun and the enhancement of family strengths. That program is FAST, which stands for Families and Schools Together.

I had the privilege of attending a FAST graduation at William Whyte School on December 5, 2000. The graduation night involved an evening of singing and games and a social gathering which brought parents and their children together with teachers and other members of the community. Families participating in the program report significant improvements in family relationships, self-esteem, motivation and cohesiveness.

FAST is a program which is building a strong reputation for effective results in bringing children and their families together through a

sharing of family time and the participation of families in various activities. The FAST Program is working for the benefit of school-aged children in both the United States and Canada, serving thousands of young people and their families. The FAST Program builds important bonds between children and parents along with schools in the wider community.

Through sharing and collaborative activities, Families and Schools Together is a vital part of the educational and family-building process for increasing parental involvement in school activities. Results after eight weeks show significant improvements in the child's classroom and home behaviour, self-esteem, parental involvement in the school, and reduction in social isolation. Children continue to improve, and some parents self-refer for counselling and substance abuse treatment, get jobs, go back to school and attend community events.

Today more than ever before it is important for parents to have a special relationship with their children to assist in the development of healthy, social and self-motivational skills. Congratulations to the collaborative partners involved in the William Whyte School program, the school staff and the families.

Manitoba Cattle Producers Association

Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights): Mr. Speaker, I rise today to pay tribute to the Manitoba Cattle Producers Association. There were a number of members of the association who were at the Legislature today talking about their efforts on behalf of cattle producers all around Manitoba.

I want to pay a tribute to the efforts of the cattle producers in contributing to the Manitoba economy. I want to pay a tribute to the efforts of the Manitoba Cattle Producers in helping promote some of the diversification which has been of significant benefit to people in southwestern Manitoba over the last couple of years. At a time when grain prices have been low, those who have got into cattle have, by and large, done better and been able to survive some of the problems with the low grain prices.

I also want to pay a tribute to the Manitoba Cattle Producers Association because of their approach to supporting the industry; their investments in the Beef Information Centre to provide information to consumers as well as producers; their approach to providing support for transition to new ways of preparing food and the new understanding of nutrition; their innovative marketing. When we have a society which wants food which is more quickly prepared as well as nutritious, then it is important that the Manitoba Cattle Producers Association is there and working with others in Manitoba to promote new ways of presenting their product, preparing it and marketing it.

I think it is also appropriate to mention that many members of the association today were talking actively about the environment and their concerns with the environment. This clearly has sprung from episodes like that at Walkerton, but I think it is a positive effort that the association is working hard on environmental issues as well.

**ORDERS OF THE DAY
THRONE SPEECH DEBATE
(Sixth Day of Debate)**

Mr. Speaker: Adjourned debate on the proposed motion of the honourable Member for Dauphin-Roblin (Mr. Struthers) and the proposed motion of the honourable Leader of the Official Opposition (Mr. Murray) in amendment thereto, standing in the name of the honourable Member for Ste. Rose, who has 40 minutes remaining.

Mr. Glen Cummings (Ste. Rose): Mr. Speaker, it is indeed a pleasure to rise and respond to this Speech from the Throne. I will address in a moment what I think has been a disappointing effort on the part of the Government with their second Speech from the Throne.

First of all, I would like to extend a welcome to the Member for Kirkfield Park (Mr. Murray), the new Leader of the PC caucus, and to the new Member for Tuxedo (Mrs. Stefanson), who has recently, in the same time in a by-election, taken her seat in the House. We welcome both of these members as a strong voice on behalf of their constituents and a strong asset to our caucus.

Also, when it is this far on in the speaking road, it is a little difficult to bring greetings to all of the pages, but if they should have nothing to do and take the opportunity to read some of these speeches from the throne when they are old and they are looking for something to read, I certainly want to be on record as welcoming the pages. I am sure it is an experience that they are going to enjoy. There may be moments in the House that they do not enjoy what is occurring, but in terms of a learning experience and gaining an understanding, and, I would hope, an appreciation for the democratic principles and the opportunity to freely express our beliefs in this country, there is certainly no better place to get a first-hand look at that than as a page in this House. I certainly welcome you and your colleagues to your positions, and I hope you enjoy the experience.

As I said, this Throne Speech was a little less than exhilarating. I made two observations to the local media after the Throne Speech. There are items in here, of course, that I hope will be beneficial to the people of this province, but I found it singularly unusual that the government that came into power saying, among other things, that they would solve health care problems within six weeks or six months, was it, or was it six years? I think it was six months that the now-Premier (Mr. Doer) and his Health Minister (Mr. Chomiak) were saying six months. Well, this is about fourteen months. I would suggest, depending on whose yardstick you are dipping into this well with, whether it is the Premier's yardstick or whether it is the yardstick of some of the others in this Province, it would be questionable whether or not we would get the same answer.

Mr. Gerard Jennissen, Acting Speaker, in the Chair

It was singularly important to note that the Government avoided, I must say, avoided much discussion, much initiative around the health care agenda. That raises with me and a number of my rural colleagues the very concern that some of us were expressing last summer during the Estimates process. Even though it was hot in this building and some of us were a little less than comfortable with the surroundings, I think, Mr. Acting Speaker, the Health Minister was

somewhat more uncomfortable trying to answer whether or not he was going to be able to adequately fund rural health areas, the rural RHAs, so that they could continue to support and continue to supply services in some of our smaller rural settings.

It seems to me that we have a few cracks that are going to cause a great deal of concern to my electorate, to other people across rural Manitoba. That is simply this: I would invite the Premier or the Minister of Health (Mr. Chomiak) or anyone else in government to deny this and to correct the record and to put my unease at rest, but the fact is, as our rural RHAs begin to develop deficits, there are signals coming out from the Minister of Finance (Mr. Selinger) walking out immediately after the Speech from the Throne was given and saying: Well, I am not sure if I can meet all my commitments.

Now, I am paraphrasing what he said, and I do not want to unnecessarily malign the Minister of Finance (Mr. Selinger). He has got a heck of a job. I mean, he is surrounded by ministers who are gleefully spending dollars that were very hard to acquire over the last decade when we were trying to once again balance the budget of this province.

We now have an economy that has moved forward at a significant rate, that is producing revenues. I would remind those who have not thought about this that the revenues of government generally flow about a year to 18 months after the tax would have occurred or after the business that pays the tax, after the individual who pays the tax, after their earnings would have been taxable. The real income from that incentive starts to roll a year or 18 months later. So this government is in the right place at the right time to fix some of the issues that were in need of financial support.

* (14:40)

Health care needs more than just financial support. It needs commitment, it needs direction, and it may well need some revising, but one of the things that rural Manitoba has always been the most concerned about is that they do not want to go through what happened in

Saskatchewan, where we saw I believe it was 25 to 30 small, rural health institutes closed.

Now, they may have had too many small ones, but I cannot think of any similar pattern in Manitoba, where we have small facilities, and I would point to a couple in my own riding, smaller facilities where, if they do not maintain the doctor presence, if they do not maintain an ability to respond to 24-hour emergency response with a medical team, then their usage will undoubtedly begin to drop off.

The template that my colleague from Minnedosa was looking at last summer and that came to my attention, the template that has been undoubtedly considered by this administration clearly points to the direction where if the activity drops or would slide in some of these small facilities, they might well not find themselves to be funded in a way that would allow them to operate at the level that I just expected that they should operate at.

Mr. Acting Speaker, members of this Government have prided themselves by saying look at northern Manitoba. Look at the issues that we want to deal with in northern Manitoba. Well, the area I represent is not exactly considered rural remote northern Manitoba, but it has issues that this Government needs to consider in terms of remoteness, in terms of distance, and particularly if the services are not going to be maintained.

It seems to me that in a farming community where they potentially can find themselves an hour, at a high rate of speed, away from good emergency medical services, it is simply not good enough, where within their area they do not have the availability of a 24-hour highly qualified ambulance service that they can expect to be able to provide that gap until they reach the community where available service is. They are currently finding themselves on the brink of that abyss in some parts of my riding, and I would suggest that there are other ridings in rural and central and southern Manitoba that are finding themselves very much with the same problem.

When I look at this Throne Speech then, Mr. Acting Speaker, I say to the Premier (Mr. Doer), I say to his colleagues how is it that they

suddenly do not want to talk about health care? Why is it that suddenly health care gets a bit of a passing glance in terms of the issues that were addressed in the Throne Speech?

I want to make it very clear that there is something else around the health care issue of a very specific nature. This Government has said that they are about to solve the nursing crisis; they are about to deal with the nursing problems. Well, they said that six months ago, they said it twelve months ago, and they said it eighteen months ago, and, frankly, the shortage of nurses is greater now than it was. I will let that speak for itself.

What concerns me more is why is this Government choosing not to deal with the legislation on behalf of the professional associations in this province? What is the reason behind that? Are they not able to accept the professionalism and the independence of these organizations? Do they have a political agenda that somehow bringing this act into place would work against, or are there a large number of people in the profession who might not meet the standards that the professional acts would require? Which of those reasons—and I think those can be the only three reasons for this Government not dealing with these acts—is the reason that they have suddenly turned their backs on the professional nursing community in this province?

I would challenge the Minister of Health (Mr. Chomiak), and I would challenge the Premier (Mr. Doer) and his Government to respond directly to the associations on that issue. If it is because they fear there will be an additional number of nurses who may well not meet the qualifications, then let them say so. If it is because they want to be comfortable in not rocking the boat in terms of implementing these acts, then let them say so. But certainly they are going to add to their woes in terms of developing the nursing professions in this province, they are going to add to their woes if they do not proceed to proclaim those professional acts.

I would suggest that the support and the concern of the nursing community—and, frankly, very likely that translated into electoral support for the now Government—that that is going to

evaporate pretty quickly if they do not get their Minister of Health to deal with an issue that these professionals have brought forward. They fully expected it would be proclaimed either before or immediately after the election date, which is now some 14 months ago. I would challenge this Government to deal with that issue.

In terms of doctor recruitment, the Premier (Mr. Doer) quickly and somewhat adequately, in the eyes of many, responded to the doctor recruitment questions he was faced with this week. It seems to me that the issue that he did not address is whether or not there is a recruitment and retention policy out there that actually is going to be able to maintain and sustain a number of practising general doctors that we have in this province.

There was a recruitment policy by the previous government that was successful, and unless somebody can inform me differently, the current government has not carried on with that. In the effort to put their own stamp on every process that occurs in this Government, they have dropped that doctor recruitment initiative. I suggest that, within the next two to three years, the number of doctors they are able to retain in this province is going to drop and that we are going to have additional problems manning some of our smaller facilities, some of the facilities which I believe I represent, and I would want this Government to make sure that on the record they address those issues.

One of the areas that was touched on in terms of resource and agricultural issues in the Throne Speech, natural resources and environment are two areas that I had some familiarity with. Agriculture is also the area where I have made my livelihood, in the main, until I became involved in politics. Mr. Acting Speaker, it seems to me that these areas have not necessarily had any stellar support since this Government came into office.

Let me start with the Department of Agriculture and its relationship with the other two departments because, while the cattlemen's association was here today, while KAP was here a couple of weeks ago, the messages were both similar. There is a strong value and valuable

product being produced in this province. There is a tremendous trade balance factor in agricultural production in this province. What we are getting in terms of leadership in relationship to environment and resource regulation and impacts by our agricultural industry is that to some extent we have created an aura of uncertainty, that the flux on some of the rule changes or the implications on some of the statements that have come out of the current ministers of this Government have led to some uncertainty and some cause for rethinking of plans, more likely to be true in the hog industry than in the cattle industry, but nevertheless it is having a dampening effect on the investment in agriculture.

I met with a builder just this week who indicated to me that he felt a cold draft, and it was not just the December temperatures, starting back in the summertime in this province when people who had been planning to build hog barns, people who were looking to invest millions, not one million but several millions of dollars in this province, were rethinking some of their plans.

Now, I know where there are investments going ahead, and I know that there are large corporate entities out there that are continuing with their investment in hog production, but I tell you, Mr. Acting Speaker, there are people out there who might feel that their investment is a little bit more at risk, that there is some uncertainty in where they are going to be taken. They are saying to themselves maybe I will just wait for another six months, maybe I will wait to 2001. That just very likely puts them into another window, and there could be a negative movement in prices and puts at further risk an opportunity that has been clearly identified over the last three years as a market that is looking for production, a market that will be stable, a market that has a cheap feed supply, a market that has a demand side through export, through new killing plants.

* (14:50)

All of these things have been very positive. Anything we do to put a cold draft, if you will, on the plans of some of our significant entrepreneurs who have been looking at the hog

industry, then I think we have done a disservice. It will ultimately show up on the bottom line of the revenue to the Government of the day because, as I said, these investments do eventually flow through to the coffers of the Province to benefit all Manitobans so that the real need of certain departments, if you will, responsibilities of Government can be met because of the tax flow.

I am looking behind me. I think the members of the cattlemen's association have left the gallery, but let me say that there was something that happened today that I thought was important. That was that I saw urban members of both Government and Opposition caucuses talking and listening to what is today a very buoyant and exciting industry to be in, the cattle production industry. Nobody said it was easy, but it is exciting. One of the things that is so key to the long-term satisfaction and opportunity in the cattle industry is the possibility of developing additional packing house capacity in this province. We have virtually none today in the cattle industry. We still are dealing with the after-effects of the change on the assistance, affectionately known as the Crow rate, systems for transfer of our coarse grains, and it is now time for governments of whatever stripe to look seriously at how they work with this body of producers to help them make their industry additionally value-added.

