

Fourth Session - Thirty-Seventh Legislature
of the
Legislative Assembly of Manitoba
DEBATES
and
PROCEEDINGS
Official Report
(Hansard)

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Speaker*

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MANITOBA LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
First Session—Thirty-Eighth 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.
HAWRANIK, Gerald	Lac du Bonnet	P.C.
HELWER, Edward	Gimli	P.C.
HICKES, George, Hon.	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.
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, Hon.	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

Tuesday, December 3, 2002

The House met at 1:30 p.m.

Madam Clerk (Patricia Chaychuk): It is my duty to inform the House that Mr. Speaker is unavoidably absent. Therefore, in accordance with the statutes, I would ask the Deputy Speaker to please take the Chair.

Mr. Conrad Santos, Deputy Speaker, in the Chair

PRAYERS

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

PRESENTING REPORTS BY STANDING AND SPECIAL COMMITTEES

Standing Committee on Privileges and Elections First Report

Mr. Tom Nevakshonoff (Chairperson): I beg to present the First Report of the Committee on Privileges and Elections.

Madam Clerk (Patricia Chaychuk): Your Standing Committee on Privileges and Elections presents the following as its First Report—

Some Honourable Members: Dispense.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Dispense.

Your Standing Committee on Privileges and Elections presents the following as its First Report.

Meetings:

Your committee met on Monday, December 2, 2002, at 10 a.m. in Room 255 of the Legislative Building.

Matters Under Consideration:

The Appointment of a Conflict of Interest Commissioner

Committee Membership:

Your committee elected Mr. Nevakshonoff as the Chairperson.

Substitutions received prior to commencement of the meeting:

Mrs. Dacquay for Mr. Murray

Mr. Helwer for Mrs. Mitchelson

Hon. Mr. Mackintosh for Hon. Mr. Selinger

Mr. Nevakshonoff for Ms. Allan

Motions Adopted and Reported:

THAT it is recommended that William (Bill) Norrie be appointed the Conflict of Interest Commissioner.

* (13:35)

Mr. Nevakshonoff: I move, seconded by the honourable Member for Elmwood (Mr. Maloway), that the report of the committee be received.

Motion agreed to.

Introduction of Guests

Mr. Deputy Speaker: It is customary to acknowledge the guests in the gallery before we start Oral Questions.

So, we have seated in the public gallery, O.V. Jewitt Elementary school, 39 Grade 5 students under the direction of Mrs. Rhonda Beddome from the constituency of the honourable Member for The Maples (Mr. Aglugub).

Also in the gallery from Springs Christian Academy 28 Grade 11 students under the direction of Mr. Brad Dowler from the constituency of the honourable Minister of Finance (Mr. Selinger), St. Boniface.

We have also in the gallery from Oakenwald School 26 Grade 5 students under the direction of Mrs. Joanne Burns from the constituency of the honourable Member for Fort Garry (Mrs. Smith).

We all welcome you in the Legislature.

ORAL QUESTION PERIOD

Provincial Sales Tax Mechanical/Electrical Contracts

Mr. Larry Maguire (Arthur-Virden): Mr. Deputy Speaker, unhindered by a little obstacle called balanced budget law, the Doer government is using NDP tax hike code such as simplification, expanding the PST to cover mechanical and electrical contracts, effective October 1. Originally estimated to bring in approximately \$10 million, stakeholders suggest that range may be as high as \$40 million to \$70 million, to be more accurate. When you ask the Taxation Division, they do not return phone calls. Even if after much effort they do, they shuffle you off to the minister's office and then refuse to give us any kind of estimate of what that level would be.

My question to the Minister of Finance is simple: How much additional revenue is your tax grab estimated to bring your Government coffers?

Hon. Greg Selinger (Minister of Finance): I would like to congratulate the member from Virden on his new responsibilities as Finance critic.

As to the question, the original estimate, some predicted the revenue would exceed \$60 million. Others estimated it as low as \$10 million. Finance, at the Estimates time when we reviewed this, indicated they thought the estimate would be in the order of \$15 million, but with late implementation this year the amount of revenue would be significantly less. The implementation was done at a later date in order to provide proper time for taxation officials to brief all members of the industry, who of course requested this change in the first place.

* (13:40)

Mr. Deputy Speaker: The honourable Member for Arthur-Virden, for first supplementary.

Mr. Maguire: Mr. Deputy Speaker, can the minister, as this policy affects all Manitobans, can he not table for this House any comprehensive analysis in terms of increased costs of

municipal governments for construction of sewer and water infrastructure, recreational facilities, community halls, skating rinks and all of those buildings that will have this tax added on to them in all of those rural and city areas?

Mr. Selinger: It is understandable that the new critic was not available for the Estimates discussion last year where we confirmed there would be no changes in taxation for water and sewer lines, no changes in taxation for basement flood relief, construction projects, no changes in taxation for water and sewer treatment plants, and of course no changes in taxation for road construction.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: The honourable Member for Arthur-Virden, second supplementary question.

Mr. Maguire: The minister almost seems embarrassed, given that there is no answer to this question in regard to the amount of the tax grab that he will take out of the province of Manitoba.

How much additional revenue is he expecting as a result of this tax grab? Is it \$10 million, \$20 million? Is it \$70 or \$100 million that he is looking at taking out in a full year?

Mr. Selinger: Mr. Deputy Speaker, as I indicated in the answer to my first question, the estimate for a fully annualized implementation of this measure is \$15 million. The amount to be collected this year is significantly less because the implementation was made effective October 1, after the majority of construction was done in this year. We, of course, will be fully accountable and report back to the Legislature or a standing committee as the tax measure fully implements.

Nursing Committee Update

Mr. John Loewen (Fort Whyte): In the 1999 election campaign, Mr. Doer promised Manitobans that if it took hiring more full-time nurses—[Interjection] I am sorry, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order, please.

Mr. Loewen: The Premier (Mr. Doer) promised Manitobans that if it took hiring more full-time

nurses to fix the health care system he would simply hire more full-time nurses. Their election literature was riddled to references of hiring more full-time nurses. Yet here we are three years later, the nursing shortage has climbed, overtime costs have increased dramatically and front-line nurses are under more stress as a result of this Government's inaction.

I would ask the Minister of Health if he would inform this House how many people he has appointed to the provincial joint committee on full-time, part-time nursing staff ratios, how many meetings this committee has conducted and what recommendations have come forward from this committee since it was struck in April.

Hon. Dave Chomiak (Minister of Health): Mr. Deputy Speaker, as you are probably aware, during the very tumultuous time of the '90s when nurses were let go from many, many facilities and programs were cancelled, the diploma program was cancelled and the nursing program was cancelled, the numbers of nurses graduating when we came to office was in the hundreds when it had formerly been in the four-hundreds and five-hundreds.

That is why one of the first measures this Government did was launch extensive training programs for nurses. When we launched our programs, members opposite were speaking against it. They were opposed to it.

I am happy to say now that we have launched those training programs and are graduating more nurses, the latest CIHI stats show more nurses employed in Manitoba in the last statistics than the year before. We have made a difference as a result of our training programs and will continue to make a difference as we graduate more nurses.

Mr. Loewen: Mr. Deputy Speaker, I asked the minister who he appointed to the committee, when he appointed them and whether they have met or not. Why is he refusing to answer those questions, and why is he refusing to help Manitoba nurses out? Why is he not following up on the election promises that were made by the Premier? Why is he sitting there doing nothing?

* (13:45)

Mr. Chomiak: The member will know during the term of the 11 lean Tory years there were two nurses' contracts negotiated, Mr. Deputy Speaker, and in fact nurses received a rollback. There was no joint commission. There was no action on full-time nurses. There was no action on part-time nurses. The only action was eliminating nurses' jobs.

When we negotiated our first collective agreement with the nurses, we put in place a committee to meet with the nurses, to have a joint council to work on full time, part time, not an administrative council, not a professional advisory council, as is in members opposite's Throne Speech, that they are going to have a professional advisory council, but a working council that has met, that is working on full time, part time, is gathering statistics and information, and I have met with them.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: The honourable Member for Fort Whyte's second supplementary question.

Mr. Loewen: Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I would ask the minister why he is ignoring his election promises. Why is he ignoring front-line nurses? Who has he appointed to this committee, when has it met, and what recommendations have come forward? Why will he not simply answer those questions?

Mr. Chomiak: The joint committee has met. I have met with the members of the joint committee.

I note members opposite's contribution to this debate has been a Throne Speech that they put out that mentioned nurses zero, no reference to nurses, no reference to professional training. I think their Throne Speech said nothing about nurses, which indicates they have the same policy regarding nurses as they had in the 1990s. There is not a recognition of the role and function nurses play.

Nurses know better than that. That is why we have the collective agreement. That is why we have the joint council. That is why we have working conditions. That is why we had a nurse task force. That is why we expanded training. That is why we are graduating more nurses.

Air Ambulances Usage Policy

Mr. Leonard Derkach (Russell): I am glad the Minister of Health is taking a glass of water. He needs it.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, the Pasieczka family is left with many unanswered questions as they relate to the lack of support from the Department of Health for costs associated with the premature birth of their baby daughter Adriana. The issue of the Government emergency medivac, an air ambulance, has not been answered by the Minister of Health.

Can the minister explain why the ambulance was not allowed to fly to pick up baby Adriana when in fact it has flown out of the province to pick up patients in the past and when in fact the medivac plane was on the ground the entire day on February 20, 2002?

Mr. Deputy Speaker: The honourable Minister of Transportation—

Some Honourable Members: and Government Services.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: —Government Services.

Hon. Scott Smith (Minister of Transportation and Government Services): Thank you very much, Mr. Deputy Speaker, TGS, for short, will work just fine.

The member brings up a point regarding air ambulance service and the process that is used in the province of Manitoba. I know the member had spoken previously to the press wanting the flights to fly all over North America but, No. 1, I can say to the member opposite the flights are for Manitobans, to prioritize flights within Manitoba. They leave Manitoba certainly for organs and things like that, that are critically needed. They will take someone out of the province who cannot get health care in the province and take them to a destination. It is not something that has ever been chartered, ever, outside of the province of Manitoba to go and pick anyone up to bring anybody back.

Mr. Derkach: Mr. Deputy Speaker, on a new question.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: A new question.

Mr. Derkach: The minister is absolutely wrong, because last year the air ambulance, the medivac, flew to Yorkton, Saskatchewan to pick up a heart patient who was in danger of dying because the procedures he needed could not be done in Saskatchewan. Therefore, the individual was picked up in Yorkton, Saskatchewan and was transferred to the Health Sciences Centre by the medivac of our province.

Now, if it was all right to send the medivac to Yorkton, Saskatchewan, then why is it not all right to send the medivac to pick up a premature baby in Phoenix, Arizona?

* (13:50)

Mr. Smith: In fact, as the member mentioned, that was not chartered. I can inform the member opposite it was not just Piney. Manitobans located in Manitoba border communities, an example is Piney, Roblin West, Falcon Lake, who have a highly acute state may be picked up from Rosseau, Yorkton or Kenora respectively and returned to a Manitoba health centre subsequently to initial dispatch in out-of-province location for the retreat. Those are border communities. Those are not anything that are chartered out. That is somewhat just on the border of our community here in Manitoba that are picked up and brought back into Manitoba.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: The honourable Member for Russell, on a supplementary.

Mr. Derkach: Mr. Deputy Speaker, how can this minister justify the actions as they relate to the medivac and the Government jet, when members of Executive Council, including the Premier (Mr. Doer), including the Minister of Health (Mr. Chomiak), can use that plane to travel all over North America? Yet when it comes to an emergency situation like bringing a premature baby back to Manitoba who requires the special services of an incubator, the minister said no.

Mr. Smith: It appears the member opposite would like to have our planes all over North America, anywhere but in Manitoba for the people who need them.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I can tell you when these policies were established and were established by the previous government there have not been any changes, other than the limited use for ministers of the Crown. Over 75 percent of the air ambulance is used by the health care system. If in fact there is ever a use within Manitoba of the service they would be immediately dropped off. The flight would immediately be rerouted to the emergency care for patients in Manitoba to protect Manitobans.

Child and Family Services Therapy/Counselling Services

Mrs. Myrna Driedger (Charleswood): Mr. Deputy Speaker, last week Winnipeg Child and Family Services supervisors were told by memo that their budget was depleted and further contracts for counselling children could not be entered into.

I would like to ask the Minister of Family Services if he could confirm today that his Government actually ordered a 10% budget reduction for counselling services, despite the fact that these are the most vulnerable children that his Government looks after.

Hon. Drew Caldwell (Minister of Family Services and Housing): This has been a steady drumbeat over the last few days. I tabled a letter yesterday in the House that confirmed the member was in fact in error in her assertions last week and earlier this week, something the member is noted for.

I will confirm that we as a Government are committed to producing and developing the best child welfare services in this country.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: The honourable Member for Charleswood, on a supplementary question.

Mrs. Driedger: Mr. Deputy Speaker, for a minister that is entrusted to look after vulnerable children, that was a flippant and arrogant

response. I would like to ask this Minister of Family Services if his Government ordered a 10% budget reduction for these vulnerable, vulnerable children who need counselling service? Did he order, did his Government order a 10% reduction in that budget?

Mr. Caldwell: The answer, Mr. Deputy Speaker, is quite clearly no.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: The honourable Member for Charleswood, on a second supplementary question.

Mrs. Driedger: I would like to ask this minister today whether or not he is going to guarantee that all of these children, who last week were told their services were cut off for counselling, if he will guarantee today that all of those children who need counselling in a timely manner will be able to get that counselling in a timely manner. Will he guarantee that today?

* (13:55)

Mr. Caldwell: It is a curious series of days with rhetorical flourishes from the member opposite. Of course, we on this side of the House are very concerned about child welfare in this province. That is why this Government introduced the Healthy Child Initiative. We are a leader in Canada as a government for promoting child welfare. That will continue. Children in this province—

Point of Order

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Point of order being raised by the honourable opposition leader.

Mr. Marcel Laurendeau (Official Opposition House Leader): Mr. Deputy Speaker, *Beauchesne* 417: Answers to questions should be as brief possible, deal with the matter raised, not provoke debate.

What was asked for was a guarantee from this minister for the service required by these children, these children that require services today. The previous minister would have already been on top of this issue, but this one who made the mistakes in Education is now doing it in Child and Family Services.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: On the same point of order, the honourable Minister of Family Services.

Mr. Caldwell: Mr. Deputy Speaker, I do not believe the member has a point of order. I was in the midst of answering the question. He was more interested in making political commentary.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Under the proceedings and rules of the House, when questions are asked the answers are expected to be responsive to the question, but in the matter of practice everybody knows that sometimes they do not do it. I have to tell the truth because everybody knows that.

The ruling is that the honourable opposition leader has a point of order.

* * *

Mr. Deputy Speaker: The honourable Minister of Family Services will continue.

Mr. Caldwell: The short answer, of course. The long answer is we are leaders in Canada. The short answer is yes.

Child and Family Services Therapy/Counselling Services

Mrs. Bonnie Mitchelson (River East): Mr. Deputy Speaker, this certainly is not an issue that members of the Government should be laughing about. This is a very serious issue that involves vulnerable children in Manitoba. We know the Minister of Family Services and the Government of Manitoba directed that there be a 10% cut in services to vulnerable children.

Will the Minister of Family Services today guarantee those children that they will receive the counselling they rightly deserve from this Government and his department?

Mr. Deputy Speaker: The question is put.

Hon. Drew Caldwell (Minister of Family Services and Housing): Mr. Deputy Speaker, I thank the Member for River East for her question.

I appreciate the concern the Member for Charleswood (Mrs. Driedger) and the Member

for River East have for this issue. They certainly expressed themselves eloquently here. This Government is absolutely committed through our record, through our deeds, our actions and words to the integrity of the child welfare system in this province and to provide children with the services they rightly deserve. The answer continues to be yes.

Mrs. Mitchelson: Mr. Deputy Speaker—

Mr. Deputy Speaker: First supplementary question.

Mrs. Mitchelson: Will the minister today guarantee that the cuts that were directed last week and in previous weeks will be reinstated for those children?

* (14:00)

Mr. Caldwell: Mr. Deputy Speaker, Thursday, Friday, Monday and Tuesday. Again members seem to not hear or not read what the executive director, the executive officer of Winnipeg Child and Family Services wrote and we tabled yesterday. There is no cut, there is no suspension of services, despite what members continue to put on the record. Clearly, the letter that was tabled yesterday by Winnipeg Child and Family Services indicates that. Members should just move on.

Ethanol Industry Status Report

Mr. Ron Schuler (Springfield): Yesterday, the minister told the House he has had discussions with ethanol producers and promoters in Manitoba. Can he tell us if his Government has commitments from these stakeholders? Are there plans to build large capacity facilities, and will they be built in time to offset our Kyoto obligations, as time is of the essence?

Hon. Tim Sale (Minister of Energy, Science and Technology): I thank the honourable member for the question.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I am sure all members will understand that before large producers of any kind make commitments in the order of hundreds of millions of dollars to build specific

plants they need a regulatory regime. We need to know where the federal government stands in terms of the ethanol subsidies. The American subsidies currently are about 22 cents a litre Canadian. The federal current subsidy level is about 10 cents a litre. If the Kyoto plan is to be successful in seeing E10 gasoline widely used in Canada then Canada needs to make that clear.

We also need to enter into negotiations with specific producers around the size of the plant, whether those plants are associated with feedlots or whether those plants are large stand-alones that are depending on export markets. We are in constant negotiations with at least three different suppliers.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: The honourable Member for Springfield, on a first supplementary question.

Government Initiatives

Mr. Ron Schuler (Springfield): In his discussions, has the Government been asked for incentives to help establish the ethanol industry, and can the minister tell this House what they might be?

Hon. Tim Sale (Minister of Energy, Science and Technology): Mr. Deputy Speaker, I think the member probably knows that most industrial manufacturers of ethanol in Canada believe they need a subsidy initially, and I say initially because the longer-term market I think will more or less look after that over time, in the order of 25 cents a litre. That is the approximate level that Saskatchewan is providing.

The industry people who have spoken with us indicate that is the range that would be required to make production affordable. It is somewhat lower than the American subsidy levels in total because Manitoba and Saskatchewan are extremely efficient locations in which to locate ethanol plants. That said, we are still at a stage of finalizing the panel's report so that we can complete our dialogue with Manitobans and particularly with those co-ops and other groups in the Russell, Beausejour, Dauphin and south Killarney area as to what would be the appropriate plans for their particular communities.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: The honourable Member for Springfield, on his second supplementary question.

Mr. Schuler: My question is: What level of commitment is his Government prepared to make, and has the Government discussed with the interested parties the possibility of taking a stakeholder position in these new ethanol plants?

Mr. Sale: Well, first of all, Mr. Deputy Speaker, the specific level of commitment would be a budgetary matter and that would be something I would obviously defer to Cabinet and to the honourable Finance Minister (Mr. Selinger), with regard to that specific issue.

In regard to the notion of equity, I think the panel heard many, many useful views on the question of equity. Farming communities, farmers specifically, expressed their interest in making sure that whatever Manitoba's plans were they included a significant role for equity on the part of producers. So that there would be a local stake the major manufacturers or refiners that we have spoken to have also indicated their interest in having equity from the communities in which their plants would be located. I think we are of one mind on that issue.

An Honourable Member: Mr. Deputy Speaker, point of order.

Point of Order

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Point of order being raised.

Mr. Marcel Laurendeau (Official Opposition House Leader): Mr. Deputy Speaker, if you do a check with the Clerk, you will notice that we are at question 8. The member has missed his opportunity.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: The honourable Leader had raised a point of order because the normal practice in the House is that the Government's question would be the sixth in the list after the honourable member for the Liberal Party had asked a question. Now we are on the eighth question so I am bound by procedure and practice to follow tradition. Therefore, I have to agree with the honourable Opposition House

Leader that we have to be consistent in our practices. The seventh question.

* * *

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Unless you have some other opinion. I welcome any other opinion. The honourable Opposition House Leader.

Hon. Gord Mackintosh (Government House Leader): Mr. Deputy Speaker, I usually would not intervene, but you have asked for further interventions although you have already made a ruling on this particular matter.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I would urge you to reconsider this approach, recognizing that the Member for River Heights (Mr. Gerrard) was not here today and there was a single question put by the Member for Russell (Mr. Derkach). So I would urge that the Chair have some latitude in recognizing the government members.

Mr. Laurendeau: We have been operating under this routine now since the new Government was formed in '99. I was able to count without having to keep notes and I am sure the members of the Government were able to count, or maybe they were not and that is where the problem is, but, Mr. Deputy Speaker, they were aware that Doctor Gerrard was not here, I mean the honourable Member for River Heights. They missed their number and you have already made the decision.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: The practices so far, as it had happened, the honourable Member for River Heights is always the cue for the Government to ask the question. It just so happened that in this particular instance today there is no such cue. Therefore, there are reasonable grounds for Government to miss the opportunity.

As a result of this I do not want to establish any new ruling or anything. I am taking the issue under advisement for further study.

*(14:10)

Elk Population Distribution—Minister's Direction

Mr. Deputy Speaker: In the meantime, I recognize the first one I put my eye on. The honourable Member for Ste. Rose.

Mr. Glen Cummings (Ste. Rose): Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Yesterday and the day before we have been accusing this Government of doing very little to help with the management of the tuberculosis potential outbreak in Riding Mountain National Park, but occasionally I believe the Minister of Agriculture does make decisions, and I would ask if she would tell this Assembly what recommendations she made regarding the dispersal of the last of the elk herds that were held in captivity at Riding Mountain.

Hon. Rosann Wowchuk (Minister of Agriculture and Food): Mr. Deputy Speaker, there have been elk held for some time in this province, ever since the previous government took the initiative to capture elk in Riding Mountain, and then we were restricted from disposing of those elk by CFIA.

Many elk had been put down but there were 260 elk that were being held until recently. Early in October, I believe, the CFIA gave approval. They gave a clean bill of health to these animals and when that clean bill of health was given those elk were dispersed. Those elk went to licensed elk farms in Manitoba.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: The honourable Member for Ste. Rose, on his first supplementary question.

Mr. Cummings: Mr. Deputy Speaker, on a new question.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: He wants to ask a new question.

Mr. Cummings: Mr. Deputy Speaker, the member managed to avoid answering what direction she gave for the dispersal of these elk. I would ask her again to indicate what her involvement was in the decision to disperse the elk.

Ms. Wowchuk: Mr. Deputy Speaker, the Province of Manitoba, the Government of Manitoba, has been holding elk for some time that were captured by the previous administration at a huge cost to the Province. So when we got a clean bill of health for the balance of the elk that we had, 260 elk, I gave the direction to the

department to dispose of those elk and have them distributed.

Those elk have gone to two licensed elk farms. They have been dispersed. I think the elk have gone. The elk have gone to Swan Lake and to Keeseekoowenin. They have gone to Aboriginals who signed agreements with the Province for capturing elk but had not been compensated as they should have been, and we are trying to address an outstanding issue left by the previous government.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: On another new question, the honourable Member for Ste. Rose.

Mr. Cummings: What direction did she give regarding the dispersal of these elk, or is she saying that she left where they went entirely to the discretion of the department?

Ms. Wowchuk: No, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I gave very clear direction to the department on the disposal of these elk. There were outstanding issues with First Nations who had agreements signed with the previous government and were not compensated for the elk they captured or the elk they were holding. We were trying to resolve an outstanding issue left for us by the previous government when they got the elk capture started. I asked the department to disperse these elk in a way that would help the Aboriginal people get started in the elk industry.

Surely the Opposition does not oppose the Aboriginal people being involved in the elk industry when it was they who asked the Aboriginal people to be involved in the capture.

Mr. Cummings: New question, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: The honourable Member for Ste. Rose, on the fourth new question.

Mr. Cummings: Mr. Deputy Speaker, this minister says she gave clear direction. Did she in fact give direction that they be disposed of to those particular individuals or groups that are holding them? Is she not aware there are a number of other Aboriginal communities that are prepared to become involved?

Ms. Wowchuk: Mr. Deputy Speaker, the agreement the previous government signed was with the Manitoba First Nations Elk and Bison Council. That is who they signed the agreement with. That is who the elk went to and the Manitoba Elk and Bison Council made a decision as to which location the elk should go. They signed an agreement with the Elk and Bison Council. The Elk and Bison Council made the decision on where the animals should go.

Mr. Cummings: On a new question, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: The fifth new question.

Mr. Cummings: Mr. Deputy Speaker, I am not counting at the moment because I am particularly disturbed that the minister a moment ago said she directed that they go to those two sites. Now she says somebody else made the decision. Which was it?

Ms. Wowchuk: Mr. Deputy Speaker, the agreement that was signed by the previous government was the Manitoba chiefs on behalf of the Manitoba First Nations Elk and Bison Council. Those were the people who had the agreement signed with the previous government.

We were trying to resolve an outstanding issue. When the elk the Government was holding got a clean bill of health we came to an understanding with the Elk and Bison Council who then made a decision to disperse the elk. The elk were dispersed at two locations that are licensed elk farms.

I just have a hard time with this member. It appears this member, although he was prepared to sign an agreement with First Nations to capture elk, he is opposed to First Nations now participating in elk ranching. If that is your opinion, tell us.

Mr. Cummings: Mr. Deputy Speaker, on a new question.

This minister knows full well that I signed the agreement with Western Region Tribal Council. I asked the question: Did she direct where they were going? She said yes and then she said, oh, no, it was not me, it was somebody

else. I want her to put it on the record. Did she give any direction on the distribution of these elk?

Ms. Wowchuk: I guess I will answer the same question again. The contract was signed with Manitoba First Nations Elk and Bison Council. That is who he signed the contract with when he made the decision to capture elk, even though the federal government advised him against capturing elk in Riding Mountain because there was a risk of TB in them. He made the decision.