In the area of resources, I have to indicate that while the Minister of Natural Resources—pardon me, the Minister of Conservation (Mr. Lathlin) stoutly defended some of the initiatives that he has taken, I would like to observe that it seems to me there are issues that his colleagues should be questioning. There are concerns that this Government should be dealing with in the area of the Department of Conservation. This is not an affront to the current minister. I think that the Premier (Mr. Doer) has, in fact, put him in a most untenable position. The Premier has charged the current Minister of Conservation to mesh two of the more difficult departments in Government. The Department of Environment in terms of numbers of bodies, in terms of budget, is a very small department, but we all in this House know all too well the attention that it has, the pressures that come on the department, the

involvement of the public in the environmental issues.

This minister was forced to stand in his place and indicate in various ways that they are looking to increase the resources in environment, that they are going to enforce environmental regulation, that they are going to deal with—I will give you an example, perhaps it would be better than looking at the broad picture. I will quote: We have changed The Planning Act to ensure that livestock operations are assessed in their entirety, the barn and the manure storage. Now, who is going to assess that? Is it going to be the Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs (Ms. Friesen)? Her department? Not likely. The people who would most likely be responsible with enforcing of that intent will come from the department of environment unless, of course, that authority is devolved to the once-Department of Natural Resources. So are we going to have natural resource officers assessing lagoons, as well as checking firearms and hunting compliance, along with flood fighting and the myriad of other responsibilities they have? I think not.

For many years there was a controversy about whether or not we had enough environment officers in this province. We commandeered natural resource officers, we commandeered public health officials, we commandeered RCMP officers, anybody that could be deemed an appropriate enforcement officer was used and encouraged to enforce and was deputized. I do not think that is the right term, but you know what I mean by using the term "deputized." They were, in fact, encouraged and licensed to enforce The Environment Act. No one is questioning the intent or the action that the Minister of Conservation (Mr. Lathlin) was alluding to here, but as a farmer, as someone who is working in an industry that I know is going to receive increasing scrutiny and the people involved in that industry know it is going to receive increasing scrutiny, if there is one thing that this Government can do to create some stability out there, and I think to some extent I am repeating what I said in the last Throne Speech, but if that is the case, it is all the more important that I repeat it because I think it still has not been dealt with.

Mr. Conrad Santos, Deputy Speaker, in the Chair

That is, the industry of agriculture, broadly speaking, everything from poultry to pigs, if they are going to receive additional regulatory authority intervening in their operations, and there may well be good reasons to do so, then it is only fair that this Government recognize it as an equal and opposing responsibility to provide the resources so that those people can, in fact, make a decision, that they can go forward, that they know that what they are putting their money into, that their investment is going to be protected, that they know they are doing it the right way. Now, I know there is a report waiting out there, and I think our critic for agriculture and environment will probably both want to touch on it, as well, where Professor Tyrchniewicz has been compiling a review and, I would assume, recommendations to this Government.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I am reminded, under The Livestock Stewardship Act, that they will be imposing regulations based on some of the things that they hear back from Professor Tyrchniewicz. Now, that sounds good on the surface. I believe that, if truth were known, that report is done, that report is probably ready to be dealt with, and I am challenging the Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs. I appreciate her listening and knowing. She is getting a better understanding of this every day, I would think, but it is important, if, in fact, that report is finished, that it be brought forward and it be brought and that it be dealt with, and it needs to be done now because plans will be made in March, maybe February, March, April. Investment plans are going to be made on the landscape of Manitoba. You do not pull together a million or two million to put together, for example, a large hog operation. You do not decide on a Friday afternoon that you are going to go into the feedlot business on Monday.

These types of approaches require long-term planning, and I always found it frustrating in government. I will extend the hand of friendship to the Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs (Ms. Friesen) on this. Mr. Deputy Speaker, I always found it frustrating when I was in government that Government does not move at

the pace of private industry, but it is up to those of us in government to drive the process so that industry is not left holding the bag or wondering what its next requirement might be. Stability, information, knowledge and support is what this industry needs at this time, and I hope the Government recognizes that.

The announcement today in Portage, however, that leaves me with a mixed feeling. I am incited for the fact that we now have an additional opportunity for potato processing in this province. It is an initiative that our government supported fully, not just that announcement in Portage, but over the previous years you will well remember, and I think the Opposition sometimes to their chagrin or discomfort used to listen to our premier of the day pointing out that we were now the biggest potato producer outside of P.E.I., in fact we were gaining on P.E.I., and I think we equalled them and we have surpassed them, and that people in Chicago are eating Manitoba French fries. It was only plants here that were finally able to meet the McDonald's standard, which is probably the highest in the world in terms of producing a French fry.

Believe it or not, there are probably a huge number of people who did not know there was a standard in French fries, but they know what they like when they go the fast food chain.

* (15:00)

Mr. Deputy Speaker,, the bottom line, however, to why I say this raises mixed feelings in my psyche is that, when we were in government, now a number of the members of the Government bench were highly, highly critical of what needed to be done in terms of water quality, water supply management and where we were going in environmental responsibility.

The Minister of Conservation has said many times that he believes in sustainable development, and yet when we as government talked about the term "sustainable development," it was literally pooh-poohed by the members across. So there has been a bit of an awakening of their consciousness in terms of what needs to be done in order to keep an economy moving.

The simple fact is that many of the concepts of sustainable development are not being adhered to as the Government has currently structured this announcement. Generally speaking, this announcement should also be accompanied by support for water retention, support for water supply, support for knowledge-based decision making around the Assiniboine River, in this case, because not only is it the supply line for water going across the dry part of this province, it is also—unfortunately, our technology is still limited in many respects. At least the cost of our technology still limits us in many respects to tying that river also into being where the effluent needs to be dealt with as well. When a better way comes, we will all be happier.

This Government had better get on the ball and recognize that cutting a ribbon and making an announcement is only the first step. I do not understand why there was not a second announcement hand in hand saying how they would respond to the cost of ensuring that the environmental integrity of this river was maintained. Where is the issue around Lake of the Prairies? Where is the additional water supply coming from? Are they thinking about the Shell dam? My goodness, maybe they are thinking about the high Holland dam. That would not be the case, would it? The high Holland dam, is that what the Minister of Industry would be thinking about? I see a smile, but I do not see a nod either way. A lot of people would be interested to know if you were thinking about the high Holland dam.

Well, you see, this is what concerns me. Now that we have the former opposition members on the Government bench, all of a sudden they believe that some of these environmental issues are sort of a nuisance. It kind of slows down the blood pressure. Just when you get the blood pumping making these announcements, then, oops, you have to think about some of the environmental consequences.

I would be more than a little bit concerned if we do not see some subsequent announcements, not just about labour law and labour regulation, but about the protection of the environment, the development in harmony with the environment. *[interjection]* Well, you know, it is easy for the

current ministers. When they were in opposition they flayed the government of the day for making announcements without, in their mind, having thought about some of the environmental consequences of the expansion of Maple Leaf, about the expansion of Simplot fertilizers in Brandon.

Ninety percent of the current government was critical of those developments. They stood in their places one after the other and said that it could not be done, it should not be done and that we were tearing the environment apart. Now they make an announcement and they do not even give much more than a nod to the environmental requirements that are going to go with this.

Find the water usage on the aquifer. I would doubt that the current Minister of Industry and Trade knows what capacity is left in the aquifer, in the Assiniboine Delta Aquifer. I would doubt if she knows what the carrying capacity of the Assiniboine River is today at Portage la Prairie. There is going to have to be augmentation to the river. That has to be the next step. So remember that when you are in government the responsibilities are greater than when you are in opposition.

I would like to spend a couple of moments talking about some of the other aspects of what I see not coming from the current Throne Speech. As I said, the Minister of Conservation (Mr. Lathlin), in my opinion, has been put in an untenable position by the Premier (Mr. Doer). The Premier has not, through the Treasury Board process, seen that this ministry was given additional resources, which I think almost every member of this House has spoken to at some point or another about that department needing additional resources, and it is even more emphasized with the combination of the two departments. I would acknowledge that if some of the issues in southern Manitoba regarding localized flooding on agricultural land—and that is a polite way of saying that drainage needs to be dealt with—in terms of environmental regulation, you have to find more officers. The officers that are there cannot be spread any thinner or they are going to have to start saying to other members of the same department do not do what you are doing today and do something

else. That "something else" is very likely going to be getting retrained to be available to do some environmental enforcement.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, the other thing that is interesting in terms of the current position of the Government is the issue around legislation to control the sale of Crown assets. It would be interesting to know what the understanding or the appreciation is about the sale of Crown assets on the other side other than the one mantra that they have been chanting for the last two to three years. That is: MTS should not be sold; MTS should not be sold. I think that was sort of a mantra even all the way through the election.

An Honourable Member: It still is.

Mr. Cummings: Well, the Minister of Finance (Mr. Selinger) says it still is. I would hope when he has a chance to stand on his feet in this House that he would explain how Manitoba Telephone System would be competing in today's market if it were not a private-sector company. Would it be competing like Saskatchewan is? They have lost the value of their telephone company because they did not recognize the competitive demands that were going to fall upon them if they did not become part of the private-sector needs of this country. You cannot use a Crown corporation to compete in the high-speed changes that occur in a public-sector competitive market.

Those changes were not brought about by the provincial government. Look, the Minister of Finance (Mr. Selinger) need not be embarrassed about this debate. The debate was caused by the federal government changing its regulations. It changed the regulations across Canada, through its telecommunications committee, to say that competition must be allowed on the telephone lines. Well, what does that mean? Competition on a Crown asset, and the best way to compete with that competition is to do what was done and make Manitoba Telephone System the strong company it is today.

Now let me draw a reflection on the other end of that scope. The other end of that scope would be Manitoba Public Insurance general arm. If we were faced today with a loser like Manitoba Public Insurance private-sector

competition where it was competing for the insurance of houses, where it was competing against the private sector, it was regularly losing dollars, is this Government suggesting, with its potential legislation, that it is going to require a referendum to make a decision on something like that? Think about it, ladies and gentlemen.

Mr. Speaker in the Chair

Mr. Speaker, there are reasons for Crown corporations. I will be the first one to say that. I am the first one to say that Manitoba Public Insurance for automobiles, as it is structured, is one of the most monopolistic insurance situations in Canada because it contains no-fault and monopoly insurance, the only jurisdiction where both are combined, but as we have just seen by the actions of this Government, it has meant that dollars have been able to accumulate to protect the drivers of this province. It has done its job and provided a good, competitive insurance. Because we are only a million people, 700 000 vehicles, that is a lot of vehicles and a lot of people if they are all in one room, but in terms of the national and international insurance companies coming in to compete for that business, frankly, I cut it up into little pieces, and we do not matter. So, by having the Crown corporation providing this function on behalf of the drivers in this province, we are doing the right thing.

* (15:10)

Now, do you intend to, however, write a legislation that is going to consider some of the issues that are raised about the general arm of MPI? What about McKenzie Seeds? Is there one member up there still prepared, either member from Brandon East or Brandon West, are they prepared to stand up and say McKenzie Seeds would be where it is today if it had only stayed public, it would be better if it stayed public? I will bet not. I bet not. I want to hear it. I want to hear it on the record, because that is where you are heading into a blind alley if you go after this legislation without thinking of the consequences, and those are only a couple of examples.

Heck, I could probably make a pretty good argument, if you are sharing the ownership of a hydro dam, that you are privatizing Hydro. That

was one of your five big promises, remember. We will not sell Hydro. Well, they are going to sell the dam instead, okay? You are just going to sell the dam. Now how the heck do you produce hydro if it is not with a dam?

Let us be reasonable in terms of how you govern this province. Think about the consequences of the type of legislation that you may bring down in this area, because there is a difference between sitting in Opposition and being able to criticize anything and being over there where you are and being able to provide legislation that does not cripple this province in other ways.

An Honourable Member: I have been noticing that difference actually.

Mr. Cummings: The Member for Brandon East (Mr. Caldwell) says, yes, I notice that. I am willing to stand by what I am putting in this speech. I will stand behind this and the *Brandon Sun* or anywhere else, because I do not think I have put on the record anything that would be considered irresponsible. I do caution the members of this Government that their mantra through the last election "We will not sell Manitoba Hydro," and now they are going to put in legislation to ban the selling of a Crown asset or a Crown corporation, I do not know how they are going to word this, a Crown monopoly, choose your words but choose your direction carefully, Mr. Minister of Finance (Mr. Selinger), or you will wear the thorns of the anger of this community if you do not get it right. I frankly, as yet, do not know how you are going to get it right without putting the public and the administration of public assets in this province into a bind.

I just gave you two of the best examples. The Pawley administration fought against, railed against the sale of the MPI general insurance arm. They said it was a social program, that it provided insurance to people who could not otherwise get it. Well, is that where this Government wants to go, that you want to make sure that Crown assets are kept in place for that reason? Is that a sufficient reason? Maybe you want to put that into your legislation. That would get people's attention.

Mr. Speaker, I see that you were telling me I am just about out of time. I did not think there was anything to talk about in this Throne Speech. I thought there was nothing there, and I have just wasted 40 minutes of everybody's time. I will leave my thoughts on the record with the members of the Government, because if you do some of the things that have been talked about, you are going to blow it. I wish on behalf of the people of this province that you consider carefully before you go down some of those routes. Thank you.

Ms. Marianne Cerilli (Radisson): Mr. Speaker, it is always a pleasure when I get to follow my honourable friend across the way. I am pleased to be able to speak to the Throne Speech today. I too want to welcome everyone back to this session, including the new members. I do not know if they are here right now, but it was good to see the new member for Tuxedo (Mrs. Stefanson) asking her first question today in the House, and I will look forward to many more of those.

Mr. Speaker, I also want to welcome the new pages, in particular Cheryl Bayer who is the first page since I have been here to be from the constituency of Radisson. I also want to recognize the other student program that is involved in the Legislature, and that is the caucus internship program and welcome those people as well. I know that they have already had half their term and know the interns working in our caucus are doing a wonderful job.

I wanted to begin my remarks by focusing a little bit on my constituency. I have the two large maps that were given to us, the very detailed lot-by-lot maps that were given to us by Elections Manitoba, mounted in my office. It is a great thing that we have those computer GIS maps that show the kind of detail in our riding. What I have to deal with on a regular basis in terms of my constituency is its size.

My constituency now goes all the way from Springfield Road off Lagimodiere to the east, all the way to Fermor Avenue, and I was thinking about how, on the western boundary, the one constituency of Radisson has a boundary of five constituencies to the west. So it gives a sense of how large the constituency of Radisson is, and it

is definitely split between communities in West Transcona as well as St. Boniface and Windsor Park. It is two very distinct communities with a number of different neighbourhoods. Mr. Speaker, I have three school divisions in my constituency: River East School Division in Harbourview South and Kildonan Estates and in Eaglemere; Transcona Springfield School Division, and now the St. Boniface School Division; two of the community newspapers, both the *Herald* and the *Lance*, and some of these things demonstrate that it is in some ways a challenging constituency to represent because it is not one community; it is a variety of different neighbourhoods.

An Honourable Member: But they all love you. Every one of them, every single one.

Ms. Cerilli: The Member for Brandon East (Mr. Caldwell) is giving me some accolades. I appreciate that.

One of the things that representing a constituency like Radisson develops in an MLA is a strong interest in urban development and planning. A lot of the issues that I deal with in my constituency have to do with land-use conflicts between different municipalities and industry and residential neighbourhoods and those kinds of things.

I am going to get into, a little bit later on, some of the issues that I have been working on in my constituency, but I think it is important to also recognize that representing a constituency like this makes you get really involved in some of the on-the-ground issues in the different parts of the constituency. I guess I have often taken the attitude that, if a constituent phones me on an issue, whether it is a municipal issue or school division issue, we have to have some responsibility in listening to their concern and trying to guide them in resolving the problem and not just saying that it is not in the provincial jurisdiction. So that is one of the things that I have tried to do. It is one of the things I must say that I enjoy about being an MLA, working with constituents on a variety of issues.

Some of the things that have been happening in the Radisson constituency is just recently there was an incorporation of, and this is on the

Transcona side, a Park City housing co-op which has sited some land in Kildonan Meadows to develop a seniors housing co-op. They have had a public meeting, and there is a lot of interest and a lot of support for expanding seniors housing in Transcona.

* (15:20)

A group of residents in Kildonan Estates off Plessis Road also developed, in co-operation with the City of Winnipeg, Meadows Park, and if you ever want to come out to Transcona, it is a park in co-operation with the City that the residents who are horticulturists and gardeners tend to and take care of on their own. It is a beautiful site. The new Park City housing co-op will be located adjacent to this park.

Other community groups like the Triplex Tenants Association become very active. I enjoy working with them. This Saturday I am going to be joined by the Minister of Family Services and Housing (Mr. Sale) to attend their annual Christmas party and look forward to that and people having the chance to get together and provide a special program for kids that live in that Manitoba Housing complex.

The other kinds of things that I have been able to work on with constituents is really working closely with Residential Tenancies and the police and the Public Health Department to address the problem of absentee landlords. You might think that that is only a problem that is facing areas in downtown Winnipeg, but it also affects some of the older neighbourhoods all over the city. I want to recognize the tenants that have come together to try and work with the different authorities to make sure that landlords are abiding by regulations and following work orders to clean up their apartments.

Some of the other issues that deal with a constituency like Radisson, Radisson contains the Regent strip, which has all the car dealerships. I have been happy to work with residents and get the co-operation of some of those dealers to address problems resulting from people test-driving their vehicles and loading and unloading cars. Hopefully, in co-operation with the City again, there is going to be a

resolution to some of those difficulties for residents in that area.

Transcona, as everyone knows, has a long history of being associated with railways. We have the North Transcona CP yards as well as the maintenance yards for CN in Transcona. On Plessis Road there is the old steam engine, the 2747, which we are hoping to find a new home for in a rail museum. I am quite supportive of that and look forward to working with a variety of community groups on that effort.

I have had a long association with the Wee Bairns Child Care Centre that offers a program for students in the Transcona-Springfield School Division. They are located at Murdock. This past year they ran into a situation where they had no students who were required to have child care services. So the day care was forced to expand and now offers a unique program of infant spaces both for community members as well as for students so that they can continue their education and have their children cared for in a public school. That has been a very successful program. I know that the former director is looking at doing a research project to evaluate the effectiveness of that program and try to track the students that have been involved with that program. I forget how many years. It is about 15 or so years of students participating in that program.

One of the issues that we dealt with in the Radisson constituency that had quite a bit of attention was a proposal by Husky to develop an asphalt plant on Springfield Road. That is a good example of the kind of land use conflict I was talking about earlier where land has been zoned industrial. It is land that is owned by CP Rail, but now the neighbourhood of Kildonan Estates has grown and brand-new homes would have been less than half a mile away from this asphalt plant.

So I am pleased to have worked with the residents from that neighbourhood to have convinced Husky that it was not the best place for them to locate and now look forward to working further with CP Rail co-operatively with the residents so that further plans they have to sell some of their surplus property are going to be in keeping with that new residential

neighbourhood. I think we impressed upon the City of Winnipeg and the Board of Revisions or board of adjustment that if the City is going to zone the homes, and these are fairly large homes, that we want to keep the value of those homes, and they have to have better land use planning around new neighbourhoods.

One of the other things that is happening in Transcona I look forward to is the conclusion of the process to see New Flyer Industries have an environmental licence. This is a plant that has been operating since the mid-'80s and now is going to be licensed under The Environment Act and hopefully will address some of the problems that have been facing that neighbourhood in terms of paint emissions and noise.

Again, I want to recognize the work of the neighbourhood residents who have come together and worked co-operatively with the company and with staff in Conservation. I am hoping that the forthcoming licence is going to address the concerns and will allow both the residents and the company to co-exist.

On the Windsor Park side, I had the opportunity to attend a unique program called the High Steppers Club which operates out of the Lutheran Church on Winakwa and Autumnwood. It is a unique program open to any seniors in the Windsor Park-St. Boniface area who are using Home Care services or are just at home and want a chance to get out and socialize and participate in activities. We had some good games of boccie, and they are entirely volunteer run.

Right up the street from that program is the Winakwa Community club, and, Mr. Speaker, I have recognized before in the House the activity of the board and the volunteers in having a very active community centre. I was just reading in some minutes I have from a meeting about their youth drop-in program and one of the things that they are undertaking is an expansion of the Winakwa Community Centre to include a new gymnasium. All of the schools in the area are booked, and they are having to run their sports leagues all over the city because there is so much interest. That community club services a very large area, and I look forward to continuing to working with them on that project.

Another valuable resource is the Child and Family Services Resource Centre and the Prendergast Centre. It is an example of what you can do with a school that has been vacated. This Prendergast Centre has two day cares in it, a seniors club, the Child and Family Services Resource Centre, and it is a hub of activity. It is I think a great example of how we can use assets like schools for other purposes when demographics change and enrolments drop, so I think other areas could learn from the example of what is going on in Windsor Park.

I continue to work with constituents on the issue of the Windsor Park Inn. I know that this is another issue that has been discussed at length in the media because of attempts that residents have made with the City of Winnipeg to limit the size of a drinking establishment that is in a residential neighbourhood. I think that we cannot underestimate the effect that this is having on that neighbourhood and people's enjoyment of their home and their property.

St. Boniface School Division heads up a very active youth and child poverty committee and is part of a very active interagency group. They have initiated a number of successful projects, and I continue to work with them and look forward to many other initiatives that they will undertake.

The last thing that I am going to mention in terms of some of the things that are happening in the Radisson constituency is now that it goes into the Windsor Park area I have a number of large industrial plants, namely, the rendering plant and other feed and fertilizer plants. I have been working with residents to deal with some of the odour problems that emit from these plants.

It was amazing to me that the former government when they developed their odour-nuisance strategy failed to actually inform the community about their rights under this strategy, and one thing that went a long way was just sending people in the neighbourhood the information that they had the right to complain and that if there were five complaints in ninety days that the Department of Conservation would do an investigation and then would issue directives to a company.

* (15:30)

That is the process that has been undertaken, and I am pleased that it is resulting in some changes in some of these industries that will, hopefully, make the co-location a little bit more pleasant for residents and anyone who is driving by on their way through St. Boniface and out to Transcona.

It has been, I guess, a learning experience now being on the Government side and having to learn a little bit new skills and what it is like to be part of Government, and I guess essentially to be kind of on the second string. I want to focus now a little bit on what I think the legacy of our Government could be. One of the things I have been thinking a lot about lately and I think this has to do with the issue we faced recently in Transcona, and that is the temporary relocation of the Bond Street health unit.

The issue that it has really raised in my mind is something I have heard a number of the ministers in our Government talk about, and that is trying to change the culture of government, I think trying to change from a government with a very corporate culture to one with more of a community culture. This is, I think, going from a government that does things sort of removed and separate from and provides services to, rather than with a community. I think a government with a community culture is going to be much more inclusive and consultative. We are not only trying to do this across departments, but I want to highlight a couple of the programs we have introduced that have in their very core or mandate this whole approach to government of creating this sort of community culture.

The first of those is the Neighbourhoods Alive program. I know that my colleagues from Brandon are very excited about some of the initiatives in the Brandon area from this program. I just want to talk a little bit though about the concept of this program and the idea that it is across departments, that it is trying to give communities the opportunity to mobilize and decide for themselves how to best develop programs and services centred and based in the neighbourhoods that have been targeted so that improvements and neighbourhood revitalization can occur.

That is a real challenge. It really is I think a unique thing for governments to do. I predict success, and this program will become a model across the country and perhaps internationally for how, Mr. Speaker, a government-community, and especially on the housing side, partnerships can also be created with the private sector.

We are trying to do the same thing with the Healthy Child plan, trying to encourage community groups to get together and figure out where best programs like parent-child centres should be located, so, Mr. Speaker, we are requiring community groups to meet and figure out between the school divisions, child care centres, child and family services, health and other community agencies, community clubs, how in their neighbourhoods they can best meet the needs for our parents and children.

There again it is an initiative that I am really proud that we have undertaken, and I look forward to seeing the results across the province.

One of the other programs that I am encouraged to see developing, and I really think it is going to support this whole idea of creating a government with a community culture, is the development of neighbourhood resource networks. I attended the conference that was recently put on by the United Way, Community Futures conference—I cannot remember the title.

The workshop I went to was examining the whole concept of the neighbourhood resource network, specifically in the Seven Oaks area. I was very impressed with the work that they have done in only a couple of years, how they have created this expanded interagency concept to include local residents.

I think what is so important, and the reason I wanted to talk about this today is because I think if neighbourhood networks like this exist throughout the city and other areas in Manitoba, then the issue that we dealt with in Transcona in terms of the Bond Street office would not have happened, that people in the community would know when a change was coming, whether it is the closing of a school, whether it is the relocating of some staff through a government program, whether it is another community organization that is going to be making some

changes or introducing new programs, that all of the partners in a community get together and they pool their resources, they pool their ideas, and they come up with a plan that is going to best use the assets in a neighbourhood to meet the needs of the citizens and the residents who live there.

One of the books I am reading right now is Judy Rebick's book *Imagine Democracy*. One of the tools that she talks a lot about in her group is community or democracy or citizen study groups. I think that these kinds of ideas are really what are going to catch on over the next while. I think that we only have to look at what has happened to the south of us with the presidential election in the United States to see that citizens are going to expect more from their democracy. They are not going to be putting up with just going and voting once every four years or three years, federally, we have had here in Canada lately, but that they want to be involved in decisions that are being made that affect their constituency or their community.

I know when I am talking about the situation with the Transcona health unit that I am concerned as well and try to work with the Regional Health Authority and impress upon them the importance of keeping that unit in downtown Transcona. I think that it is important that, when we have government services that are providing jobs—there are 23 jobs, I think, involved at that site right now, they are going to be expanding that, that we utilize those services to revitalize and develop older neighbourhoods and older business districts like we have in downtown Transcona.

I think that it is important to reiterate that everything was done to try to find a temporary site in downtown Transcona. I think that the good news is to look forward and that the Winnipeg Regional Health Authority has made a commitment that the new expanded Transcona health access centre will be located in downtown Transcona. It will provide primary care. There are plans to have midwives and more nurse practitioners in the community to make sure that the whole mandate of a community health access centre is to be accessible. That is one of the reasons we feel so strongly that it has to be located in the heart of Transcona.