We are trying to correct the issue. When those elk were given a clean bill of health they went to the Manitoba Elk and Bison Council and the Elk and Bison Council made the decisions as to where the elk should go. The elk are at two licensed facilities.

Again, I am assuming the member is now implying that First Nations should not be involved in elk ranching and that is why he is raising these.

Mr. Cummings: Mr. Deputy Speaker, the minister—

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Is this a supplementary or a new question?

Mr. Cummings: New question, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: New question.

Mr. Cummings: There are two First Nations in my constituency that also elk ranch. I am asking this minister if she made a recommendation or made a decision to encourage the distribution of these elk before they were handed over to the Manitoba Aboriginal elk producers.

Ms. Wowchuk: Mr. Deputy Speaker, that may have been the way the previous government interfered when it came to these kinds of issues but I can tell you that if he is asking whether I interfered the answer is no. The elk were transferred to the Manitoba Elk and Bison Council. I can tell the member that I was not even aware of the location of the distribution until the distribution was complete, which was at the end of November.

* (14:20)

Mr. Cummings: Mr. Deputy Speaker, on a new question.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: On a new question.

Mr. Cummings: Because on this side of the House we have a significant amount of distrust of the answers that we are receiving from this minister and her involvement in the handling of the development of the elk industry in this province.

My question to her again, when she, first of all, provided information to the House, she now says she was unaware. She was certainly aware of the problem in Riding Mountain National Park when she made the decision to disperse. Is she saying she decided to disperse those elk at the very time that herds adjacent to them were being tested for possible contamination?

She tried to make an issue that this was not an important issue. She has not chosen her option to put a double fence around the compound where those elk came from.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: I did not hear any question, so there is nothing to answer.

Ms. Wowchuk: Mr. Deputy Speaker, thank you for that. I guess the member was using this time to make a member's statement perhaps, but I would question the member's motives here when he is saying we should not have dispersed elk when it is the federal government, CFIA, that has the responsibility to clear the status of this herd. These herds were held for over two years. It was CFIA that gave the clearance on these animals.

Now the member is talking about double fencing around elk farms. I am surprised if that is the area where the member thinks how elk farming should be done. Why did his government not put those regulations in place when they started the industry?

They started the industry. There was no demand for double fencing then. Suddenly he has changed the rules.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order, please. I have not recognized the honourable member. I have to remind that every member of the House should be mindful of the fact that Question Period is putting a question and giving an answer. It is not an occasion for debate. There is a specific forum for debate.

If we use the Question Period debating an issue, that is contrary to the spirit of Question Period. If I see occasion when there is not even a question, and there is no question, there being no answer, and people are still taking the floor, there is a looseness of procedure in this House.

I do not know how many independent questions a member can ask. That is still open for us to make the necessary rules, but in the meantime there are no rules. I recognize the Member for Ste. Rose.

Mr. Cummings: Mr. Deputy Speaker, certainly we appreciate how difficult it is to have control in this Chamber from time to time.

On a new question to the Minister of Agriculture, I am trying to ascertain what knowledge she had and what involvement she had in the distribution of the elk, because it is very unusual that two hundred and some elk would be distributed to two locations in this province and that they would be moved at the very time when the beef industry in that part of the province feels threatened.

I am asking the minister to acknowledge that she made that decision with the full knowledge that there was a potential outbreak of TB near that herd when they were dispersed. Does she know that or not?

Ms. Wowchuk: Well, Mr. Deputy Speaker, these elk that we are in discussion on were captured by the previous administration at a time when they were advised by CFIA not to do a capture because there was a risk. He was the minister at the time; he made the decision to capture. We inherited the issue and have been working at it since we have taken office.

This fall we got a clean bill of health on the 260 elk that were being held at Inglis. When we got that clean bill of health, TB-free status, the

elk were transferred to the Manitoba First Nations Elk and Bison Council. The Elk and Bison Council made a decision as to where they would move those elk, because they now belong to the Manitoba elk and bison foundation. That is who owns them.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, the member is talking about TB in the area. Cattle are being tested and the elk were tested. The elk have a TB-free status and have the ability to move them. Surely the member does not think we should continue to hold and feed these elk at public expense because he captured them when they should not have been captured.

Mr. Cummings: Mr. Deputy Speaker, on a new question.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: On a new question.

Mr. Cummings: This is getting sillier and sillier on the part of the minister.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order, please. The honourable Member for Ste. Rose shall put the question.

Mr. Cummings: Mr. Deputy Speaker, this minister now tries to switch the issue to whether or not the elk should have been caught. The issue is what involvement and what knowledge did she have about the distribution of those elk. *[interjection]* The chirping across the way says that the CFIA cleared them. The fact is there is a known problem in the area where they were being held.

Why would she fly in the face of the people in the community who were concerned about the possibility of those elk having a cross-fence recontamination? Will she say whether or not she had any knowledge of that?

Ms. Wowchuk: Mr. Deputy Speaker, I would ask the member why he flew in the face of the advice that he was given by CFIA not to capture elk in the Riding Mountain. That is the advice he was given. He chose to not listen to it. So it was okay for them.

We have not gone against the advice of CFIA. CFIA has monitored the herds very closely. CFIA has given the TB-free status.

I can tell the member as well that my department and the Department of Conservation, along with the Manitoba Cattle Producers and Parks Canada and others, are working to address the issue of the elk herd and TB in the region. There has been a plan put in place and we are working on it.

We are not turning a blind eye to it, as the previous government did, because they did absolutely nothing. They did absolutely nothing when they knew there was a risk of TB. All they did was capture elk and then bring them into the areas where there was cattle as well. So let them not throw stones.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: The time for Question Period has expired.

Mr. Speaker in the Chair

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

International Day of Disabled Persons

Mrs. Myrna Driedger (Charleswood): Mr. Speaker, I would like to bring to the attention of the members of this House that today, December 3, is the International Day of Disabled Persons. In 1992, the United Nations General Assembly proclaimed this day as a means to increase the awareness and understanding of issues facing people with mental and physical disabilities and to mobilize support for practical action at all levels by, with and for persons with disabilities.

This morning, in our own city, the Independent Living Resource Centre held a launch to commemorate the International Day of Disabled Persons. The honourable Member for Kirkfield Park (Mr. Murray), along with the Member for River Heights (Mr. Gerrard) attended the important event, but unfortunately the Minister responsible for Persons with Disabilities (Mr. Caldwell) could not find the time to show his respect for this province's worthy individuals whom he represents.

* (14:30)

The theme of this year's observance of the International Day of Disabled Persons is independent living and sustainable livelihoods. This

topic reflects the increasing integration of persons with disabilities into all facets of society, including work, recreation and community life. Policies and strategies to bring persons with disabilities into the social and economic mainstream are increasingly recognized as superior, both economically and socially, because they focus on strengthening people's capacities, thus increasing their economic self-reliance and integration while decreasing their dependence on social services.

Manitobans with disabilities are increasingly acknowledged, and rightfully so, for their valuable contributions to our province and country. Their important skills and strong commitment to the communities in which they live serve as a benefit to each and every member of society. Fortunately, Manitobans are increasingly recognizing people's abilities before perceiving their disabilities and encouraging the participation of those with disabilities in all aspects of life and society.

I would like to take this opportunity to congratulate all persons with disabilities on this important day of recognition and appreciation for all that they provide to our province and country. I would also like to extend my gratitude to all those involved in working to promote understanding of the issues facing persons with disabilities and to ultimately uphold the equality of all human beings. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Independent Living Resource Centre

Ms. Bonnie Korzeniowski (St. James): Mr. Speaker, this morning I had the pleasure also of attending the open house at the Independent Living Resource Centre's new office space in Portage Place, as well, on behalf of the Premier (Mr. Doer), which I was only too happy to, since I had met many of them when I attended their AGM in St. James. The event was held today to recognize and celebrate the United Nations International Day of Disabled Persons.

The open house today launched ILRC's year-long awareness campaign, entitled "Untapped, Untold, Unlimited—Independent Living, Building a Better Canada for Everyone". I was very impressed with the new premises and the variety of services the centre offers.

The ILRC, which first opened in 1984, is operated for and by people of all ages and types of disabilities and works to promote full integration into the community.

Mr. Speaker, the ILRC distributes information on services offered by other agencies and reacts to gaps in existing programs by implementing pilot projects that will eventually be continued by appropriate community organizations. The ILRC's unique delivery approach to services is flexible and custom designed to meet the needs of the individual.

I was particularly impressed with the presentation by the Kids on the Block, an educational troupe of puppets that teaches young audiences about what it is like to have a disability. These puppets encourage children to accept differences in others, a critical step in changing society's attitudes towards the disabled in the future.

I also met Connie Elcomb, a talented artist, who painted the mural in the ILRC's office space.

I want to thank the ILRC for the invitation to their open house today. The work the ILRC does is invaluable to the community, and it is impossible to underestimate the impact that their efforts have on the lives of Manitobans with disabilities.

I want to congratulate the ILRC on their new offices in Portage Place and wish them continued success in the future. I was also very pleased—

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Princess Patricia's Canadian Light Infantry

Mrs. Heather Stefanson (Tuxedo): Mr. Speaker, on December 1, I had the pleasure of attending the presentation of the Commander-in-Chief's Unit Commendation to the Second Battalion Princess Patricia's Canadian Light Infantry.

The Right Honourable Adrienne Clarkson, Governor General, presented the 2PPCLI with a special unit commendation at an inspiring

ceremony at the Winnipeg Arena. The 2PPCLI soldiers received the Governor General's commendation for the courage and skill they displayed in a battle at Medak Pocket, Croatia, in 1993. The troops were in the former Yugoslavia as peacekeepers deployed on Operation Harmony, a United Nations operation in the region.

Although the mission assigned to the 2PPCLI was to implement the latest cease-fire agreement between Croatian army troops and Serbian regular forces, the soldiers became the targets of the Croatian army, who in an attempt to stop the Canadian advance, opened fire with machine guns, mortars and artillery. For the 15-hour duration of that battle, the Canadian soldiers were forced to draw upon their war fighting skills in order to protect not only themselves but also innocent civilians who were just beyond the front lines. As the Canadian troops drove the Croatian forces back, they limited injuries to themselves, while forcing a stop to the horrendous practice of ethnic cleansing, thus saving hundreds of lives.

Although they showed great bravery and orderliness on the battlefield, the greatest demonstration of military professionalism and discipline came after the confrontation was over. Following the retreat of the Croatian army, the Canadian Forces immediately reverted to their role as impartial peacekeepers, a significant feat considering just moments before the Croatians had attempted to kill them.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to take this moment to congratulate the members of 2PPCLI for receiving the Commander-in-Chief's Unit Commendation. Without their valour, courage and diplomacy many innocent lives would have been tragically lost. To all the troops of the 2PPCLI, thank you. We salute you.

Flin Flon Mall

Mr. Gerard Jennissen (Flin Flon): This is the first opportunity I have had to bring to the attention of this Legislature a much anticipated event which occurred at 8 a.m. on November 14. That event, which I had the pleasure to attend, was the grand opening of the huge Wal-Mart store in the city of Flin Flon. Simultaneously, the

McDonald's restaurant within the store celebrated its grand opening.

The large empty lot beside the Victoria Inn is empty no longer. After 30 years, the first phase of the Flin Flon Mall is a reality. The new businesses located there now and the new or relocated businesses that will be there in the future will draw shoppers from all over the region. This means more jobs for Flin Flon. This means more choice for northern shoppers.

When my wife and I visited the new mall last Saturday, we met shoppers, not only from Flin Flon, Creighton and Denare Beach, but also people from Cranberry Portage, Sherridon, The Pas, Snow Lake and communities in north-eastern Saskatchewan. This mall will continue to grow, continue to service the entire region and will be an important economic boost for Flin Flon.

I thank all three levels of government for working so hard to make phase 1 of the Flin Flon Mall a reality. Special thanks go to Mayor Dennis Ballard, City Council, the staff of City Hall, particularly Director of Operations Kevin Komarnicky, the Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs (Ms. Friesen) and Deputy Minister Marie Elliot.

Last, but not least, I would like to thank the developer, Kraft Construction, and more particularly, Henry Rattai, whose vision of making the Flin Flon Mall a reality never wavered. We thank all those who made phase 1 of the Flin Flon Mall a reality. All of us look forward to the phase 2 expansion of the Flin Flon Mall. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Air Ambulances

Mr. Leonard Derkach (Russell): I rise in this House today to raise an issue regarding the air ambulance for Manitoba. The Pasieczka family is left with many unanswered questions and frustration about the lack of compassion, understanding and support from the Minister of Health (Mr. Chomiak) and this Government in the complete and unexpected circumstances surrounding the premature birth of their baby daughter, Adriana.