One of the other issues that I am dealing with right now is a proposal by the City of Winnipeg to close one of the fire halls in Transcona. I am glad to see that the budget that was passed this week at City Hall did not include this proposal. I have great concern that the Pandora fire hall in the Radisson constituency could be closed. I think that the geography and the nature of Transcona has to be considered here. I have sat in my car at the rail line at Plessis, just across Dugald Road, in front of an ambulance with its sirens wailing and had to wait sometimes as much as 20 minutes to half an hour while a train went by. There is one time I actually got out of my car and could go and talk with the drivers of the ambulance sitting behind me. They said that happens all the time. It would happen with fire trucks; it would happen with police cars and paramedics and any emergency service.

* (15:40)

I think that the nature of the geography and the lay of the land in that part of the city has to be considered. You cannot just look at it in terms of a map and try to see where you can locate the fire hall. The logistics of actually getting the emergency services into Transcona, I think, shows that we have to have that fire hall on Pandora on the other side of the tracks, closer to Transcona.

I think that the people in the community and this neighbourhood network that we are talking about are going to have a chance to maybe deal with a real issue if that proposal does come forward and there is a recommendation to close one of the fire stations in Transcona.

I think that any citizen and resident in Winnipeg has to have the same kind of response time no matter where they live, and it should not be based on utilization rates but it has to be based on response time. So that is ongoing, another issue I can mention that is ongoing in terms of the Transcona area.

One of the other issues that we have recently been working on with residents that live in the Lakeside Meadows neighbourhood is the issue of Gunn Road. Gunn Road, Mr. Speaker, is a street that is now attached to the Perimeter

Highway. The extension of the Perimeter Highway south of Springfield Road is connected onto Gunn Road. It is a gravel road. It is the boundary between the R.M. of Springfield and the city of Winnipeg and Transcona, and it causes an incredible amount of traffic, truck traffic, dust and noise. I was pleased to be able to join with residents and make a presentation to the community committee a month or so ago and want to move forward with a proposal to see some kind of resurfacing on that road so that residents do not have to put up with another summer again of having that kind of dust and noise.

These are the same residents, many of them, that recently had to have their yards excavated because of the contamination from the former Domtar plant, and I think that a solution has to be found involving the R.M. of Springfield, the City of Winnipeg and the provincial government to provide some relief and allow those people to get the value from their property and the enjoyment of their property that all of us pay taxes to enjoy.

The kind of issues that I have been talking about I said earlier make me very interested in urban planning and land use planning and that is why I am also very interested in the Capital Region strategy and I want to urge on our Minister for Intergovernmental Affairs (Ms. Friesen). I know that there has been a renewed interest to move to action on this whole area, that we have had a number of initiatives that have tried to encourage regional planning and co-operation between municipalities. That kind of thing is very important to the constituency of Radisson and it is also, I think, important for Manitoba as a whole because of the large role that the Capital Region plays in our province.

I want to move then from talking about more in my constituency, and I think one of the reasons that I spent so much time talking about my constituency in this speech is because since the election this is the first time that I have had a chance to address the Throne Speech and that is the tradition. I was pleased to give other members in the caucus, particularly our new MLAs, the chance to speak to the Throne Speech last time, so I am going to talk a little bit now just to wrap up what I think our Government is

trying to do in terms of the Throne Speech and the budgets we have brought in.

We want to present a balanced approach. We do not want to just jump on the tax-cut bandwagon. I think it is incredible and this is a good example of what not to do when you look at Alberta. I think it is incredibly irresponsible. You have a province with the wealth and the assets that Alberta has. They are not trying to turn themselves into a no-tax zone, and I think something that any MLA should be paying very close attention to is the suit that is currently going on in the Province of Alberta where the Premier and the Minister of Health are being sued because of cuts in health-care services.

On that note, I guess I am just saying that we cannot expect to have it both ways, that we have to realize that a tax cut is not going to help you when you need a hospital bed. We have to pay very close attention to striking a balance, and I believe that our Government is well on the way to doing that. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Conrad Santos, Deputy Speaker, in the Chair

Mrs. Joy Smith (Fort Garry): It is my pleasure to rise in the House today to put some comments on record in regard to the recent Throne Speech. Before I do that, I would like to welcome to this Legislature the new pages that have come on board and to express my deep appreciation for the work that the pages do in this Chamber. I do not know how we would manage without them. Everything that they do is very much appreciated, and I think that members on both sides of the House have echoed that sentiment.

I would also like to welcome the six new interns who are part of our Legislature as well and are putting much time and effort into the issues and concerns that we have regarding the governance of the province of Manitoba.

I would especially like to welcome the two new MLAs, the Member for Kirkfield Park, our new Leader, Mr. Stuart Murray. I have to say that we are thrilled to have such a leader of his understanding and confidence and experience and very pleased to have him with us in the Chamber. Also I would like to welcome the

Member for Tuxedo (Mrs. Stefanson). It is always nice to add another woman to this side of the House. As you know, Mr. Deputy Speaker, it is important that both men and women participate in the Legislature, participate in the governance of the province of Manitoba.

I would like to now turn my attention to the Speech from the Throne, the opening of the second session of the 37th Legislature of the Province of Manitoba.

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Mrs. Smith: Before I even speak, I hear members opposite chirping away in a defensive manner because obviously they know that I have some critical remarks. In particular, the Minister of Education (Mr. Caldwell) I can hear across the way already defending his lack of vision. Having said that, I would like to point out one comment or one point that was put forward in the Throne Speech.

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Mrs. Smith: Mr. Deputy Speaker, could I just ask for some call to order from the Minister of Education (Mr. Caldwell) and the Minister of Mines (Ms. Mihychuk) so I can continue with my speech?

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order, please. The Member for Fort Garry has the floor.

Mrs. Smith: Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Having said that, I can understand the discomfort that members opposite have now because the Throne Speech had an awful lot to say, or supposedly say, about education. On examining the Speech from the Throne, we find this particular speech empty of vision and planning. We find a lot of comments about education with no substance. In the Throne Speech, the First Minister (Mr. Doer) has said that my ministers, quote, are aware that the decisions they make now will shape the future of Manitoba, and the Throne Speech is very lacking in vision for the students here in the province of Manitoba.

* (15:50)

What are the legacies we wish to establish for the children who will come of age in the year 2020? I quote from the Throne Speech. I quote as the Minister of Education continues to chirp on the other side of the House. It says: first a society that supports their development as learners from their earliest years through their working careers. This is a statement. It is words with little or no meaning. I challenge members opposite to give a plan forward that will support the learning of students across Manitoba and will support the preparation that these students need for the furthering of real education, high-standard education, so our students in Manitoba are able to be competitive on the global market, a society, I dare say now, that is being dumbed down educationally.

Having said that we see in a memo from the Minister of Education (Mr. Caldwell), an education agenda, a so-called education agenda for Manitoba. I want to address first the election promises, the promise, the empty promise that all Grade 3 children will read and write fluently by the end of Grade 3. This was a promise by members opposite, a promise from this Minister of Education. Under his leadership, he has proclaimed in the province of Manitoba all Grade 3 children will read and write fluently by the end of Grade 3. On examining the Throne Speech, there is no such plan, no such vision, and Mr. Deputy Speaker, in the election promises members opposite stated unequivocally that they would end the Grade 3 test, the Grade 3 test was no good for Manitoba students.

Let me tell this Legislature what they elected to put in. What they elected to put in was a Grade 3 diagnostic test, and their lack of understanding, their lack of experience, their lack of knowing about pedagogical principles for Grade 3 children showed clearly what happened—[interjection] By the way, the Minister of Education said that is not what teachers told him. Let me tell the Minister of Education what the teachers have told me. The teachers have told me that their classrooms have been on hold for two months, and you know parents do not even know about this. They do not even know that Grade 3 children have not been taught curriculum for up to two whole months, September and October of the year 2000. What the teachers have told me, as the

Minister of Education chirps across the way, is the fact that they had to spend summer holidays, they had to spend September and October getting together a diagnostic test that took them hours and that they felt had no real relevance. It was a directive from the Minister of Education.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, talking about the Throne Speech, in the Throne Speech nothing has been said about this report that has been given to parents. A survey of the parents across Manitoba showed that most of the parents did not even know about this Grade 3 diagnostic test. I have had questions from parents saying where is this report? Where is this detailed report the Minister of Education promised? Well, it turns out that all children got the ordinary report card. We had teachers who were beat up and burnt out, because they were so busy trying to test every individual child.

What the teachers have told me is that they did not have time to individually test every single student. They did not have time to get around to everybody because most teachers know how to administer tests that they have on hand. Most teachers know how to assess the children. Most teachers know that you cannot take individual students, and as the Minister of Education is chirping about how right he was, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I want to put on record that he does not understand that teachers cannot be expected at the beginning of every school year to put their classrooms on hold and to individually test, design, test, implement the test and evaluate the test. They just cannot do it.

Individual teachers across the province wanted to get their classes settled. They wanted to get to know the children. They wanted to be able to test the children as September, October went by, and test the children not individually—some cases I say that had to happen—but to test the children as a whole in the classroom to find out where their class was and then gradually to work with each individual child so they could reach their highest level of competence.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, in the name of political payback, in the name of political promises with hollow focus and objectives, this minister and this Premier (Mr. Doer) put our Grade 3 students in jeopardy. It is hard to find a parent across the

province that even knew about this diagnostic test. This minister across the way has his face in the rearview mirror. He is talking about the past. Might I remind this minister that perhaps he should take some seminars and some courses on testing before he puts directives down on teachers, before he overloads teachers with work that is impossible.

What about the students? As he is chirping across the way about how right he is, what about the students who lost close to two months of classroom time? This is irresponsible. We hear a chorus of denial on the other side of the House. The other side of the House obviously this afternoon believes that teachers can do this. They believe that teachers should take two months working with individual students, leaving their classrooms on hold. They believe that this is right. This is irresponsible. It is not only irresponsible, it puts the students in jeopardy. So here we have nothing about the Grade 3 guarantee—I daresay they want to forget it even happened—nothing about the fact that every Grade 3 teacher has to make sure that every Grade 3 student reads and writes fluently by the end of Grade 3 after they have missed two months of school.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, there is another segment of the student population. I see that the Minister of Education (Mr. Caldwell) seems highly amused that we would be concerned about this. I want it on record we are concerned about the Grade 3 students, the lack of instruction for two months, the burden on the teachers, the burden on the teachers of having this tremendous workload when teachers rather need resources, help, bodies in the classroom to assist them. They do not need this kind of directive from an inexperienced Minister of Education who had the ability or the opportunity to substitute in classrooms and feels that he knows what should be done.

* (16:00)

I am calling on this Minister of Education (Mr. Caldwell) to withdraw this Grade 3 assessment that has no meaning across the province. I am asking the minister to please take some courses on test design. Maybe then the member opposite would understand that what

you have to do is have a consistent test across the board that will be provided by the Government so the students can have the same test. Supply the teachers with this test like members on this side of the House did so the teachers can take it and they can administer it to the students. They can send it in to be corrected and have the results sent back to them. That is a way to facilitate the teachers.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, there was one segment of the population that the members opposite did decide deserved this kind of courtesy, and thank goodness for it. The students on the French side did have tests provided for them, and that was very much appreciated by the teachers and by the parents.

In this province, it is believed that all children are created equal. It is also in this province that all teachers deserve the same kind of consideration.

As I listen to the comments made by the Minister of Education, I wonder if he would say this kind of thing out loud to teachers. I wonder if he would say to them yes, this is what we are supposed to be doing; we are supposed to be putting classrooms on hold for two months, and yes, teachers can do this. From what I have heard, when the minister goes out, he tells teachers that he wants to support them. If that is true, I am requesting that the Minister of Education and members across the House withdraw this very poor plan they have about teachers designing these tests. I am anxiously waiting for the minister to provide parents with that detailed report, and indeed to provide parents with even information that this diagnostic test actually did happen.

When we say that we need to support learning across the province, we hear from members opposite about everything but a plan to make this happen. Maybe I could point out to members opposite that I was anxiously waiting for something in this Throne Speech that did give some credibility to their education plan.

I have to commend one area. One area is the 10% tuition cut at the post-secondary level. I think that was well deserved and I applaud the members opposite for doing that. I also would

encourage members opposite to think about the whole picture, with tuition cuts at post-secondary level. We also need to have the infrastructure, and not necessarily borrowing from corporations like MPIC to get the money and to give it to the university but to take out of the massive transfer payments and the balanced budgets and all the kinds of monies available to this Government now to work with to support the universities at the post-secondary level.

There are many kinds of statements that are made that are very, very puzzling when you read the Throne Speech. In the Throne Speech on page 4, they talk about working in co-operation with business and community partners. These are very empty words when action is not taken.

I would like to talk about the fact that YNN was not allowed, in spite of some school divisions wanting it. I grant that every school division can make up its own mind. If YNN is not welcome in a school division, then YNN should not be there. It is up to the trustees, the parents, the teachers to make that decision, but they are very empty words when we hear that in the Throne Speech, that members opposite welcome working in co-operation with business and community partners when indeed that action was not demonstrated at all in the province of Manitoba.