The Government jet, which doubles as a medivac, is used for medical emergencies as a

priority. It is the same plane that is used for flying ministers and the Premier (Mr. Doer) anywhere in Canada or North America. Why, then, is there a double standard here when it comes to the transportation of people who require a specialized mode of transportation to get a very sensitive and very seriously ill or in this case a newborn baby back to the province of Manitoba?

Mr. Speaker, I ask the Government when it is going to show some compassion and understanding for situations like this and change a policy which is outdated from allowing ministers and the Premier at taxpayers' expense to fly anywhere in Canada and in North America, at the same time not allowing this plane to be used for a very serious medical situation where the family was prepared to pay for the cost of transporting that child back to this province using the air ambulance.

This minister oftentimes blasts the American system. I remind him that it was an American jet that flew this baby back to our province, an American jet whose firm said: We will cut the costs by two-thirds as a compassion shown to this family, to bring this family back to this province.

I think the Minister of Health should be ashamed of himself. This Government should be ashamed of itself for doing what it did to a Manitoba family and to a young Manitoba child who was born outside of this country.

* (14:40)

ORDERS OF THE DAY

GOVERNMENT BUSINESS

House Business

Mr. Speaker: Order. If members wish to have a conversation, they can do it in the loge or out in the hallway. I have to be able to hear the Government House Leader for government business.

Hon. Gord Mackintosh (Government House Leader): Mr. Speaker, would you canvass the House to see if there is agreement for the House to set aside consideration of the Throne Speech tomorrow, Wednesday, December 4, to consider

government business, specifically Bill 2 and condolence motions?

Mr. Speaker: Is there agreement for the House to set aside consideration of the Throne Speech debate tomorrow, Wednesday, December 4, 2002, in order to consider government business, specifically Bill 2 and condolence motions? Is there agreement? *[Agreed]*

ADJOURNED DEBATE (Fourth Day of Debate)

Mr. Speaker: Resumed debate on the proposed motion of the honourable Member for Selkirk (Mr. Dewar) 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 Lac du Bonnet (Mr. Hawranik) who has 35 minutes remaining.

Mr. Gerald Hawranik (Lac du Bonnet): Mr. Speaker, I again welcome the opportunity to continue debate on the Throne Speech and to continue where I left off yesterday.

I would like to extend congratulations to the recipients of the Queen's Jubilee award winners from our constituency. In fact, we have six recipients from Lac du Bonnet constituency in total.

Karen Dudeck, who lives in Tyndall, is a tireless volunteer. She was involved in organizing the Taking Pride Days in Tyndall. From the beginning of the Taking Pride Days, she took control and, in fact, organized the entire festival and has done so for a number of years already. She is involved, of course, in fundraising events for the Tyndall Community Centre. Now that Tyndall and Garson are in the process of amalgamating, she has been involved as a volunteer helping both communities, both Tyndall and Garson. She has also taken a very active part in the Home and School Association in Garson.

June Kotchon, who resides in Garson is a tireless volunteer in the Garson area. She is a real asset to her community.

Anton Ottenbreit, whom I know personally, last year was 101 years old. He is a consummate

volunteer and a community pioneer and a member of St. Mary's Roman Catholic Church, where I attend church with my family.

Carl Sabanski, who resides in Pinawa, is the founder of the Pinawa Suspension Bridge and the Pinawa Sundial Project and the Pinawa in Bloom Festival. He has worked tirelessly for his community as a volunteer. Barb Sabanski, his spouse, is also a volunteer, so it really becomes a family volunteership in that community. She, in fact, has been involved from day one in the Lac du Bonnet and area food bank and other community activities in Pinawa and in Lac du Bonnet.

Ken MacMaster, has the distinction of being the 50th Golden Jubilee Award winner but he was also the 25th Jubilee Award winner. He has been a volunteer for the fire department in Bird River, and he has worked with the Lac du Bonnet community centre in fundraising activities, ensuring that the project was funded a few years ago. In fact, he was the Member for Thompson for the Progressive Conservative Party a number of years ago as well.

Gordon Emberley, the next volunteer, lives in Lac du Bonnet. He was instrumental in establishing the Western Canadian Aviation Museum and, in fact, received the Order of Canada a number of years ago for his work with the Canadian Aviation Museum. He also works tirelessly with heritage groups in Lac du Bonnet.

They are all consummate volunteers. They all made their communities a better place to live, to work and to raise our children. All have said in their acceptance speeches when they were given their award that they are humbled. They also thanked other community volunteers within their community in helping them accomplish their objectives.

Volunteers create an identity for each and every community in which they live. The identity that each of those volunteers created for their community was one of compassion, caring and community spirit. For that I thank them.

I would also like to congratulate the new councils in the constituency and the school board trustees. They all face new challenges. I believe

that everyone who was elected was very capable. They are community-minded people. They are all volunteers. I would congratulate all of them and wish them the best of luck in their next four years in municipal government and the next four years as school board trustees in the Lac du Bonnet constituency.

I would also like to thank all council members and trustees, reeves and mayors who decided not to run again and those, of course, who ran but were not successful. I would like to thank them for all their hard work and the dedicated service to their communities. I believe they made their communities a better place to work, to live and to raise their children.

I think it is important when doing a debate on the Speech from the Throne not only that we talk about what was in that Throne Speech, but in fact, what was not in that Throne Speech. That, I think, is where I would like to focus a little bit of my debate, in terms of what was not in that Throne Speech.

I think I would like to refer to an article written a number of days ago by Tom Brodbeck of *The Winnipeg Sun*. I think he put it quite succinctly when he wrote an article in terms of what the Throne Speech did not say.

The NDP's idea of fiscal management, I think, is about spending more money. It is not about efficiency. It is not about competition. It is not about streamlining programs to get the best value for your dollar. Instead, I think it is more about monopolies and spend, spend, spend. They have had a great deal of spending money. They have had a great deal of spending money since taking office. I think the biggest windfall has really come from the federal government.

The federal government takes responsibility and should be taking responsibility for giving more money to the provincial government to spend. After years of declining transfer payments from Ottawa in the 1990s, when the current Government came into power, the transfer payments from the federal government started to skyrocket. In 1998 to 1999, the last fiscal year of the previous government, the PC government, the total transfers from Ottawa were \$1.6 billion. In 1999, the first year that the

current Government took office, federal transfers soared to \$2.1 billion. They were \$500 million higher than the previous year. They have increased every year since and are projected to come in at about \$2.4 billion this year.

The NDP has \$800 million more a year to spend from Ottawa than the former administration in the last year of government. That is enough to run the departments of Justice, Transportation, Conservation and Agriculture all combined. If you add in more than a hundred million dollars in new money being taken from Manitoba Hydro, you can see why it has been a cakewalk for the current Government to balance the books, despite massive spending increases.

But there could be trouble. There could be trouble on the horizon. Manitoba's economy has gone into collapse, I believe, since the NDP took over, it has not gone into collapse, but there are some discouraging signs, and I think they ought to take notice of those signs.

Manitoba's employment growth last year was only half the national average. Private investment in Manitoba is down. After a decade of improvements in interprovincial migration, Manitoba is losing more people every year, again to other provinces. One of the reasons we have a low unemployment rate, I believe, in Manitoba is that so many people are leaving. Manitoba's big challenge in the 1990s was to clean up its books and to diversify its economy, and I think that is what was done in the 1990s. The next step for the province is to become more competitive and to attract more capital to bolster our economic output, create higher paying jobs and stop the exodus of skilled workers. I believe the current Government has failed miserably at that because they do not know how to do it. They talk in circles about industries we already have, such as Manitoba Hydro, but if you listen carefully, you will hear no specific plan on how to attract new businesses.

* (14:50)

We always hear about Manitoba's economic growth, the gross domestic product. They say that it is equal or better than the national average, but actually that is just the percentage

the economy grows from one year to the next. What you rarely hear is the fact that for the past 20 years, Manitoba's per capita GDP, which is our economic growth based on our population, has been well below the national average. Per capita GDP nationally was \$32,975 in 2001, and in Manitoba, it was only \$28,960, which means it is 12 percent below the national average. That gap has widened since the late 1990s. I think that is the real story, but you will not hear that story in the Speech from the Throne.

Manitoba is lagging in growth. The *Manitoba in Profile* report, released in early November of 2002 by the Canada West Foundation, shows that Manitoba's population is expected to grow at one third of the national rate over the next 25 years. The report also shows that an average of 5000 people leave the province every year. Is that something to be proud of? I do not think so. It is no small wonder why we have one of the lowest unemployment rates in the country. If you did not have a job and you did not have any prospects for a job, what would you do? I am sure you would leave the province. That is why we have so many people leaving, and that is why our unemployment rate is so low.

Economic growth is important to the Lac du Bonnet constituency. It is important that we create jobs and ensure that we keep our young people there, and important that we continue to secure the services that we currently enjoy, services such as health care services and education services. The Lac du Bonnet constituency is really a reflection of the entire province itself. We have everything the province has. We have rich agricultural land for farming. We have rivers for power generation. We have lakes for recreation and tourism. We have forests for pulp and paper and lumber. We have peat for harvesting and also we have minerals for mining. We have all of that, and yet, we have really failed to grow substantially in the last 20 or 30 years.

Why is that? Well, one of the problems is that Atomic Energy of Canada Limited is in the process of withdrawing from our communities. It just does not affect the community of Pinawa. It affects the communities of Lac du Bonnet, Whitemouth, Beausejour, Pine Falls, Powerview. It affects all our communities, and what

they have done is they have begun to withdraw from our community and withdraw the jobs that are there and transfer them to Ontario. We fail to grow because of that, and we need to replace those jobs with other important jobs in our community. But we do have one resource, I think, that counts above all this in the constituency, and that is the people in Lac du Bonnet constituency and their entrepreneurial spirit. I think that will, hopefully, pull us through.

Some recent exciting developments in the constituency, which I believe will create economic growth, and I want to go through them all in terms of the area from which these developments are occurring. First, the Pine Falls-Powerview area. Both of those communities, in fact, are discussing merger. They are not talking about a forced merger. They are talking about a voluntary merger, a merge of those two communities into one economic unit, into one political unit, into one community, and I think it is good for those two communities. I believe it will help them to attract industry, businesses and jobs for their community, and I support that merger.

Another development is the sawmill that is proposed by Tembec in Pine Falls. They have put that on hold at this point, as I understand, because of the softwood lumber dispute between Canada and United States, but once that is solved, I am assured by people at Tembec that they will be proceeding with that sawmill and, in fact, will create the needed jobs in that area, probably in the neighbourhood of 100 to 200 direct jobs in that community.

The road on the east side of Lake Winnipeg is an important initiative and I applaud the Government for, in fact, appointing Phil Fontaine, he is a very reputable person, to a committee that is studying the effect of the road on the east side of Lake Winnipeg and to ensure that the Aboriginal communities have a voice and have opportunities to give input in terms of the road on the east side of Lake Winnipeg.

In that area, we also need to improve Provincial Road 304. I have mentioned that road at least four or five times here in the Legislature to members opposite, and I will mention it again. I think Provincial Road 304 is, in fact, the

priority road that needs to be rebuilt in the constituency and the Government ought to look toward rebuilding that road in the near future. Provincial Road 304 connects Provincial Trunk Highway No. 11 and Provincial Trunk Highway No. 59 in a southerly direction from Powerview. Eight or nine years ago, that road was rebuilt to within about 10 kilometres of Powerview. The balance of that road needs to be rebuilt. It does not have any shoulders. It is in terrible condition. It is just in terrible condition, and it really presents a hazardous situation for the travelling public, for the people who are in Powerview, Pine Falls, St-Georges and people north along 304 in Manigotagan and Bissett, when they have to travel to Winnipeg or to Selkirk for goods and services for their community.

I think what compounds that problem is the fact that many of the pulp trucks, lumber trucks and transport trucks which service those communities travel Provincial Road 304, and, of course, so do the travelling public in those areas. It is a very dangerous road and a very dangerous situation. I think it needs to be remedied and rectified sooner rather than later. I would encourage the Government to rebuild that road as soon as possible. I will continue to push for Provincial Road 304 to be rebuilt.

The area needs sewer and water infrastructure in the Rural Municipality of Alexander. Everyone has the right to a clean water supply. I believe the people in the R.M. of Alexander have waited much too long for that service. I support them in their project and I commend them in their efforts, particularly the Rural Municipality of Alexander, in attempting to get Canada-Manitoba infrastructure funds. I support them in their venture and I support them in their application, and I will continue to do so.

The town of Lac du Bonnet and the Rural Municipality of Lac du Bonnet is really in a new era of co-operation and regionalization. They received a new mayor in Rod Demoline for the Town of Lac du Bonnet and a new reeve in the R.M. of Lac du Bonnet by the name of Don Halbert. They are very community-minded people. In fact, when I attended the all-candidates meeting in Lac du Bonnet, I heard both of them say that they want both the town and the Rural Municipality of Lac du Bonnet to

co-operate and to form one region to attract industry and business to their area to create jobs and needed growth for their area. I was very encouraged by that. I believe they will take reasonable steps and appropriate steps to achieve that end.