I am waiting anxiously for the replacement of computers and materials in the particular classrooms that will be affected by the withdrawal of YNN, another election promise where there is no rhyme or reason to any of these directives. Nothing makes a whole lot of sense to the education world.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, we have a promise, an election promise, where every child will have an e-mail address. That was an election promise. Nothing was said about the fact that there is more advertising on the e-mail and the Internet than anyplace else. We will hear from members opposite: Oh, well, we will put screenings in. There is no school that can monitor or screen well enough. I know schools. I had an instance two weeks ago of a school whose student got onto a very unsavoury Web site accidentally.

What solution does the Minister of Education (Mr. Caldwell) have for this?

I daresay there is nothing in the Throne Speech that talks about the election promise about e-mail or how they are going to monitor it. When you take a look at the education initiatives that are supposedly set up by members opposite, we see lack of vision, lack of planning, lack of understanding, lack of foresight for the future.

We now have at the Senior 4 level a proposal by members opposite to again dumb down the education system in Manitoba.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, there have been a lot of phone calls to my office talking about the lack of understanding. I would hope that with the Senior 4 students the courses—I agree that students can have a variety of school-initiated courses, but there is nothing said about the criteria. There is nothing said about the rules, about what courses are acceptable, what courses are not acceptable. If skate tying came as a course, would that be acceptable to the Minister of Education? Probably, because he wants to dumb down the system to such a point that the standards will not be recognized across Canada or the U.S. or anyplace else where students go. As we look at these initiatives or as we look rather at these political promises, we do see the lack of vision, the lack of foresight.

We hear a lot across the way, across the House about catcalls and all these kinds of things. We see things on an e-mail sent out by the Minister of Education, in his e-mail on the education agenda for Manitoba. Mr. Deputy Speaker, he said the issues that he thought needed top priority were improving success rates for all learners, strengthening opportunities for teacher learning, strengthening parent and community involvement, improving school planning, strengthening links between secondary schools, post-secondary education and work, strengthening the role of research and data in policy and practice, and maintaining stable funding for public education.

* (16:10)

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I cannot argue with all these priorities. I applaud the minister for putting

these forward and the Premier (Mr. Doer) for putting these forward. The problem is there is no plan to go along with it. How do you improve success rates for all learners when Grade 3 students at the Grade 3 level have missed the better part of two months class time? How do you improve success rates for all learners when a hollow promise that all Grade 3s will read and write fluently at the end of Grade 3 will happen? These are hollow words. Members opposite are masterful at putting sentences together that sound good. They are not so masterful at putting a plan together that is sustainable.

So the students in our province will reach a high academic standard. So the accountability will be there. When we talk about supports for teachers, members opposite have to understand that what teachers need are resources. What they need is time. What they need is books. What they need is to be able to make some decisions about what kind of testing goes on in their classrooms. This is the kind of support that teachers need.

Once again, I am calling on the Minister of Education (Mr. Caldwell) to eliminate this ridiculous Grade 3 diagnostic assessment. I am asking also for the members opposite and for the Minister of Education to explain a little bit about the funding of these tests because, in the Throne Speech, stable funding for education was one thing that was put in the speech. I applaud that. The education system does need stable funding. How can the Minister of Education and members opposite justify off-loading the cost of the Grade 3 diagnostic test on school divisions? How can they do that? They talk about stable funding. That does not mean that the school divisions pick up the tab for these tests. That is not supporting the school divisions. That is not supporting the teachers.

We need more money for teachers in professional development. When they talk about strengthening opportunities for teacher learning, it would be very helpful for these members opposite, with these grandiose ideas they have, to put a plan into place so teachers can actually have their way paid to seminars and have resources put in classrooms so they will have the opportunity to teach in the manner they want.

When we talk about strengthening parent and community involvement, I am hearing all across the province that the advisory councils for school leadership and the parent councils feel as if they have very little input. There have been people who have tried to get appointments with the Minister of Education (Mr. Caldwell), and the word is out that he does not meet with the people. He meets with certain organizations or certain people who are on his side.

Good governance is governance for all the people, whether you are Progressive Conservative, whether you are NDP, whether you are Liberal, whether you are whatever. The importance is you have to serve the people.

When the Minister of Education (Mr. Caldwell) has put in his e-mail that he wants to improve school planning, I have to tell you that on this side of the House we put forward a document, the school plans document. It has disappeared. The Minister of Education has not taken it off the shelf and dusted it off. So when he sends e-mails out: Dear colleagues, I am pleased to again write in order to update you on a number of matters of importance to us all, and then he lists improving success rates, strengthening opportunities for teacher learning, strengthening parent and community involvement, improve school planning, I ask members opposite where is the school plan document. The administrators are telling me it has disappeared. This is a document that members on this side of the House worked for four to five years to get together. We had it in the pilot stages. Since members opposite came into power in this province, it has disappeared.

So here we have the empty words like the Grade 3 assessment and the fact that all Grade 3s are going to read and write fluently by the end of Grade 3, promise. We have the empty words that say one important priority for members opposite and the Minister of Education (Mr. Caldwell) is to improve school planning. May I please advise, with all due respect, the Minister of Education should maybe dust off that school planning document and put it into practice, and maybe we can take a look at building partnerships so parents and teachers can work together to make their schools better.

There is so much. One of the priorities is maintaining, as I said, stable funding for public education. Again, as I have stated before, these are empty words. When the Minister of Education and members opposite offload the cost of the test on school division, that is not maintaining stable funding. This is something that the school boards across the province were not expecting. So what we are finding in the Speech from the Throne is the same as what we found in the first Speech from the Throne. What we are finding is an absolute desert of thought or ideas. Everything is empty, empty thoughts, empty plans.

Members opposite, with all due respect, need to learn how to get rid of the hyperbole and the empty promises and put plans in place that would cause for high academic achievement and social integrity in the schools across this province. Members opposite have made many grandiose statements about the kinds of things that are going to be happening in this province, and when I think back to the first Throne Speech and when I think back to the kinds of things that have occurred, this is a Government headed by the First Minister (Mr. Doer), the Premier of this province, that has no credibility, no credibility whatsoever. They do not have any credibility because they put false promises on the record, and the first Throne Speech was filled with them as well. They mislead not only in the education field but in the other fields across the province as well.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, my area that I am responsible for is education, and as Education critic I would like to see a plan put in place that would maintain the high standard in this province of education. Any plan would be good, any vision that had timelines, benchmarks, expectation. We cannot afford to dumb down the education system here in Manitoba. In the e-mail that members opposite and the Minister of Education sent out on October 20, he said in the e-mail to members of advisory councils and to educators across the province that the new approach, which is the Grade 3 assessment, focuses on reporting to all Grade 3 parents early in the school year. The first round of parent-teacher interviews has stopped, and teachers have tried their best to incorporate what they could on the report cards, but the problem is in a

lot of schools across the province the teachers have not had time to teach the curriculum.

* (16:20)

So, basically, when members opposite and the Minister of Education (Mr. Caldwell) promised parents detailed reports, I am now hearing that a lot of parents do not even know that there was a Grade 3 assessment. There are problems here. There are problems in terms of credibility. There are problems in terms of vision and planning. In the e-mail, when you have the Minister of Education saying and doing two different things, it causes great alarm. In that same e-mail, the minister said, the new policy on Grade 3 supports good educational practice and does not create unnecessary work for teachers. We will also be evaluating this year's experience closely and will share with you the results of the evaluation.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, is there going to be some promise that is carried out, because this is not good educational practice, and it did indeed create a lot of unnecessary work for teachers.

When the Minister of Education talks about high school credits and Special Education Review, there is little or nothing of substance said about the Special Education Review in the Speech from the Throne.

Mr. Speaker in the Chair

Do parents of special education children realize that the resource teachers who were attending to their needs in September and October, a lot of them were removed from the special education students and put in Grade 3 classrooms to supervise Grade 3 classrooms. I daresay that the Special Education Review talks about ways to bring out the greatest potential in all education students. The special education students have been totally ignored. This again is an empty promise.

When the Minister of Education (Mr. Caldwell) cranked out his e-mail, he also talked about the class size commission. Everybody knows that he will decide, the Minister of Education will decide what the class size is, because Bill 42 reflects that. The members

opposite and the Minister of Education have not even read his own legislation or maybe he has and he does not understand the ramifications of the class size commission.

The Minister of Education talks about support for funding. Can this Minister of Education or can the Premier raise their credibility by giving us full documentation about the cost of this commission? This commission is going to be well underway very soon. The public, Manitobans, do not know how much this commission will cost.

So when we talk about the Throne Speech and when we talk about the credibility of this Government and the ability of this Government to put forward a plan, a vision for students of Manitoba, I would appeal to members opposite to get away from election promises, the ones I talked about earlier, and to take a real look at how we build accountability into the school system, how we support our teachers.

As I said, we do not support our teachers by putting the gigantic task of designing and implementing a Grade 3 assessment that does not have any consistency across the province, and Mr. Speaker, we need to follow through. Members opposite, the Minister of Education (Mr. Caldwell) needs to follow through and understand that we need the accountability, we need the real cost of education. When the cost of this Grade 3 assessment is camouflaged and offloaded onto school divisions, we have problems with that, because Manitobans and school divisions are unaware of what the real cost really was.

So when we go into this new year, I would hope that looking forward to next year's Throne Speech we might have a Throne Speech of more substance. When we have a Speech from the Throne that talks a lot about education and says nothing, Mr. Speaker, that is worrisome to members on this side of the House. I must say that members on this side of the House are inclusive. Members on this side of the House support teachers. Our new leader is anxious to go all across the province and listen to Manitobans and to listen to teachers all across the province talk about what their concerns are. We want a chance to work in partnership with

members opposite, to be able to let them know what Manitobans are saying and to have an education system that reflects the changing job market and the high academic and social structure we need in Manitoba to be competitive globally.

I want to wish all members of this Legislature a Merry Christmas and a restful new year, and I look forward to putting forward plans and ideas that will really enhance the education system. Thank you.

Mr. Gerard Jennissen (Flin Flon): Mr. Speaker, it is my pleasure to put on the record a few words regarding our Government's Speech from the Throne at the opening of the Second Session of the Thirty-Seventh Legislature of the Province of Manitoba.

First, let me begin by congratulating the new pages, and I wish them well this term. I also want to make welcome the six new interns, and may this experience not sour them on politics forever.

I want to welcome back all honourable members, and particularly the two new members, the Member for Kirkfield Park (Mr. Murray) who has the added challenge of being Leader of the Opposition, a job, I presume, seeing such independent spirits over there, that is much like herding chickens—

An Honourable Member: Or cats.

Mr. Jennissen: Or cats. The Leader of the Opposition (Mr. Murray) has said that he believes in co-operation and he believes in working together, and indeed the tone seems to be a little bit less abrasive than in former years. This great willingness to co-operate, I hope, is more than just a honeymoon phase that will soon settle into a more bitter reality.

I also want to make welcome the Member for Tuxedo (Mrs. Stefanson), who is the youngest member of this Legislature, and I make the presumption she is also the most fit, seeing that she has knocked on 7500 doors.

I listened with great interest to the Opposition Leader's response to the Speech from

the Throne, and I must commend him that he does give a good speech. He does turn a mean phrase, and as an English teacher, I really responded to some of those phrases. For example, I will give you three small samples. The first one was the little guy from Punnichy. It has a rhyme to it, reminds me a little bit about the little guy from Shawinigan. I hope we get a better deal, though, from the little guy from Punnichy.

An Honourable Member: Where are you the little guy from?

Mr. Jennissen: I am the little guy from Evesham, Saskatchewan.

The other phrase that he used and, I thought, was actually a very powerful phrase: You cannot drive a grain truck down the information highway. I thought that was very good.

Then, lastly, he came up with the sentence: They must be tearing up their New Democratic Party membership cards at the union centres as we speak. I found that a bit hilarious because I do go to the Union Centre on occasion, and I do not see anyone tearing up party memberships. I just see a lot of hardworking brothers and sisters in the labour movement. I spot nary a millionaire in that whole crowd. Good people, and I am happy to be able to work with them.

As I listen to members from all sides of the House, there is a frequent reference to vision or lack of vision or competing visions. I found it interesting, in fact, when the speaker who proceeded me talked about lack of vision while she took her glasses off. It is true the Throne Speech ought to be a visionary document outlining future initiatives and direction of a government, and this Throne Speech, I think, is such a document.

The Opposition has tried to portray the initiatives in this Throne Speech as reflecting only the lobbying efforts of a few special interest groups, and that is unfortunate because nothing is further from the truth. The Throne Speech reflects the diversity of Manitoba, the diversity of our Cabinet, of our caucus and of our province.

* (16:30)

In fact, I would ask the members opposite: Has there ever been a Manitoba caucus or Cabinet, for that matter, that has included as many women as the one we have now? Virtually every sector is represented in our caucus and in our Government, not just agriculture and business, important though they are. We do not treat labour as poor second cousins. We do not ignore Aboriginal people. We do not ignore northern Manitoba. Seven of the MLAs elected under the NDP banner were born outside of Canada. Members elected under our banner speak French. They speak Greek and Dutch and German and Low German and English and Tagalog and Spanish and Cree and Inuktituk and probably some other languages.

An Honourable Member: Ukrainian.