They realize they need to construct an industrial park for the area in order to attract industry and they need, of course, to set up a development corporation, which would be independent from the town and rural municipality and to develop a strategy to develop I think their most obvious resource, which is their tourism potential, considering the fact that, of course, they have got the LaVerendrye Trail going right through Lac du Bonnet.

Pinawa is another community in Lac du Bonnet constituency. It was the community that was hit hard the most in terms of Atomic Energy of Canada when it decided to leave the area. It needs to attract new industry to their area and new business. They have incredible tourism potential in that area because of the natural beauty of that area. They still have, I believe, the scientific expertise to attract and hold new businesses, new businesses such as the laboratory for the study of world climate change which was announced by the Minister of Energy, Science and Technology (Mr. Sale). I thank him for the announcement that he is, in fact, in support of Pinawa's application for that laboratory. I wholeheartedly support that application. I will do whatever I can to assist the minister to ensure that happens in that community.

* (15:00)

The council of the LGD of Pinawa has an incredible challenge to ensure the future viability of their town, but I believe that they are up to that challenge. I have met with the council. I am impressed with their commitment and their attitude in terms of attracting business. I believe they are up to that challenge, and they are incredibly hard working. I will assist them wherever possible to achieve that goal, to attract more business and industry and more jobs to that area.

The Whitemouth-Seven Sisters-Elma-Rennie area, Whiteshell Provincial Park area is

incredibly beautiful and a picturesque area with tourism potential. The council of the R.M. of Whitemouth has a proactive municipal council which recognizes that it can grow from within. It needs to develop its local entrepreneurs to ensure growth, prosperity and jobs. That is the challenge. The challenge is to reverse the trend in loss of population. I graduated from Whitemouth School in 1970. At that time, there were more than 600 students attending the Whitemouth School. Today, just over 200 students attend that school. That is an incredible loss of population for that area.

There are a number of bright spots in the Rural Municipality of Whitemouth, not the least of which, of course, is the mix of council that they have today and the reeve that they have in Don Nichol. There are a number of developments that are worthy of mention. First of all, in Whitemouth, the South Interlake Credit Union is, in fact, building a brand-new building after the Royal Bank withdrew from the community. I think that is a very good sign. There have been several new housing starts in that community within the last few years. They have great entrepreneurs in that area. Dueck's Mechanical manufactures Diamond Shelters and ships them around North America and has developed a North American reputation for excellence in what they do. The Barkman family is involved in a hydroponic vegetable growing operation just outside Whitemouth. That is set for expansion and for increased employment opportunities for that area.

The Beausejour-Brokenhead area needs to be mentioned. It also needs to continue, I believe, to attract new industry, business and jobs to that area. They have an ethanol committee whose job it is to attract an industry in the ethanol business to ensure that they manufacture ethanol within our community. I believe that ethanol is a proper fit for the community. It has the workforce in our area. There is a workforce. There is the excess grain that is required to operate an ethanol plant. It is close enough to Winnipeg. It is near the market. It is near feed markets for the residue. It has railway trackage, and it also has grain handling facilities. Those are all elements that are required before you, in fact, establish an ethanol plant in any community. I think it has all the elements, and I

think it ought to be seriously considered in terms of when the time comes to locate a plant within Manitoba. I would like to thank Randy Bialek and Robert Small and Anupam Sharma and all the ethanol committee members for all their hard work that they have put forward in the last six months to a year.

Drainage is always an important issue within our constituency. Drainage is an important issue because a lot of water from the west and from the south and from the east comes through our constituency into the Winnipeg River and then into Lake Winnipeg.

It is an important issue because of the fact that we have a great deal of water flowing through our constituency. The industry that employs the most people in our constituency is still farming. The farming community is really being hard hit in terms of input costs. The input costs have increased, which are beyond their control. The commodity prices are low, and, of course, they have no control over commodity prices, so profits for farmers are being squeezed.

If you add to that drainage problems within the constituency, they have loss of crop and loss of inputs. I think drainage has to be looked at within our constituency. I know the Government has said in the past that they have increased the drainage budgets, but, in fact, the drainage budget with respect to drainage maintenance—drainage maintenance is what moves the dirt. If you do not move the dirt, the higher the back-flows, water does not move.

The drainage budget for drainage maintenance has really not increased over the last 20 years. Twenty years ago, it was \$4 million. Today, it is roughly \$4 million. We need to increase that drainage maintenance budget at least 2 times what it is today or 3 times what it is today, because we all know what \$4 million bought 20 years ago is not the same as what \$4 million will buy today.

There is a bright spot, though, I can tell you, in the Beausejour-Brokenhead area in terms of we do have proactive and energetic councils in Beausejour and Brokenhead. Beausejour and Brokenhead, of course, are the third fastest growing areas in terms of population in eastern

Manitoba over the last five years. I think that is a tribute to the councils that were there and a tribute to the councils that are here today.

The Tyndall and Garson area needs to be mentioned. Those communities are undergoing a voluntary amalgamation process which will be complete by the end of this year. They are involved with a sewer and water project to ensure there are sewer and water services throughout both communities. Really, that will ensure the growth of those two communities.

After the amalgamation, those communities will be larger than the town of Pine Falls and nearly the population of the town of Lac du Bonnet. I predict that those two communities will be the future growth centre in our constituency.

Health care is an important issue in our constituency. I know that NEHA, the North Eastman Health Association, has, in fact, made an announcement with respect to the possibility of building a new hospital, a new regional hospital for our area. In fact, in my maiden speech to this Legislature in April of last year, I mentioned the possibility of a new hospital, a regional hospital, and the fact that one was needed in our constituency. I am glad that NEHA has, in fact, taken notice and, in fact, has continued to support me in that regard.

It needs to be a regional hospital. The hospital that is being proposed would service the communities of the town of Lac du Bonnet, the rural municipality of Lac du Bonnet, Pinawa, Seven Sisters, Whitemouth, the Whiteshell area and the Nopiming Provincial Park area. So it is a large area that it needs to service. Currently, there is a hospital in Whitemouth, but it really has become a nursing home, a personal care home. Really, the function has changed over the years since when I was in Whitemouth.

As well, there is a hospital in Pinawa. NEHA understands and recognizes that that hospital needs major upgrades in order to maintain its hospital status and, in fact, has looked into the possibility of renovating or adding to it or replacing it. They have come to the conclusion, as I understand it, that it would be cheaper, in fact, to build a new hospital or

maybe cheaper to build a new hospital and to convert the existing hospital in Pinawa into a personal care home or other health care facility.

My concern is that it is built and that it does get built, not necessarily where it goes. I am committed to ensure that funding is, in fact, received by NEHA for the building of that hospital. My concern is that it is a regional hospital. My concern is not where it is built, in which community it is built. I know that people in Pinawa want the hospital to be in Pinawa. Lac du Bonnet wants the hospital in Lac du Bonnet, and Whitemouth wants the hospital in Whitemouth.

My only concern is that NEHA consults with all those communities and makes sure that the councils have input within each of those communities, that residents have input within each of those communities and that health professionals who work within each of those communities have input, whether it be the nurses or the physicians or whether it be the ambulance attendants or the fire department or the orderlies or the support personnel from hospitals. They all ought to have input. They all ought to be consulted as to where that hospital will be located. I am certain that if everyone is consulted and all the possibilities are put on the table, that those communities and the residents within those communities will come up with a very satisfactory solution. I leave it to those communities, and I leave it to NEHA to determine where that hospital will be built.

* (15:10)

Rural economic growth is important to our constituency. It is important because we need to ensure that we have services for our residents, services such as health care services, education services, agricultural services and so on. It is very important. In order to have economic growth, we need to have infrastructure. I have spoken about each of the communities and the infrastructure that they require, but they all require, of course, the usual services such as water, sewer services, roads, hydro, telephone service and natural gas.

I know during the spring session when we were in the Legislature, members opposite

introduced legislation which, in fact, was located in the Budget, that, in fact, increased the taxation on propane. They justified it by saying that the taxation on propane would be harmonized with the taxation on natural gas. They made light of the fact that it would only cost 12 or 13 or 14 cents extra to fill a propane tank for your barbecue, but that was not the point. That was not the point at all.

To a great extent, our rural businesses depend on propane for heating their businesses, for using it in industry and using it in their businesses. In fact, I was speaking to Peter Raymond at Papertown Hotel and the Manitou Lodge. They are located in Powerview and Pine Falls, and he owns both businesses. He told me that he now pays \$5,000 more for propane because of that increase in taxation on propane due to the Budget being passed by the current Government—\$5,000 more annually for propane because he does not have the luxury of hooking up to natural gas. There is no natural gas in Pine Falls and Powerview.

So he is being penalized to the tune of \$5,000 annually. Sometimes it is easy to say that, well, you are a business; you can pass it on to your customers. That is not the case quite often in rural areas. You cannot always pass that on to your customers. You are working and you are operating your business in a population that is limited and with a limited amount of traffic on the roads to your community. You cannot always pass it on to your customer.

This is the case not only with Peter Raymond in Pine Falls and Powerview, but this is also the case with all small businesses in rural Manitoba, all small businesses who depend on propane. What we have done is we have penalized small businesses in rural Manitoba by increasing the taxation on propane. I think what we ought to do is ensure that natural gas is available to these communities, so that they have the same benefits and the same opportunity as other businesses within our cities, cities like Brandon and Portage la Prairie and Winnipeg.

I believe in the education area that we need to match training with the industry needs in our province. We do not need to train people for jobs outside the province. Every day that I come here

from Beausejour going to the Legislature, I pass by Provincial Trunk Highway 15 and 12. At that intersection, Loewen Windows from Steinbach is advertising asking for skilled and unskilled labour because they cannot fill the jobs that they have, but we have an incredible untapped labour flow in Aboriginal people.

Aboriginals have incredibly high unemployment rates. Yet, as a province, we are not spending a great deal of money to train them for jobs. Instead, the province is looking to increased immigration to fill these jobs.

My challenge to the Government is to train our Aboriginal people instead to ensure that they lead productive lives through productive and meaningful jobs. More money has to go into Aboriginal training. They are unemployed to a great extent. They have incredibly high unemployment rates, and they are looking for those jobs. They are begging for jobs. We have an opportunity to fill jobs here in Manitoba with Aboriginal people if we increase money toward Aboriginal training and target them to jobs that are available in our province.

In the Throne Speech, the Government, in fact, said that we need increased immigration to help increase Manitoba's growth to increase our population—

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

Mr. Harry Schellenberg (Rossmere): Mr. Speaker, it is a pleasure and honour to speak to the Speech from the Throne. Before I say more, I would like to welcome the new pages to the Legislature. As a Canadian history teacher of many years, I wish you the very best, and I hope you have a great experience here. Maybe some day some of the pages here will take their place as an MLA in this Legislature or work in some other capacity in this Legislature.

I would also like to wish all the MLAs that are stepping down at the next election the very best.

3Mr. Speaker, I would like to take this opportunity to speak on the Throne Speech. The Throne Speech had focussed on many issues that were important to all Manitobans, such as health care, education, the economy, public safety,

modernizing the floodway, revitalizing our major cities, as well as protecting our environment.

Our Government, as it was first elected in 1999, began a new vision, a new agenda and has worked hard for the last three years to serve all Manitobans and to listen to their concerns. Our Government has kept the commitments and election promise it made in the last election in 1999. As I meet the Rossmere constituents and people across Manitoba, there seems to be an appreciation for the good work this Government is doing.

I am proud to be part of this Government because of the progress that has been made in many areas. The Leader of the Official Opposition says this Government is looking in the rearview mirror. I think, if we looked in the rearview mirror, all one would see is Tories far behind. Let me explain by using a metaphor or an example.

Tommy Douglas, about 50 years ago, began public medicare in Saskatchewan, which soon spread across Canada, and today in the 21st century the Tories want to privatize medicare and place health care back in the marketplace as it was over 50 years ago.

Mr. Speaker, our movement adopted public, accessible, universal health care over 50 years ago, and the Tories are far behind. If you look in the rearview mirror, all you see is Tories far behind. Our movement not only brought in medicare but also added Home Care, Pharmicare, personal care homes and many other initiatives that Canadians appreciate in the 21st century.

What programs have the Tories brought in? I really thought about that, and I really cannot think of health care programs that they brought in. Yes, I hear people across the way say that they will not privatize and so forth. They just go to the frills that they will do. That is just the beginning and afterwards, they will allow more people to come in and soon it will be in private hands.

Mr. Speaker, the Tory policies are policies of the past. They want to place health care in the

marketplace so their friends can make a profit, and all you hear is "contracting out." Those are the words of the Leader of the Official Opposition (Mr. Murray). Also, you hear the words "competition" and "privatizing." They are not offering reform but the policies of the past.

* (15:20)

An Honourable Member: I know you want a communistic state here.

Mr. Schellenberg: I hear my friend from Pembina speaking out, but we will have a discussion with him later on. I appreciate his comments.

Mr. Speaker, the years leading up to the 1990 election we had many quarrels or fights with health care workers. You know, they did fight with LPNs, with RNs, support staff, home care workers. You name it. I remember the time they wanted to privatize home care and the Home Care Coalition group came to northeast Winnipeg all you saw were hundreds of home care signs on private lawns. The opposition to privatize was so great the Government pulled back and the Health Minister had to resign. I remember it very clearly. I hear people from across the way. Home care is one example of what they wanted to privatize.

In fact, they went through quite a few Health ministers and they were not bad Health ministers. It was not the Health ministers. It was the policies of their government. Yet many of these Health ministers were out of tune with Manitobans, and people do not want policies of the past. People do not want policies of contracting out or privatizing or health care put into the marketplace. There has been real opposition and somehow they do not see it. They do not understand it. The opposition is there from the public. It is easy to read. Usually, they pick up these little cues. Usually, they are very sensitive to these things, but when it comes to privatizing health care and other things in our society, they are not very sensitive.

Contracting out or privatizing of health care would have to have the same effect on Manitobans as the sell-off of MTS. Rates have gone sky-high. Many people are paying much

higher rates than they once paid. I would like to point out two other Crown corporations that have served Manitobans very well: MPI and Manitoba Hydro. Both have very low rates, and we must do everything possible to make certain they do not go the path of MTS.

Mr. Speaker, I would just like to refer to Ontario for a moment. Ontario has also had their problems with Tories trying to privatize Hydro. Anyone who has visited Ontario recently knows it now has one political issue in Ontario: Power deregulation. I see some members opposite are looking at me, and they know that is true. The Premier of Ontario, Mr. Ernie Eves, has admitted it was a mistake and has even called off an early election.

Let me tell you what I read in the November 20, 2002, *Winnipeg Free Press* about hydro bills in Ontario. A bill of \$320 soared to \$800. A bill of \$100 went to \$400, and another bill for \$125 reached \$350. Also, many families had their hydro cut off because they could not pay their bills. Community clubs were also shut down because they could not pay their bills.

The present Premier of Ontario is now re-regulating hydro and providing rebates estimated as a total of \$500 million to hard-pressed consumers. In fact, the present Premier of Ontario is putting some distance between himself and Mike Harris and many issues like health care, education, he is changing. In fact, usually when there is an election approaching, the Tories sound very much like New Democrats, and then as soon as the election is over, they go back to their old ways.

We also know that Alberta faced the same hardships. There the government had to cushion the cost of deregulation with \$2 billion of government money. You would think people would learn from their mistakes, but that is not the way it is.

I would like to point out a few things that we have done in health care recently and also over the past three years. I am proud of our Government in health care. I am very proud of what the Minister of Health (Mr. Chomiak) has done in health care. Recently, our Government announced a new palliative drug Access Program

which will cost \$3 million and assist about one thousand Manitobans. This program will provide prescription drugs at no cost to the patients.

I would just like to give a few examples of what our Government does. The number of doctors in Manitoba has grown every year since our Government took office, reversing the flight of doctors in the 1990s. Also, almost three times as many nurses will be graduating this year than in 1999. Manitoba has more nurses per capita than Ontario, Saskatchewan, B.C. or Alberta. We have also created 500 new training spaces for health professionals, technicians, nurses, health care aides, therapists, doctors. Manitoba has been acknowledged as a leader in making progress on hallway medicine with its across-the-board strategy for managing emergency room services and streamlining access to home care.

The Health Sciences Centre will be getting state-of-the-art equipment and facilities and a \$100-million redevelopment, the largest such project in Manitoba history. Over 50 health care facilities have been expanded and modernized under our Government; 80 new ambulances distributed; 8 new CT scanners as well as new MRIs. We placed many of these outside the Perimeter at Brandon.

Those are just some of the things our Government has done in health care. The list is much longer, but I will leave it at that. I am proud of what we have accomplished in three years in health care. The challenges are great, but I realize more work has to be done, and it will be done.

The Government will continue to build health care. We will work with Ottawa and other provinces to implement the recommendations of the Romanow commission. We will continue building our health care system.

I would like to leave health care and move on to another topic. Our Government has made great progress in revitalizing the core of Winnipeg, Brandon and other places. That is recognized by many people in our community. The Neighbourhoods Alive! program has rebuilt many neighbourhood homes. As a result of this good work, homes have appreciated as much as

24 percent, according to reports from the *Winnipeg Free Press*.

People are beginning to move downtown on a permanent basis. As you drive through the downtown area, you will notice urban renewal. Let me give you some examples. The new Crocus Building on Main Street is a beautiful building. The new hotel at Main and St. Mary, and that is private, that is not public, private money has built that hotel; the new waterfront drive; the True North building that is being worked on. The Red River campus in the Exchange area is a model for many cities across Canada. It is supported by the business community, by the City and many other sectors in our community. The co-op retail store sells outdoor products at Portage and Donald, which is private. Mr. Speaker, when Hydro moves its headquarters to the downtown, that will again bring people and activities to downtown.

Many of these initiatives are the result of government policies. The private sector has confidence that the downtown is being revitalized, and the private sector is beginning to invest in business where for years it was a real desert for any activity. Today there is a vision for downtown, and our business community appreciates that.

* (15:30)

Mr. Speaker, I also point out that the city is being rebuilt because both levels of government are working together and not against each other. There is a real turnaround as far as downtown Winnipeg.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to take a global perspective on what has been happening in the economy. From members opposite, we hear one story, but I would like to point out a few things that have been happening in our economy.

Let me explain and show that Manitoba has a healthy economy: 2002 economic growth is projected to be above the national average; Manitoba was one of three provinces to achieve investment growth in each of the past three years; annual job creation since 1999 has doubled the annual rate of the prior 10 years; the lowest unemployment rate in Canada; college

and university enrolment is up 19 percent since 1999, but we need these skills for business; an 11% increase in apprenticeship training; the number of welfare recipients down to the lowest level in two decades; 24 000 Manitobans now paying no income tax due to three years of tax cuts; immigration to Manitoba is up 50 percent since 1999 to a high of four and a half thousand, and plans are out to increase it to 10 000, which is 1 percent of our population; property values are rising in Winnipeg, west and the North End, for the first time, the result of housing and renewal.

Mr. Speaker, our balanced budget and tax rates have also added to confidence and strength of our economy. Income taxes have been cut by 11.3 percent by the year 2003. Property taxes have been lowered by \$150 through the increase in education property tax credit. A corporate tax cut for 2003, first cut since World War II. We began to phase out the education support levy on property, and we paid down the debt by \$96 million each year. Our economy is quite healthy, and government has been very responsible in its fiscal management.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to say a few words about education. Everyone in the Legislature knows the good work we have done in education. For instance, our Government has given over \$100 million new funds for infrastructure, renewal and expansion in Manitoba's universities and colleges, \$60 million of bursaries. This indicates investment we have made in education, and our belief is in good education. We believe a good education is very important for a good economy.

As a teacher of many years, I am proud to be a part of this record of achievement. It is just great work. I could give you more examples, but I want to talk about building relations with people. I think we have done that in education. I know the Leader of the Official Opposition still has problems with certain education bills that we passed. He does not appreciate some of the legislation, but what he really is saying and his colleague is saying, that they are still anti-teacher and are still at war with teachers.

If you read his material, what he says, you can see that there is still this negative feeling towards certain working people.

It is still the same old Tory party that wants to keep working people in their place. By reading the alternative speech from the throne, we see the Tories are still working with policies from the past in education and health. To have a good educational system, you must have a good working relationship with people in the front lines. I could give you a little short story here, but I will maybe leave it.

An Honourable Member: Well, I would not mind hearing it, Harry.

Mr. Schellenberg: Well, okay, I have something here. I attended a CIP annual banquet last June at River East Collegiate. Several MLAs from the Legislature were there, trustees, superintendents, parents, students, and the former Minister of Education was there. I felt quite at home there because I taught there for many years. It was a fine evening where students were recognized.

As the evening was concluded, people stood around talking in small groups, visiting. I happened to be speaking to some teachers. They were not of my political persuasion, and they were discussing education policies and so forth. I introduced them to the Minister of Education then, and they had a great time. They later told me that meeting the Minister of Education was the highlight of the evening. What I am trying to say is that a relationship had been built up between our Government and people in the front line. I never expected them to say this. One former teacher, whom I knew very well, came to me, and he was not of my political persuasion, and he said it is just nice to be able to talk to people from the Legislature as equals. He went on to say more things, positive things, but that is what it is about. It is not just about giving the funds; it is about communicating, relationships, talking to others as equals. I am not saying that we will not fail at times.

An Honourable Member: That never existed before?

Mr. Schellenberg: The member across, it did not exist before? I think it probably did at times, but I am just saying—I am speaking about the present now—there is a good relationship. They know they made a mistake in education. I do not

want to go into it because I have some friends across the way. I do not want to offend them, but I will talk to them privately. Actually, they are pretty good people across the way. I have the problem of saying the way I see it, and I must be a bit careful at times.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to place some comments on the record concerning the Kyoto accord. I will move on from education. First, I want to point out the Tory policy on Kyoto, which is a policy to delay, and when we delay, we do nothing. This is the Alberta plan; it is not a Manitoba plan. Our plan supports investment in a Canadian clean-energy grid, with lower emissions, and creates 175 person years in jobs. We support coal and oil for the U.S., and we support low-impact hydro jobs for Canadians. Even Mulroney took a stand. One hundred countries are signed on, and 75 percent of Canadians want it, as well as our own task force. We know the effects if we do not implement the Kyoto plan, and I will not go into that because it has been mentioned in our Legislature.

The Tories, in their alternate Throne Speech, have made many promises. In fact, their list is lengthy, and they have added no cost estimates to any of your promises in the document. We are still waiting for those estimates. They keep asking us where are our estimates, but they do not give them, but if you add them up they do promise \$400 million. That is not including the large infrastructure commitment to clean up Winnipeg's water and sewer system.

I will not go over that whole list, because I think we all have it. I will conclude my remarks because there are other people here that want to get on the record, from both sides of the House, and address the Throne Speech. So I thank you, Mr. Speaker.

* (15:40)

Mrs. Heather Stefanson (Tuxedo): Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I would like to start off today by welcoming our new pages and interns to their new positions at the Manitoba Legislature. I hope they learn much and enjoy their experience here at the Manitoba Legislature.

I would also like to thank the members who have recently announced that they will be

retiring after their service at the end of this term. I would like to thank the members for Lakeside, Minnedosa, Morris, and the Minister of Labour for their dedication and commitment to representing their communities in the Manitoba Legislature over the years.

I would also like to thank the people of Tuxedo once again for their support and guidance over the last two years that I have had the opportunity to represent them. It is indeed an honour to be their spokesperson in the Manitoba Legislature. I want to thank them wholeheartedly for their support and guidance.

I also want to make mention to the recipients of the Queen's Jubilee medals that I nominated. They will be receiving these medals in the next short while. I just want to make mention to their outstanding commitments and contributions to our community. I first of all would like to mention Val Fraser, who has just been an outstanding volunteer in the community and in Winnipeg. Unfortunately, Mrs. Fraser recently passed away and will be unable to accept her medal, but I just want to say that on behalf of the members in the House, I want to extend my deepest sympathies and condolences to Jack, John and Lisa and the rest of the Fraser family on their tremendous loss.

Mr. Speaker, Val Fraser was an outstanding contributor to the volunteer community in Winnipeg. She is very deserving of this Queen's Jubilee Medal. She was most known for her commitment to the Winnipeg Art Gallery. She was the chair of the fantasy auction fundraiser gala for 10 years. She was the president of the board of governors for two terms. She was also more recently the chair of the Starry, Starry Night fundraising gala for the Juvenile Diabetes Research Foundation.

She played many, many other roles with the Winnipeg Art Gallery and will be sadly, sadly missed by all of those who had the opportunity to be able to work with her over the years. She also was on the board of governors of the Health Sciences Centre Research Foundation. She was a member of the board of governors of the Manitoba Centennial Centre Corporation, and she was a member of the members committee of the Royal Ontario Museum.

She was chair of several special projects as well in the community, Mr. Speaker, and beyond just our community. For the Royal Winnipeg Ballet she again was a member of the board of governors of the volunteer committee. She was a member of the board of governors of the Winnipeg Symphony Orchestra. She was the Centennial Ball co-chair and she was vice-president of the Manitoba Theatre Centre Curtain Raisers and chair of the children's theatre.

Val Fraser's commitment to the community has been absolutely outstanding. Again, she will be very sadly missed by myself and by other members who have had the opportunity to work with her over the years and many others.

Mr. Speaker, there are three other recipients of the Golden Jubilee medals. I would like to just give a little bit of background on these people as well. Deb McCreanor. Deb was chosen as a volunteer of the year in the constituency of Tuxedo for 2001. Along with caring for her family, working full time, she has volunteered her spare time for the past 16 years working with her community centre where she was president in 2001. She also worked for the parent-school council and numerous positions within the sport of curling both at the community and provincial levels. She has also held key positions for fundraising events, high school reunions, civic election campaigns, and, in 1999, was the transportation co-ordinator for the Pan Am Games. I want to congratulate Deb McCreanor for her outstanding commitment to the community.