Mr. Jennissen: And Ukrainian. I am glad you added that in. I think this really represents a lot of Manitobans. We on our side of the House are proud of this diversity in our caucus. When members opposite accuse us of representing only a few narrow interest groups, they are dead wrong.

As well, this Throne Speech continues the path, the progressive path into the future that began with Edward Schreyer. In that we are consistent. A New Democrat is a New Democrat is a New Democrat. We are not, as in other circles, Tory the day before yesterday, Reform yesterday, Alliance today, Republican tomorrow. We are not that. We are proud of who we are, as we are proud of the needs of all Manitobans that we represent and attempt to address those needs. We do not attempt to address the needs only of a small class of the most privileged. This Government intends to govern and does govern for all Manitobans, not just for members of the Manitoba Club.

As I said before, I have listened with interest to the common refrain, actually more like a long list of whining, a litany of whining that members of the Opposition have levelled at the Throne Speech and at the Government. In fact, we could distil the whining, if you like, to several common themes, and namely two themes: spend more money, give us more tax breaks. Surely it

must occur to members opposite that these two themes are somewhat contradictory. You cannot have it both ways.

In September of 1999, Manitobans did not take a little detour, as the Leader of the Opposition would have us believe. Manitobans finally saw through the Filmon charade and put us firmly back on the main road. That main road, by the way, was pioneered largely by Ed Schreyer and Mr. Pawley. It continues to amaze me that some of the members opposite are less than charitable when it comes to giving credit where credit is due. I think the closest they came to it was when the member from Fort Whyte conceded that there were some good things in the Throne Speech. Yes, indeed there are.

Somewhere in those benches opposite there lurks a mighty misconception, a belief that only Tories can govern or have the right to govern or somehow or other they have the divine right to govern. They ignore the fact that the wisdom of the Manitoba people saw fit to choose a different government in September of 1999. They should stop being bitter and they should stop sulking.

So my advice to members opposite is stop being bitter, admit you screwed up, and that the electorate turfed you out of office, and enough of the sour grapes and let us get on with the job of rebuilding Manitoba. We can do that together, but if necessary we may have to do that alone.

The Leader of the Opposition talks about health care issues being absent from the Throne Speech. He refers to our so-called alleged health care failures. Nothing could be further from the truth. We have made giant strides in rebuilding our health care system. Surely you do not expect us to fix every single aspect of a complex health care system that was systematically downgraded and slashed and cut and hacked for 10 years, not only by the Tory government, but by the federal Liberal government. Or have you forgotten the capital expansion projects for hospitals that the Tories would faithfully promise before every election and then sort of yank the rug out from under us and cancel those same projects after the election. We have not forgotten Connie Curran and the million dollars she took back with her to the United States. I am sure that you have not

forgotten the SmartHealth boondoggle, the frozen food fiasco, and so on.

The unelected RHA boards that you instituted, for example, is also a sore point. I was rather amazed that the Member for Charleswood (Mrs. Driedger) made reference to unelected RHA boards. The regional health authority boards at one time were going to have two elected members on them. I recall this distinctly because I talked to the member from Brandon West, who at that time was the Health Minister, and he was firmly committed to the idea of putting two elected members on each regional health authority. He felt at that point that was the right thing to do. But somehow somebody in the power pyramid of the Tory party shut that idea down. So the Tories instituted a totally politicized RHA board system, which they want to blame on us now. You started it.

It reminds me a little bit of the last federal election. The federal Liberals made health care the big issue. They were going to fix health care, the same health care they slashed and underfunded year after year. In other words, they promised to come to the aid of the victim that they had created.

If members opposite do not want to give this Government any credit for working diligently to fix health care, then let them at least listen to what others are saying. Let me quote the Winnipeg Free Press, Saturday, December 9, quote: "Health care passable, we said. Most Manitobans are satisfied with how the province has managed health care . . . 75.8 percent of respondents gave the province a passing grade."

That hardly sounds like criticism of what we are doing in health care. Again, the Winnipeg Free Press, front page, December 12, headline: "Family medicine gets boost from NDP. More spots coming at U of M, foreign-trained MDs to get break." It certainly sounds to me like they are very positive initiatives, and, to the best of my knowledge, yesterday there were no patients in the hallway. We are keeping our promise and we are fixing the health care system. That is why our Minister of Health (Mr. Chomiak) is not only highly regarded all across this country, but his many positive initiatives, including palliative care initiatives, have received accolades from

right across this country. We promised to do better before the election and indeed we are doing better. The Tories maybe promise it, but we actually deliver it.

Obviously the vast majority of Manitobans are agreeing with us, as the surveys I just quoted indicate. They are saying we are doing a good job in health care. Furthermore, there are 446 more nursing students enrolled this year as compared to last year. There are 45 more licensed family doctors practising medicine in Manitoba this year over last year. That certainly sounds like an improvement to me. There will be further initiatives to increase medical school enrolments and to create more residency positions. There will be physician recruitment and a retention plan to strengthen ongoing efforts to address the shortage of physicians, particularly in rural and northern Manitoba, where the need is the greatest.

The Throne Speech makes reference to the new Healthy Child Initiative, which includes targeting prenatal benefits for pregnant mothers, establishing fetal alcohol prevention programs, and a network of parent-child centres across Manitoba. Those are only some of the positive and proactive initiatives taken by this Government.

Mr. Speaker, I am proud also to represent a riding in northern Manitoba. It is natural for people in my riding to ask: What is in the Throne Speech for us? Northerners have come to expect things from this Government because they knew they were not going to get anything or not very much from the former government.

Well, let us take an example, hydro rates. This Government will proceed with the equalization of hydro rates. The former government toyed with this idea, but never actually produced results. They promised, but they did not produce the results. Now, it may not seem like a big deal to some people living within the Perimeter, but to us northerners it is a big deal. It is maybe not a huge amount of money that is involved either, it is \$14 million, but still to us in northern and rural Manitoba, that is a sizeable amount. It will make a difference on our hydro rates and it will help us. It was the right thing to do. It is particularly important for

northerners because they have always felt that since most of the hydroelectricity is produced in the North, in their backyard, that they should at least have the same rates as, let us say, Winnipeg.

Apart from the savings involved for northerners, it is an important symbol. It says to northerners you are part of Manitoba, we treat you exactly the same way. We pay the same hydro rates as the rest of Manitoba.

Northerners are just as delighted with the hydro equalization initiative as they were, Mr. Speaker, when this Government dropped the unfair \$50 Filmon user fee targeted at northerners using the Northern Patient Transportation system. Northerners are just as happy with the hydro rate equalization as they were with this Highway Minister's renewed emphasis on fixing and expanding northern roads, roads that were sorely neglected under a decade of Tory administration. This means looking for creative solutions.

* (16:40)

Yes, indeed, it would be nice, it would be desirable if the federal government gave us their portion of the gasoline tax to improve our Manitoba roads. That would mean an extra \$150 million to improve our roads, but I am not holding my breath. It does not appear that the federal government is about to do that, and it is really too bad, because I think that Canada might well be the only one of the industrialized countries that does not put a large amount of federal cash into the road system.

They certainly put a lot of money into the road system in the United States and in Europe. The Opposition, and particularly the member from River Heights, should help us lobby Ottawa, at least tell Ottawa that we would like the return of the tax they collect on gasoline and give it back to our province. He could have a very valuable role to play here and I am sure our Highways Minister would spend it wisely. I hope he would spend at least a proportional amount in the North where it is most needed.

The former government also was at war with Ottawa continually. This Government is not that

warlike. It will work with the government in Ottawa as the Minister of Highways (Mr. Ashton) worked with Ottawa in order to have 50-50 funding to build a road from Brochet to Lac Brochet and Tadoule Lake. Now that was a winter road, not over ice, but actually over firm ground mostly. The Minister of Highways and I visited the site, I think it was last spring—was it last spring?—by plane and by helicopter, and we hope to drive there soon. Anyway, we had a first-hand view of how difficult it is to build roads in northern Manitoba. I am very happy that this minister worked in conjunction with Ottawa to make sure that Tadoule Lake and Lac Brochet and Brochet will at least have a reasonable overland winter route, so they can join the rest of the province, so it is easier to move food and building materials to those isolated communities.

I should also point out that formerly in northwest Manitoba those roads were toll roads, the only section of Manitoba where people were expected to pay a toll when they used the winter road. I raised this over and over again with the former Minister of Highways, the Tory ministers of Highways, and their argument always was, well, that was historically how it developed. In other places winter roads might be cost-shared with the federal government 50-50, but in northern Manitoba it was user pay. I am glad that finally we have removed this impediment and that now all Manitobans can drive on roads that are not toll roads.

Remember, also, when those toll roads were in existence years ago, you were basically asking the poorest of the poor to pay those tolls. These are people in the far North where groceries are already exorbitantly priced. You are asking these people to pay even more because a toll was involved. I am glad we have removed that and northern Manitobans, particularly in Tadoule Lake and Lac Brochet and other places, will find their grocery bills less than they used to be.

If you want to develop the economy in remote northern Manitoba you have to pay attention to transportation links. Roads are virtually indispensable and they need to be built. I also want to point out that this Government is finally building a road to South Indian Lake, something the former government promised, in fact was obliged to do under the Northern Flood

Agreement that they signed in 1992 with I believe a 10-year extension, and had done nothing until 1999 until we got into office. We have only a few years to make this come true and we did make it come true. I want to thank the Minister of Highways for having worked hard on this project. Now we have \$23 million we can use to build the road to South Indian Lake.

The Tories talked; we acted. I can give you another example about northern roads. Since the 1980s we have had a project on the books, namely the fixing of Highway 10A as it leads into Flin Flon from the Perimeter Highway to past Green Street, approximately a kilometre or a little better than a kilometre. Now, that was on the books since the '80s, but nothing happened year after year. Year after year the city of Flin Flon would budget \$100,000 in their budget to build a sidewalk which would run parallel to this road, but they could not put the sidewalk in until we built the road. I am happy to say this year indeed we did build that road.

It needed to be done because the children walking to school were walking in very unsafe conditions. The road was narrow. The line of sight was not good. The traffic was congested so we fixed that, something that should have been fixed at least 10, 15 years ago, but we fixed it this year.

Yes, northern Manitobans overall are happy with the content of this Throne Speech, and they are happy with this Government. They know that most of the northern roads were built under the NDP administration anyway. They know that most of the hydro expansion took place under the NDP government as well in the past. Hydro's present profitability is a direct result of the foresight and the vision and the decisions made by people such as Ed Schreyer. The Tories talk about vision, but our predecessors in the New Democratic Party in governments had that vision and carried it out.

Hydro will continue to develop and be a tremendous asset for the people of Manitoba and for the people of the North. In the future, hydro developments will work together much more closely with Aboriginal peoples. They are going to do it in partnership not in confrontation.

Manitoba Hydro delivers some of the cheapest electricity in the world to its users. This will attract business. This is a major Manitoba advantage, and we will not sell Crown corporations like Hydro as the Tories sold off MTS. I think the selling off of MTS is directly linked to the fact that they are not in office right now. You cannot promise not to sell a Crown corporation and then go ahead and do it anyway. You should not be selling Crown corporations.

Take a look at what MTS is worth today, in fact, as compared with the bargain basement price the Tories sold it for. So you could argue that the people of Manitoba have lost hundreds of millions of dollars, hundreds of millions of dollars that could be better spent elsewhere. Never again will we allow a Tory government that rules largely for a handful of the business elite to sell a Crown corporation to the ongoing detriment of all Manitobans.

Mr. Speaker, this Throne Speech reflects what northerners want. It is going in a direction that makes us feel comfortable, makes us feel we are part of Manitoba again. After 11 years of being in the political wilderness, we, in September '99, emerged on the main road again. I mention the importance of roads and hydro to northern Manitoba, but equally important are mining and forestry, particularly operations such as Tolko. Both require roads and electrical energy.

But not yet every community has road access in northern Manitoba. Not every community is hooked up to the electricity grid. Diesel power is still used in Brochet and Lac Brochet, Tadoule Lake, and I believe also in Shamattawa. Some of these isolated communities in summer can only be reached by air. It is important to note that the airplane is often the only way a sick person can be transported out of the community or food and building materials can be brought into the community.

The Tory leaders talk about vision, yet it was the vision of the former NDP leaders which led to the creation of virtually all of the 22 northern airports. When was the last time the Tories built an airport? I am happy to say that I believe in this coming year or so there will be

major upgrading of at least one northern airport, the one at Lac Brochet. I still may have to have a little chat with the Minister of Highways (Mr. Ashton) on that.

So the Tories were virtually absent when it came to building the infrastructure in northern Manitoba, when it came to building roads, when it came to building airports and so on. Is it any mystery then that northerners reject Tory candidates even if good candidates are available during elections? We in the North remember the lack of vision by Tory governments, and this lack of vision extends also to the federal government. In their total deregulation of the railroad industry, for example, in July of 1996, the feds put many railroad lines in Manitoba at risk. Some of those lines that were particularly affected were the ones in my area, the Sherridon line and further to the east and north, the Hudson Bay line.

The federal government did not have enough vision to safeguard vital rail transportation links, jeopardizing those links and even threatening the very survival of the Port of Churchill or the very survival of the whole northwest region which includes Leaf Rapids and Lynn Lake.

We have an inland port. Many countries would give their eyeteeth to own Churchill, but we apparently did not do very much to support Churchill. The federal government and the weak-kneed provincial government stood by as a privatization occurred and the chance even existed that those lines would be torn up. Fortunately, OmniTRAX, based in Denver, bought both the Hudson Bay line and then the Sherridon line. I might add for an extremely low price but at least they saved the lines, and they are fixing up Churchill and grain is moving through Churchill. In fact, this is a banner year, something that could have happened earlier and something that we should have supported much more vocally.

* (16:50)

Those railways, by the way, are essential to farmers, farmers trying to get their grain to the market without driving hundreds of kilometres in huge trucks because these trucks further damage an already underfunded and crumbling

infrastructure. Those roads are being further hurt, but the federal government did not protect railroads, railroad abandonment did take place and our roads are taking the punishment.

I would also like to point out that several northern communities are only accessible by rail and they have to rely on VIA Rail to provide services. VIA Rail has in the past provided less than sterling service. For example, to Pukatawagan we are still running railroad cars, passenger cars that are of 1913 vintage. Only a few years ago they removed even older cars that actually had signs in them saying, please do not shoot at the buffalo. Those were obviously cars we got from the United States in the 1870s. That is the kind of service we were getting and still are getting to some degree in northern Manitoba.

The federal government promised that VIA Rail would put \$400 million into the system. I have seen precious little of that in northern Manitoba, but I hope some of that percolates further north. Certainly, Mr. Speaker, the people of Pukatawagan and the small communities along the Bay line could use an improved service. Every Christmas the people from Pukatawagan are stranded in The Pas. There is not enough room on the passenger train or they are asked to ride in baggage cars or whatever. They should not have to put up with this.

There is a unified demand from the Opposition benches regarding the Throne Speech with regard to more tax cuts. They say we must be more tax competitive vis-à-vis Alberta and Ontario. That is a red herring. We are not even close to the industrial heartland of North America as Ontario is. Ontario's population is ten times ours. Ontario has many advantages we do not have. They also have one large disadvantage we do not have: Mike Harris. Similarly, we cannot compete with Alberta. We should not even try to compete with Alberta, because how do you compete with the billion dollars of oil revenue. We are not in that league. We do not have that oil wealth. We do have, however, modest hydro wealth. So let us build on our strength and not compare ourselves falsely to other provinces and try to emulate them.

The Tory rhetoric that they are better managers of the Manitoba economy than we are

is a fallacy. It is not borne out by facts. It was their government that virtually ignored northern Manitoba, the one place where major resource development can take place far into the future. The North has tremendous potential. That is why the Golden Boy points north.

It was the former government that was tainted by questionable deals, not our Government, the former government that was tainted by questionable deals such as the Churchill forestry deal, Faneuil, SmartHealth, Isobord, frozen food, Connie Curran, and on and on.

Right now, whether the members opposite like it or do not like it, the Manitoba economy is humming right along. There is a 15-year high in job creation and population growth. This year there is a 15 000 total job increase over last year. We have the lowest unemployment rate in the country. The labour force statistics report for November 2000, issued December 1 actually from the Manitoba Bureau of Statistics, indicates that the unemployment rate for Manitoba is 4.9 percent, which is lower than Alberta. In fact, it is the lowest in the country.

We will continue to offer responsible tax relief without cuts to social programs. This tax relief should total \$100 million over the next few years. There is real vision in this Throne Speech, not just empty rhetoric.

I would like to take up the Opposition Leader's challenge that we work more cooperatively in this Legislature. I think we do need to set a more positive tone, certainly during Question Period. It is particularly disturbing when all of us get rowdy during Question Period and there are young children in the gallery watching, and we get comments back saying, you know, what exactly do those people do and why do they behave that way? So I think all of us need to, in my wife's language, couth up.

Actually, I think things have become a little bit more positive. The tone has become a little bit more positive during Question Period, and indeed I think the heckling is far less strident than it used to be. In fact, lately I have not heard the Member for Springfield (Mr. Schuler) make even one reference to Albania or the Albanian

working class. I think that is a step in the right direction. Now, it may be that he has outgrown that fixation or it may be that his leader is muzzling him; I do not know.

We can work together, and for the sake of this province it would be wise if we did work together because we have much in common despite the heated rhetoric sometimes, and there are some small examples I would like to point out before I close, some small precedents for co-operating. Last year I was privileged to work with several of my colleagues on the graduated driver's licences task force. We consulted widely with the public and held some 12 or 13 meetings right across the province. The Member for Portage la Prairie (Mr. Fauschou) was at several of those meetings, and I know he worked hard to bring his views and the views of his constituents to these meetings. He and I and others rose above the partisan politics in order to drive a good initiative, namely to eventually legislate a good, graduated licensing system for the province of Manitoba because such a system will save lives, and that is the important point: it will save lives. I thank the Member for Portage la Prairie for his valuable input.

As well, on December 6, at the committee hearings on Bill 5, The Helen Betty Osborne Foundation Act, it was obvious, Mr. Speaker, that that bill was supported by all parties in the House. Collaboration and co-operation are possible. Unfortunately, that is the exception rather than the rule. Still, I for one welcome the Opposition Leader's call for co-operation and hope that at least on occasions we can rise above the partisanship, that we remain ever mindful not just of the people in the gallery but that we represent our constituents and that we should represent our constituents to the best of our ability, that we should represent all Manitobans and we should represent them well.

If that means compromising or putting a damper on our ideological leanings, even though I would personally find that difficult, let us do it as long as it is good for all Manitobans. All of us want to make a positive difference. Working together has the power to multiply that positive difference. That is what is called synergy.

Mr. Speaker, I conclude by saying that this is a great Throne Speech. Not everybody will share that opinion, but I believe it to be a great

Throne Speech. It is balanced and consistent. It will be well received by the majority of Manitobans. It certainly is very well received in northern Manitoba. I urge all members of this House to support the Throne Speech. Put your partisanship aside; vote for this Throne Speech. Remember we voted for your budget in 1999 because it contained certain positive elements. We did the right thing. We were not totally partisan. So in that spirit I hope you will also take my remarks, and I will hope we will see more co-operation in the future. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Frank Pitura (Morris): Mr. Speaker, I welcome the opportunity to put a few comments on the record in response to the void speech or, I mean, the Throne Speech, and the comments that I will make in my presentation I say in support of the amendment to the Throne Speech. Some of the concerns that I outline as I go through my presentation will support my argument as to why I cannot support the Throne Speech as written; I have to support it as amended.

Firstly, I would like to welcome all of the pages this year to the House, and I hope that you will find this a rewarding experience and you will no doubt encounter sometimes when you wonder whether you will ever get a rest, so take your opportunities now to have your rest because the day will come when you will be run off your feet. So I would like to welcome you and hope that you enjoy your time here.

I would also like to welcome all of the interns that we have assigned to each of our caucuses in terms of helping us in preparation of statements and doing research for the respective caucuses.

But, Mr. Speaker, I would particularly like to welcome our new leader and member from Kirkfield Park. The Member for Kirkfield Park (Mr. Murray) is a very welcome addition to our caucus, and we are really looking forward to his leadership over the next little while.

I would also like to welcome the member from Tuxedo to the Legislature. I think, as the member from Flin Flon indicated, she is by far the youngest person in this Legislature. When you take a look at somebody that young and you

start looking around the House, there could be some father-son combinations, mother-daughter combinations in the House here. I do not know if that has ever happened in the history of this Legislature where you had two members of the same family in the Legislature. At any rate, it is nice to have somebody who is young, energetic and intelligent coming into this Legislature, and I know that she will do a very good job for the constituents of Tuxedo.

* (17:00)

An Honourable Member: And on the right side.

Mr. Pitura: And she is on the right side of the House right now and soon to be on the Government side after the next election.

Mr. Speaker, I never had the opportunity in the last session to make any comments on the Throne Speech at that time, and I believe I did not make any comments on the Budget either. So I will take some opportunity right now to make a few comments about my new constituency of Morris, if I could put it, because with the boundary realignment prior to the last election the constituency of Morris did a 90° flip, went from an east-west constituency that ran from east to the Red River starting east of St. Pierre-Jolys and extended all the way to west of Carman at Miami and Graysville.

Mr. Conrad Santos, Deputy Speaker, in the Chair

With the new boundaries, the constituency still goes out to east of the Red River with St. Pierre-Jolys and now St. Malo included as well, all of the R.M. of De Salaberry. It also includes the R.M.s of Morris and half of Richot, the R.M. of Macdonald, and the additional parts added to the constituency was the R.M. of Headingley, the R.M. of St. Francois Xavier and the R.M. of Cartier. Although the geography has changed quite a bit in the constituency, it is a constituency that has a large amount of resources in terms of highly productive land, resources in terms of value-added industries to the area, but its biggest, strongest resource is its people.

There are many, many citizens who are living in that constituency that have done very

well, are very entrepreneurial spirited. I would like to commend each and every one of the people living in the constituency because they are the type that really do not look to government to solve all their problems. If they have problems, they solve them themselves. They only will come to government when there is a very necessary situation.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, the Throne Speech that we heard almost two weeks ago is probably the worst Throne Speech I have ever seen since I have come into this Legislature, and this is what? the seventh Throne Speech that we heard. It is void of any vision. It is void of any plan. There is just nothing in that Throne Speech, and I believe there is nothing for Manitobans to be proud of or to have hope for, because they do not see in this Throne Speech those things that would tend to make Manitobans very hopeful and visionary for the future.

I do not want to take a whole lot of time to make my comments so other people can get their comments on the record, but let us look at the speech in some detail. It will not take too long.

Firstly, it talks about youth in 2020, but it does nothing to address the youth of today, the youth of next year, the youth of the year after or even the year after that. I would think that, if a government had at least a vision of its mandate, it would be able to put into place at least that kind of a vision to the end of its mandate, knowing it must go back to the electorate. We are talking about our young people in 2020. That is not a vision, that is strictly a pipe dream. I just hope that these youth that are being mentioned in the Throne Speech in 2020, with the lack of things being mentioned in the Throne Speech, we also pray that these youth do not get sick and they will be able to find a job because those are the two things that are not in the Throne Speech that should be addressed.

Another area, Mr. Deputy Speaker, is the education and the announcement with the Red River Community College, and I say bravo. The downtown Red River College campus is finally finishing what this side of the House when we were in Government started. That was the plan to bring that downtown campus to that area. I applaud the Government on having enough

foresight to support what we started in having the downtown campus finally started.

I am thankful that the Minister of Education (Mr. Caldwell) did not get his way with his idea of a college campus which he was going to put near the University of Winnipeg because that would not have fulfilled the purpose of revitalizing the downtown area of Winnipeg. That is a magnificent area of historic buildings that needs to be preserved and enhanced for generations to come, and this is a great way to do it.

I do commend the Government on bringing forth legislation with regard to parental leave, increasing it from 17 to 37 weeks. That is a good move, and we do support that. I would also like to commend the Government, and in particular the Minister of Aboriginal and Northern Affairs (Mr. Robinson), for bringing forth The Helen Betty Osborne Foundation bill. On this side of the House, we do support it unanimously, and we are looking forward to having it go through third reading and be passed, I believe, tomorrow afternoon. At that time I will make some comments when it comes to third reading, but we are very much in favour of that bill.

The Healthy Child Initiative that was mentioned in the Throne Speech is a new coined phrase for the renaming of existing programs such as the Taking Charge! and the BabyFirst programs that were brought in by the previous government, but it is a good initiative, a good initiative and should be continued. Then, if we take a look at the schools, and referenced in the Throne Speech was that gyms and computer rooms will be open. I am thinking about that and saying that, well, if you are going to open a school up and you are going to have the gyms and the computer rooms open, you have to have somebody who is willing to use it. If you do not have the need defined by the community, then having the schools open and the computer rooms open does not really make any sense unless it is a community decision to do so.

So, again, you have to consider that local school boards and local school divisions and local schools have that autonomy to make those kinds of choices for themselves, and certainly encouraging them to do so would be great, but I

think that making it part of the Government mandate, that gyms and computer rooms stay open, is really forcing the inclusiveness into the system.

If you consider the fact that we have had a lot of discussion about YNN and it is being beat upon by the Government because of ideological and political reasons, that YNN's commitment was to the extra-curricular use of all the technology, and the computers that they had put into schools could be used in the after hours. So you have to wonder that if YNN were allowed for other schools, to accept them as he saw fit, what kind of possibilities there would be with regard to the Government's comment in the Throne Speech about having open gyms and open computer rooms.

Then there was the mention in the Throne Speech of credits for volunteer work for students. A noble idea, but it raises some concerns too. How many credits will be applied to a high school diploma, or will there be credits applied to a high school diploma? Will we be following some of the examples set forth in the United States as an example, where their credits in some of the courses that they have have a student graduating from high school without the proper skills to continue post-secondary.

One of the things that comes to my mind, when I was much younger, in school, reading a book by James Thurber, where he talked about a football player that was having a great deal of difficulty with his courses. So they attempted to get around the system and, because he needed to play football, he was a great football player, they need him on the football team to win the trophies and win the championship, that they went to great lengths to get his education for him, by hook or by crook.

* (17:10)

Sometimes I think having credits for volunteer work—I do not downplay that because recognizing volunteer work is very important. It is very important. I am not sure that it should be or could be recognized as a major part of the credits for a high school diploma, because if you do that then you may be compromising what the

student is going to be taking with them when they graduate from high school.