The next recipient, Erin Friesen, was chosen as the youth volunteer of the year in the constituency of Tuxedo for 2001. Erin has volunteered her time since 1996 at the age of 12, I might add, at West Park Manor Personal Care Home, visiting and assisting residents in a variety of activities, Mr. Speaker. She also shares her volunteer time with the younger crowd by helping out at summer day camp for four- to seven-year-old children and has volunteered for a number of years at the Teddy Bears' Picnic. Erin teaches volleyball and has organized and led tournaments at the elementary school level. In her senior high school years, Erin has participated in numerous committees, planning

and working in many school events. I want to congratulate Erin Friesen on her outstanding commitment as a youth volunteer in our community.

The other recipient of the Queen's Jubilee Medal, Mr. Speaker, is Margaret Koniuk. Margaret has been an active grassroots UNICEF volunteer for over 10 years. She has served as treasurer for the Manitoba committee, Manitoba chairperson, national president fundraising, and national vice-president administration. She was elected president of UNICEF Canada in June 2000. Over the last decade, she has put in countless efforts for UNICEF doing everything from sleeping out on Main Street in 30 degree weather to meeting with political leaders in the Ukraine, from chairing a fundraiser with Roger Moore, to volunteering at Boo at the Zoo in our community. She has appeared on radio and television and at numerous speaking engagements.

In 2000, she inspected UNICEF projects in Kiev which supported street children, AIDS patients and the handicapped. She has represented Canada internationally at conferences in New York, Turkey and Finland. She has also lent her time to the Manitoba Council for International Cooperation, Beyond Borders, St. Ignatius Church and École Tuxedo Park. Margaret has been recognized by CGA Manitoba with their Sharing of Expertise awards. In private life, she runs her own financial planning business in Winnipeg. I just want to also extend my sincere congratulations to Margaret Koniuk for receiving the Queen's Jubilee Medal, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to now go into a few issues that are of concern to members of the Tuxedo community, some issues that have come up over the course of the last number of years.

I, first of all, would like to touch on the issue of the Kenaston Underpass. Mr. Speaker, the mayor recently agreed and made it part of his election platform to ensure that this underpass would be built. This Government, our provincial government, has been opposed to this initiative, quite frankly, for purely political reasons. I hope that this Premier (Mr. Doer) now sees the light and joins with the mayor, with representatives

on this side of the House and with people of southwest Winnipeg and beyond who are in support of this much, much needed project. I strongly encourage that this Government work with the mayor and work with the people in the community to ensure that this underpass is built and built as soon as possible.

Another issue concerning the residents of part of Tuxedo is the decommissioning of the Oak Point rail line. This rail line extends from Taylor to Academy Road along Centennial Street. This land has been used as a walkway for seniors and young family for some time now, as it has not been in operation for a number of years. These members of our community have grown accustomed, Mr. Speaker, to having the use of this land as green space and would like to be able to continue to use this land for their walks. I hope and encourage the civic government to maintain this land as green space and to ensure it remains accessible to the citizens of this area who use this land as a walkway. So I hope that they will continue to be able to do that.

*(15:50)

Another issue of concern to people in the Tuxedo area, Mr. Speaker, is what will happen with the land where the Kapyong Barracks is currently situated. I have been informed that the earliest that these troops will be moving from the space along Kenaston to their new home in Shilo will be in the summer of 2004. While we were happy that these troops, the plan is to keep them in Manitoba, we are very sorry that they will be leaving our community.

The Kapyong Barracks is home to the 2PPCLI, which I mentioned earlier in a private member's statement, Mr. Speaker, that these soldiers recently received the Governor General's commendation for their courage and skill they displayed in a battle at Medak, Croatia, in 1993. I again want to congratulate the 2PPCLI for their outstanding commitment to the community and to their country. The troops will sadly be missed, but we in Tuxedo will continue to salute these troops for the contribution they make to the safety of our communities and to the integrity of our country.

Many people continue to ask the question: What will become of the land? I have been told

by representatives of the federal government that the people in Tuxedo and indeed all interested parties in the lands will have ample opportunity to participate in a public debate about the issue. I look forward to these debates and to ensuring that the voices and the people of Tuxedo community are heard on this issue. We will work hard alongside the people of Tuxedo to ensure that any development that takes place on this land maintains the vibrancy, beauty and outstanding commitment to our community.

I would like to now, Mr. Speaker, go into some comments, some general comments on the Speech from the Throne. As our Leader said, and I will quote our Leader: If this is an election Throne Speech, then it is weak. I will put our Throne Speech up against the Premier's (Mr. Doer) any day.

Mr. Speaker, I really found in listening to this Throne Speech that it was a real sleeper. I question at this point in time if really our Premier was perhaps asleep at the wheel and some of his colleagues on the other side of the House. Imagine after only three years of government, and this Government has truly run out of new ideas in how to govern our province.

Perhaps this Premier should take some direction from our Leader who demonstrated that he and members on this side of the House are ready to govern. He introduced his vision in the recent alternative speech from the throne and some details on what we would like to do and implement if elected to government. I suggest that the Premier and other members opposite can learn from his visions and ideas for our province.

Mr. Speaker, there are a couple of stories that I would like to tell, and first off I find it just absolutely unbelievable at how many people are continuing to leave our province on a regular basis. This Government has talked about its immigration policy to increase the immigration here, but they have said absolutely nothing about keeping the people that we have here, retaining our people here in Manitoba, and I find that absolutely deplorable.

I want to tell a story of one of my best and closest friends who was recently headhunted by a company in Vancouver. They came in and they

absolutely made her an offer that she could not refuse, and it did not take much really. But what I want to say is that she is now gone. She has left our province. She was a very strong contributor to our volunteer community. She is a young person, 31 years old, that will be sadly missed by myself, by my family, by many, many volunteers in the community who she has worked with over the years, and I am sorry to see such a strong and vibrant person in our community has to leave this province in order to seek opportunities elsewhere, in this particular case, Mr. Speaker, in British Columbia.

By moving to British Columbia before the end of this year, she actually has the opportunity to file her income tax return in B.C., and by doing that, she will save \$8,000 alone over what she would have made here. I tell you, Mr. Speaker, \$8,000, I think we can all think of the wonderful things that we could do to spend that \$8,000 on in our community to make our community a better place to live and raise our family and make it more competitive. I mean, when I think about \$8,000, I think of things in terms of diapers and what this does in terms of putting food on my family's table. There are so many things that can be done, that we can spend in our community in order to help and nourish our families and to raise our families. I would have liked to have seen that my friend would have had the opportunity to spend that \$8,000 here in Manitoba as opposed to out in British Columbia. I think of the dollars that could be spent on even daycare and some of the things that affect our daily lives. I just find it so sad that we have to see her leave to another province. There are so many other stories I can tell of similar people who have left our province. The numbers are growing, and I find it very, very concerning that this provincial government has done nothing to retain our youngest and brightest here in our province.

I ask you, Mr. Speaker, how many more young people does our province have to lose before this Government recognizes the seriousness of this issue? I am tired of losing my friends to other provinces and indeed to the U.S. and to other countries where opportunities and hope for the future is there for them. We should have hope and opportunity for our young people here in Manitoba. It is for this Government I

encourage them to take immediate action to ensure that we keep our young people here in Manitoba, contributing to the vibrancy of our province and making it competitive on a national scale. I encourage this Government to do the right thing, to make us more competitive, to keep our young people here in Manitoba.

I also would like to talk a little bit about an article that we recently saw in the *Winnipeg Free Press*, Mr. Speaker, entitled, *More Tax Cuts: Not High on NDP Agenda, the Premier Says*. Mr. Speaker, I have to say that I am deeply offended by the comments that the Premier of this Province made by who I believe are three outstanding representatives of the business community in Manitoba. They represent hundreds of thousands of businesses here in our province, and to be treated with such disrespect, I think, is absolutely deplorable. Shelly Wiseman, Graham Starmer and Victor Vrsnik are, and in the case of Victor was—because I would like to point out the fact that Victor Vrsnik has actually left Manitoba to seek opportunity elsewhere, which I find is extremely unfortunate, and he should have had the opportunity to stay here and work and live and raise his family here in Manitoba, but I find it absolutely deplorable that this Premier would say such awful things about these incredibly intelligent and wonderful members of outstanding leaders in our community.

Mr. Speaker, I just want to quote what the Premier said from this *Free Press* article: Shelly Wiseman of the Canadian Federation of Independent Business has never run a business in her life, the Premier said. She is a spokeswoman. What does she own? The hallways of the Legislature are full of people who will never own their own companies. What company did the Manitoba Chamber of Commerce president, Graham Starmer, ever run? Victor Vrsnik of the Canadian Taxpayers Federation, what has he ever done? He represents a thousand people, a thousand people, for heaven's sake. This is the Premier (Mr. Doer) of our province, Mr. Speaker, talking about these people in such a disrespectful manner. I think it is just absolutely unbelievable.

* (16:00)

I would like to read for the House today a letter, an e-mail, that I received from Victor

Vrsnik this morning. This is a letter addressed—*[interjection]* Oh, well, I only have one copy, actually, so we can table it.

Mr. Speaker, it says:

Dear Premier, when the Premier of Manitoba launches an unprovoked attack on the Canadian Taxpayers Federation and other well-regarded organizations in Manitoba, he should at least get his facts straight. Contrary to what you say in the *Winnipeg Free Press* article entitled "More Tax Cuts Not High on NDP Agenda," the Premier says, December 2, 2002, the CTF is supported by not 1000, but actually 4000 members in Manitoba alone, and our supporter base is growing. Personal attacks on the credibility of the directors of the Canadian Federation of Independent Business, the Manitoba Chamber of Commerce and the Canadian Taxpayers Federation is unbecoming of the Premier and demonstrates disrespect also for the Manitoba individuals and businesses who support these groups. It is remarkable that you would single out for a tongue lashing organizations that refuse government funding but then have nothing to say for any of the groups that line up outside the Premier's office for a hand-out.

It was recently reported that your Government rewarded the left-wing Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives by buying a 15 000 subscription and a \$250 government membership. Apparently, the Premier's respect is earned by groups calling for more handouts and the higher taxes that support them. The Canadian Taxpayers Federation, however, cannot be bought. We pride ourselves on a policy independence that can only be maintained by refusing government funding. If the Premier's wrath is reserved for groups calling for an end to handouts and fewer taxes, then Canadian Taxpayers Federation knows it is doing a good job.

I just wanted to put that on the record, as that came across my desk this morning, Mr. Speaker.

I just think that the treatment of these individuals is absolutely disturbing and deplorable, and I hope this type of action, the Premier should apologize for his comments. I would

hope that he would apologize to these individuals personally and indeed to all Manitobans and all the people they represent.

I would like to now go on to talking a little bit about the Throne Speech and maybe making some general comments on what really was not there, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, let us talk about the economy. There is absolutely no commitment for further tax relief for Manitobans. Middle-income Manitobans remain the highest taxed west of Québec. People continue to leave our province for other provinces, as I already talked about earlier. Let us look at some of the Government's own numbers. What we have found in the most recent report that came out, entitled *Manitoba's Recent Economic Performance*, the net provincial migration, it says: In the first two quarters of 2002, interprovincial net out-migration was 1484 persons. The majority of Manitoba's net migration loss was to Alberta, Ontario and BC. Well, gee, I wonder why that is, Mr. Speaker? Perhaps because those areas of our country provide a competitive advantage to ours here. When will this Government stand up for Manitobans and encourage them to stay here and make our province competitive?

Mr. Speaker, on health care, the Premier spends more time looking back than he does planning for the future. He has placed all his hopes, all his hopes, on the outcome of the Romanow Commission and getting more money from the federal government. This Premier does not present a concrete plan for reducing waiting lists, and that is what Manitobans need, they need from this Premier and from this Minister of Health. By partnering the government-funded private clinics, the Premier could immediately reduce waiting lists for a number of procedures, but will the Government even look and will this Premier even look at this alternative. No. Why will they not do it? Because of their own ideological reasons for not doing it. This is not about politics. This is about patients. When will this Government stand up for the rights of the patients in our province. I would suggest, based on this Throne Speech, that they have no plan to do so.

On justice, this Government is clearly devoid of ideas on minimum sentencing for

assaults on police officers, addressing court backlogs or eliminating child prostitution. Most of the previous initiatives have been all talk and no action. I say shame on them.

On education, the Premier has practically been silent on the K to S4 education policy. They say nothing about class size and composition or special needs. Nearly half of 13-year-olds are not meeting expectations in math, and still this Government ignores the need for standards tests. Sixty percent of children entering Grade 3 are not able to add and subtract to 10. This Premier of this Government said that that is acceptable. Well, I say that it is not acceptable to have below standards for the students of our province. How is this providing hope for the future of our province?