There was reference in the Throne Speech to Aboriginal training. Again, it is a very noble statement and it is a statement that every government could make. I could reference the Howard Pawley government in the '80s making a similar statement. Nothing happened. So you have to take a look and say, well, yeah, that is great, but let us see what is going to happen in terms of developing the programs. So we challenge the Government. We will be watching them on that particular area to see just exactly what they are going to do with regard to Aboriginal training.

The Throne Speech also referenced immigration. I say to the Government that when we were in government we always argued with and had discussions with the federal government that we needed to have a larger, much larger immigrant base coming into Manitoba. What is really the strength of this province is all of the people who came here from other countries to make their home.

I, for one, am part of that group. My grandfather immigrated here at the turn of the century. I am now the third generation here. I give my thanks to my grandfather for having made that choice to move here to Canada from Poland. If he had not, I do not know where I would be today or even if I would be here today, but I am eternally grateful for him making that decision. It was a major decision on his part to leave his homeland and move to another country where he did not know that he would even be able to speak the language, and he could not speak the language, to make a new home here and to get used to the very harsh winters that we sometimes have here in Manitoba.

But I challenge the Government that, if you had indicated in your first Throne Speech that you would be able to develop the very close working relationship with the federal government, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that somehow the federal government has to be convinced that the allocation of immigrants to Canada should be in the reverse order that it is right now, because my understanding, is that when immigrants come into the country, they are allocated to

province to province based on the percentage of the population of the country in that province.

So if you take a look at provinces such as Ontario, Québec and British Columbia, the majority of those people immigrating to this country will go to those three provinces. Manitoba has 2 percent of the population approximately, that we only get 2 percent of the immigrants coming into Canada. It should be reversed so that the majority of the immigrants would come here to Manitoba because I think that if they were allowed to come to Manitoba first, they would not likely leave Manitoba, because this would be the place that they would like to choose to make their home as many of our forefathers did. So I think that that is one of the major issues that we challenge the Government on, in getting the federal government to relax or reverse the number of immigrants coming to Manitoba.

The indication by the Government that they are going to go to a single hydro rate across the province, and firstly I would like to say that that is a good move, and it is probably achievable. Hopefully there is not a downside impact to that, but if the Government does bring in the single rate across the province, I think that that would be a good move.

Now, let us take a look at what is not in the Throne Speech. Many of my colleagues, when they made their presentations, did indicate it is not a case of what is in the Throne Speech but what is out of the Throne Speech. What is not in the Throne Speech? Agriculture. There is no reference to this Government in terms of what they are going to do over the next twelve or fourteen months or longer with agriculture in the province of Manitoba. They have no indication of what they are going to do with the livestock industry, no indication with the grains industry, no indication of anything towards value-added or processing.

So it makes me wonder that this Government is really not too concerned about agriculture in Manitoba and what it contributes to the entire provincial economy. So it makes me very concerned that they have not addressed it in the Throne Speech because it is, in my opinion, a

very important part of the economy in my constituency.

The situation out there right now in the agricultural industry is one that there is a lot of fear and trepidation about what is going to happen because we are looking at low commodity prices. We are looking at input costs going up significantly as a result of the increase in energy prices. We are finding out that parents rather than transferring their farm to their children are seeking to encourage their children to leave the farm, and if they leave the farm, the chances are they are probably going to leave the community in hopes of a better life.

So when that happens and that farm is sold or rented out, the very thing that that government, the Government today, opposes is going to happen. If they do not put policies into place and do not have programs in place that will address that situation, what we are going to find is that there is going to be, in fact, larger and larger and larger farms that are going to be the so-called corporate farms, and it is not going to be as a result of people looking at it and saying here is an opportunity. It is going to happen by default, because absolutely in the history of this province land has never gone uncultivated, uncropped. It will always be cropped. It will always produce food of one kind or another.

So it will evolve, and if this Government has no vision and no plan for the agricultural industry in this province, then it is going to be just that one more year where it is going to be just allowed to be whatever happens happens to the ag industry. It is going to have a negative impact if what we are seeing right now as a trend continues on.

Something else that is not in the Throne Speech, tax reductions. There has been no reference at all from this Government to say that we would try to be competitive with our neighbouring provinces. Mr. Deputy Speaker, of course, the Government always cites examples of us reducing our taxes to Alberta's level or Ontario's level. We are saying: Hey, just reduce the taxes down to Saskatchewan's level and that would be a good start, because even Saskatchewan is going to be more of a friendly province to business and to young entrepreneurs

than Manitoba is unless we address our tax situation.

There is also nothing in the Throne Speech with regard to this Government's intended next year's program with respect to small businesses and medium businesses. They just have nothing in that Throne Speech with regard to the type of vision they have for business development of small business in this province or medium-sized businesses in this province. They clapped and applauded about a potato processing plant in Portage la Prairie today, but it was really a lot of that leg work, I would say most of the leg work, was done by the previous government to get things moving in that direction, because we knew that the potato industry could be expanded. We also know that there is a definite need for irrigation for potatoes. This Government has not addressed any of those issues in the Throne Speech with respect to the ag industry and to the businesses and the medium-sized businesses.

* (17:20)

The other area that we are waiting patiently for is something from the Department of Conservation with regard to the establishment of watershed districts and properly funding watershed districts. If I might just divert for a bit and talk about the IJC, the International Joint Commission, that produced its report, *Living with the Red*, making recommendations to the governments of Canada and the United States and to the states of North Dakota and Minnesota and the province of Manitoba. Of course, of great concern to many of my constituents is the recommendation in that report as to the widening of the floodway or placing a dam across the Red River south of Ste. Agathe.

I will tell you in no uncertain terms that the constituents that live in the Morris constituency around and south of Ste. Agathe are very much opposed to the concept of a dam across the Red River. Their basic statement is this, and we have talked about it in past years: If we are not going to build a dam across the Red River at the border and flood our American neighbours—we would not think of doing that; that would be terrible—then why would we build a dam at Ste. Agathe and flood ourselves? Self-inflicted pain. Why would we do that? So widening the floodway is

the option I believe that this Government should pursue with respect to floodproofing.

But let me take it one more step, Mr. Deputy Speaker. We talked about how the IJC unfortunately had as its terms of reference floodproofing in the Red River Valley basin. It should have had one more term of reference added to that, and that was watershed management. They should have been able to take the same amount of money that would have been spent on widening the floodway or the money that could have been spent on the Ste. Agathe dam along with the compensation paid to everybody that would be flooded—you could take those total dollars, which would be \$780 million, I believe, for the floodway and probably in excess of a billion dollars for the Ste. Agathe dam, and spend that money on water management projects throughout the entire Red River Valley basin in the Manitoba section, because we are only talking about dollars spent on the Canadian side.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, we could control how water comes into the system, and if we can control how water comes into the system and when that water comes into the system, then we can shave a large number of feet off the peak of any flood. If we would have been able to take three to four feet off the peak of 1997 flood, we would have had a flood slightly in excess of 1996, but by lowering that flood peak then we do not have to spend the big dollars to widen the floodway. We do not have to spend money to dam.

Virtually 80 percent or 90 percent of residents living in the Red River Valley flood plain now are adequately floodproofed or soon will be adequately floodproofed. Soon I hope 100 percent will be floodproofed, and communities will be floodproofed to 1997 plus two. So if we can manage water coming into the system and shave feet off of peak flow, then I would argue that even an 1825 or 1826 flood, which is the largest flood ever recorded in the history of this province—I believe though there was one in 1777 that was even larger—that those floods would be a mere 1996 flood or maybe even a 1979 flood. That is the impact I believe, Mr. Deputy Speaker, can happen with water management.

However, the IJC report, *Living with the Red*, does make reference to water management that should be pursued, but at the same time it does only talk about flood protection. So from that standpoint, I, as the Member from Morris, will be opposing any kind of movement towards a dam across the Red River at Ste. Agathe. I will be supporting widening of the floodway.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, before I leave that I would like to also address the fact that in order for watershed management to work we need watershed districts. This is where the provincial government has a major role to play in promoting, informing and funding watershed management districts. We have a group of municipalities out in the southeast corner of the province, which is part of this large flood plain, that are in the process right now of having a study prepared for them and bringing it back to indicate what kind of procedures or what kind of steps they can put into place to manage water. They are prepared to form I believe a watershed management group which would encompass a large area. But this Government has to recognize it and has to support it and fund it to a level that it can operate and perform those projects and carry out those projects that are needed to manage water. This is something that we will be very much putting pressure on the Government to adequately fund.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, we get onto another little issue that has arisen in my constituency and that is one of Aboriginal casinos. I am just going to say casinos because that is basically the issue is the fact that this Government, when they first came into power, fast-tracked RFP criteria for five Aboriginal casinos. They did not pay any attention to or contemplate any of the outcomes in terms of the proposals that might come back. Then when the proposals did come back, I believe that the Government was caught off guard. In fact, they had indicated that the Aboriginal casinos had to be on reserve. They did not anticipate the fact that on reserve could be anywhere where there is treaty land entitlement and the reserve could be established.

Now, that came out when RFPs came in, and then you had the community of Headingley putting it to a referendum vote and having it soundly defeated, that they did not want to have

a casino in their community. Yet the committee who was looking after the awarding of the five Aboriginal casinos chooses Headingley as number one. Then we have the Minister responsible for Gaming (Mr. Ashton) indicating to the Municipality of Headingley that this process has up until 2002. Therefore, that Swan Lake First Nation could take the time and try to convince the community of Headingley that this Red Sands Resort was good for their community. They had up until 2002. In fact, Mr. Eric Luke, who was employed as part of the implementation—

An Honourable Member: Who?

Mr. Pitura: Eric Luke, as part of the implementation team, indicated to the Municipality of Headingley that they had to have or could have another vote. They can have another vote, if they wanted, until they are satisfied.

Then what happens, Mr. Deputy Speaker, is that the R.M. of Headingley says: Well, we will have another referendum because we did not think that the Swan Lake First Nation had adequate opportunity to share its project with the community. So they had their meetings to explain the project. And they had their referendum. The day before the referendum, the Minister responsible for Gaming writes the R.M. of Headingley and says the results of the first referendum we will accept. We will not accept the results of the second referendum.

It was just a waste of time for this community to even have the referendum. They spent all summer arguing each side, neighbour against neighbour. Swan Lake First Nation, never being told that that first referendum was the binding referendum that the Government would take a look at, continued to spend money putting the proposal together, thinking that they are going to sell a project to the people of Headingley. Let them know that it was a done deal. It is not. It is dead. Then Swan Lake could have gone on to better things with the resources that they spent putting their proposal together, and they could have spent that money in terms of economic development opportunities for the Swan Lake First Nation. The R.M. of Headingley would not have had neighbours pitted against neighbours.

So, Mr. Deputy Speaker, just on finishing up—in fact, how much time have I got left?

* (17:30)

Mr. Deputy Speaker: You have got about five minutes; no, about two.

Mr. Pitura: One last area, Mr. Deputy Speaker, and I will sign off.

Earlier, just last month, this Government decided that they needed to have capital money for infrastructure. They were cash starved, but they had a balanced budget that they had to adhere to. So they were trying to think of ways that they could spend money and keep spending money without affecting the balanced budget. So the ultimate way was to take money from MPI and get MPI to donate \$20 million or \$30 million to the University of Winnipeg, Red River Community College, Brandon University and Assiniboine College, and having \$10 million spent in the Department of Highways. It almost worked, but the one thing it did not count on was the public of Manitoba did not see it that way at all. They did not want to have the money that they spent for premiums going towards education directly from MPI to educational institutions outside of the balanced budget legislation, which made it clean. It did not affect the balanced budget.

Mr. Speaker in the Chair

I was talking to a potato grower around the Carman area, and he was telling me that with all of the premiums he pays for insurance on his potato trucks, he was going to be donating \$700 from his premiums to the University of Winnipeg, to Brandon University and to Assiniboine Community College. He just did not think that that was right. He would have rather had the \$700 back in his own pocket.

Fortunately, the Government made a tactical retreat. That means that when you make a tactical retreat, you back up, you move over and

you come at it from a different angle. I do not think we are going to see the last of trying to get the hooks on the money from the Crown corps.

One last thing, Mr. Speaker, is for this Government—it has been suggested to me and I pass it on as a suggestion—when you have an accident with a car you should probably have a separate accident merit account, rather than your driver's merits, because there are people who on icy streets in Winnipeg in the wintertime will have a couple or three fender benders probably in one year, and they are all two demerits.

An Honourable Member: How many have you had, Frank?

Mr. Pitura: Oh, I am okay. I am okay. It is just a suggestion, and I think it is something that is worth discussing in the future, down the road.

So, Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the time that was given to me, and we will look forward to the Government supporting our amendment so that we can get on with the real business of the province. Thank you.

Mr. Speaker: The honourable Member for St. Norbert, on House business.

House Business

Mr. Marcel Laurendeau (Opposition House Leader): Mr. Speaker, I think if you were to canvas the House, you might see a willingness to call it six o'clock.

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

When this matter is again before the House, the debate will be open.

The hour being 6 p.m., this House is adjourned and stands adjourned until 1:30 p.m. tomorrow (Thursday).

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Wednesday, December 13, 2000

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