On energy, most of what this Premier says here in the Speech from the Throne is recycled announcements. It is government driven with no strategy, no attracting major businesses to Manitoba to provide hope for our future. It is time for this Premier to provide Manitobans with a full cost analysis of Kyoto. They say they have a comprehensive assessment. I say table it. Let us see it. What are we afraid of? Perhaps a little bit of debate in the Manitoba Legislature? Are they afraid of debating us on this comprehensive assessment? Table it so we can at least engage in appropriate debate on the matter.

On rural Manitoba, there is absolutely nothing in the speech for farmers at all. Where is the hope for the future of our young farmers in this province? Clearly there is no plan, no vision and no hope for the future of our young farmers in rural Manitoba, who are the backbone of our economy.

On post-secondary education, there is never any talk about quality of education. I think that is absolutely deplorable, no talk about the quality of education and no vision to keep students here after they graduate, once again, no vision, no plan and no hope for the future.

I would like to just touch on a couple of things. Our leader had the vision to come up with an alternative Throne Speech. I think this is absolutely exciting. The fact that this Throne Speech is much more exciting than anything that

this Government has ever come up with in its three years I think is exemplary of the kind of leader that we have. I would say that there are a few things that our leader has talked about. One thing is that we will not let politics get in the way of quality, accessible patient care. We advocate a publicly-funded system that uses private components to better manage a system so as to provide better care for all Manitobans. Where does the NDP stand on this? They certainly do not stand on the side of the patients. It is absolutely unbelievable. They have no plan, no vision and no hope for the future.

Part of our commitment on health care that was released in the alternative throne speech is that we will release an annual health care accountability and transparency report detailing improvements and innovations in health care as well as challenges facing the system. Where does the NDP government stand on this? Nowhere, no plan, no vision, no hope for the future.

We will reduce waiting lists and preserve and promote the excellent health care services available outside the Perimeter Highway by increasing co-operation between rural and urban hospitals. Where does the NDP government stand on this? No commitment, no hope, no vision for the future of our province. We will establish a provincial wait list registry, so that patients can go on-line to find out waiting lists for specific procedures. Where does the NDP stand on this? Nowhere, Mr. Speaker. No hope, no vision for the future of our province.

* (16:10)

On justice, Mr. Speaker, let us talk a little bit about what our Leader's vision is for the future of our province under his leadership. He announced that he will increase resources to the Winnipeg Police Service, so more police are patrolling the streets. He announced that we will reduce the court backlog by contracting with private law firms to provide prosecution services on an as-needed basis. Our Leader will establish a safe house for child prostitutes. That is to name just a few of the things that he announced in his Throne Speech, but I ask where does the NDP government stand on all these issues? Where are their commitments? Nowhere. No plan, no vision, no hope for the future. I think that is very sad.

On education, here are a few things that our Leader—the vision that he provides in his alternative Throne Speech, is that he will bring back mandatory standards tests in Grades 6 and 9 and will expand testing to other subject areas. He will work with parents, councils, teachers, trustees and others to develop a consistent province-wide school-safety policy that lays out consequences for bullying. He will enhance distance education opportunities. He will introduce a component to student loans to increase accessibility to rural and northern students, and he will implement a new graduate tax credit to encourage new grads, Mr. Speaker, to stay here at home to start their careers and build their futures right here in the province of Manitoba. But where does the NDP stand on all of this? Nowhere. No hope, no vision, no plan for the future of our province, absolutely unbelievable.

So let us talk about the economy, Mr. Speaker. Let us talk about some of the commitments that our Leader made in his recent alternative Throne Speech. He said that we will significantly reduce property taxes. We will tear apart the tax system and build a system that makes sense to make us competitive with other provinces, so like the person I spoke about earlier who had to move to B.C. has the opportunity to stay right here and live and work and raise her family right here in Manitoba.

Mr. Speaker, we will rebuild the trust between business, labour and government by immediately repealing Bill 44 to send a message that Manitoba is open for business and opportunity. We will increase partnerships with the private sector to train our workforce. We will introduce a tax credit so tradespeople can claim the tools of their trade. Those are just some of the things that our Leader announced in the recent alternative speech from the throne. I ask, on those issues, where does this NDP government stand? Nowhere. No plan, no hope, no vision for the future.

Other commitments that were made, Mr. Speaker, are that we would implement a tax credit for stay-at-home parents, so they can receive the same tax breaks as parents whose children are in day care. We would establish a mental health advocate to report directly to the Health Minister and divert MLCC advertising

funds to pay for fetal alcohol syndrome programs. I ask, on these issues, where does this NDP government stand? There is no commitment in this Throne Speech. There is no plan, no vision and no hope for the future.

Other commitments, Mr. Speaker, we would help to modernize Winnipeg's water treatment system, so major sewage spills into the Red River will not take place. We would implement an urban residential street renewal program and fix Manitoba's deteriorating roads and crumbling infrastructure. Under the Leader of the Official Opposition (Mr. Murray), under his leadership, he has announced in the alternative Throne Speech that he would twin the Trans-Canada Highway from Virden to the Saskatchewan border. He would build an underpass at the intersection of Kenaston and Wilkes, and I strongly encourage that this Government take his advice and his action and make sure that this Government does that as well. He would immediately provide farmers with the province's 40% share of transition funding set out in the agricultural framework. So where does this Government stand on these issues? Absolutely nowhere. No plan, no vision and no hope for the future of our province.

I would strongly suggest that this Government listen to and take a look at our alternative Throne Speech, because it provides a lot more substance than their Throne Speech and indeed anything that they have ever introduced, Mr. Speaker.

So I would like to say just in conclusion that once again I would like to thank the people of Tuxedo for their guidance over the last two years that I have been representing them in the Manitoba Legislature. I would like to strongly encourage that this Government or that the people of Manitoba take a look at our alternative Throne Speech that our leader has introduced, because I believe it provides the future that we need for our province. I find it unfortunate, Mr. Speaker, that in the Government's Throne Speech they really offered absolutely no plan, no hope and no vision for the future of our province. So I would have a great difficulty supporting this Speech from the Throne. I thank you very much.

Mr. Jim Rondeau (Assiniboia): Mr. Speaker, I am very pleased to support this Speech from the

Throne. I think when one looks at government, one has to decide what type of government one wants, whether one wants an oligarchy, a government by the few for the few, or whether one wants democracy, a true democracy, a government for all people.

I believe that this Government brings everyone to the table, developing a vision, preparing a plan, working harder every day to make the province a better place to live now and for the future. I think that Manitoba has a very sunny future that will be bright for all Manitobans if we take time to focus all our energies. I believe this Government is doing just that.

Some examples are in the economy. Manitoba's job creation since 1999 was twice the jobs created during the 1990s, so since 1999 two times as many people in new jobs than in the 1990s. During the 1990s, if you can recall, that was the largest expansion of the economy in a long period of time, actually since the Second World War.

Mr. Conrad Santos, Deputy Speaker, in the Chair

So, in spite of the September 11 slowdown and the global economic slowdown, our province actually grew. We had the second highest rate of growth. We have had a huge amount of new jobs being created. Most jurisdictions did not pay down the debt but incurred additional borrowing or ran just balanced budgets. I am pleased to say that not only did we continue to pay down the debt and address the pension liability but we also did it without dipping into the rainy day fund.

High end jobs—the previous government spent a lot of time creating jobs, telemarketing jobs. Yes, they are jobs and they stayed in our economy and they have increased the pie, and that is very important, but I am glad to see that our Government is working on high-end jobs that are related directly to our education strategy. Examples of this are the aerospace industry and the composite program that we are doing in education. That links directly to jobs in Air Canada. These are good, well paying jobs.

Other things, like biotech, there are 37 firms today, a 40% increase in two years under an

NDP administration. What is nice about it is these are not minimum wage jobs. These are high quality jobs, high-tech jobs that cannot be exported to a Third World country. So what we are doing is we are creating jobs in the aerospace industry, in the biotech industry, jobs that people want to stay in the province to work in. We are not talking about low-end jobs, we are talking about high skilled, high quality jobs.

It is great to see that in the last year and a half we have been competing with Alberta for the second lowest unemployment rate. It is also interesting to note how some of the movement is back to Manitoba. People have looked at other jurisdictions, checked out other areas and are moving back to a province where we have a good, affordable cost of living. It is neat to see, when you look at the studies, the economic studies by different economic groups that what they do is when you talk about similar jobs in different jurisdictions, if you look at the final bottom line, cost of living for, say, a teacher in all the different jurisdictions, how much money, the quality of life you actually have, Manitoba rates first or second in almost every study. That is what it comes down to, your bottom-line standard of living.

I was really pleased to see that because when you talk about even many of the United States jurisdictions, because you have the costs and premiums for health insurance, because you have additional costs, then what happens is that those jurisdictions when you take health insurance, et cetera, the cost of post-secondary, the cost of a lot of other things, Manitoba fares very, very well not only just to live but also to manufacture and do business.

* (16:20)

So I think that with further promotion of our economic strategy, the further promotion of hydro, the further promotion of our education strategy, what will happen is we will find more and more businesses have started to move here, but I think that that will accelerate very much in the future.

The other thing that I would like to talk about is hydro. We on this side of the House believe in a strong, positive publicly owned Hydro. Compare that to just what is happening

in Ontario recently. At Hydro, we have basically 4 cents a kilowatt hour, which compares very interestingly with the 39 cents a kilowatt hour that was offered in Ontario this year. Sometimes people get very dogmatic and say, oh, the private sector is the only way to go. I find it interesting that the electricity rates in Toronto went up 8 times, 8-fold in a very short 8-month period.

What is interesting to note is now their government is backtracking and putting in millions of dollars just to control the prices of electricity. It is interesting how they have made a political decision, a dogmatic decision. What they have done is they forced hardship on the poor, the working poor and the average Ontarian. To what advantage? So that some people can get rich.

We believe in using hydro as an economic tool to advantage all. We believe that jobs in hydro will be created greatly. We believe that hydro expertise will create new jobs in hydrogen and in the creation of electricity for export and for use in our own province.

It is interesting to note that during the last year we used about 50 percent of the revenue of the out-of-province sales. I repeat, out-of-province sales was used to help support government initiatives. Part of those initiatives was paying down the debt. Part of it was the pension liability. Part of it was health care and the provision of services to Manitoba. The other 50 percent of out-of-province sales was used by Manitoba Hydro, and that is important to point out. The new businesses that are being created, it is interesting to note, in the industry trade, that you can see a number of new businesses that are locating in or investigating Manitoba because we have a dependable cheap source of energy.

So what we will be doing is we will be creating a bigger pie by having new businesses, new entrepreneurship and new employment opportunities for our people. It is also important to know that hydro, especially in terms of Kyoto, where we can look at green energy, I find it passing strange that the Leader of the Opposition (Mr. Murray) has spoken out against Kyoto.

I think when we are talking about planning for the future, planning for the future of Canada,

I think what we have to do is each person has to look at what we want, what type of country we want in the future. It is no good if we are going to use up our economy, use up our environment and have nothing for our future generations.

I think what we have to do is plan for the future, and Kyoto, is it the right plan? Maybe not, but what it is, is a plan. It is a step in the right direction. Manitoba I think is well established to do well in it. One of the things is we can create energy and export it to Ontario or out west. I think what happens then is we are going to be taking energy production that is using nuclear or coal and we are going to be replacing it by renewable energy of water. Hydro energy is renewable. It does not cost the environment virtually anything to create new energy.

We can be the next Alberta. If we invest in some environmental projects and do more hydro projects plus look at our own cleaning up of the environment, we can be one of the first jurisdictions to be truly green. I think we should be focussing on that for us, not only economically but for the future.

We start talking about hydrogen as an energy source. During non-peak demands, we could use the energy we create using hydrogen and water, basically hydrogen and oxygen in the water and the energy from the dams, and we could be one of the biggest hydrogen producers in North America. That would help our economy.

We compare this to MTS when it was sold. I researched yesterday some of the Hansard. It was amazing to hear that the former government promised that there was going to be no increase in telephone rates which have gone up over 65 percent. They also said no job losses. It was interesting to note that this month alone 250 jobs were eliminated, and most of them were exported not only to Ontario but also to the States. So we are losing jobs to Manitobans, and they are being exported to the States. Here we are paying more money for the service, getting less service, and the people who are employed are going outside the province. That is not increasing the size of the pie or the amount of money our province has or the jobs that our province has. So I leave it to many people to look at who got rich, who made the money from

the deal and what the benefits are for our province. I look at it, and I sort of shake my head because I have the comparison of MTS, which lost jobs, which lost revenue, which downsized and which hurts the average Manitoban. I look at Hydro, which provides wonderful service, wonderful skills and jobs and expanding the pie in Manitoba. I know, when I am balancing the two philosophies, which one I believe in.

Now I look at the other thing that I am very proud of in this Budget speech and the members opposite do not often talk about, and that is creating a revenue pool of investment in the venture capital. As a previous business owner and an investment advisor, as a person who has owned three businesses, in fact, I know the importance of venture capital in investments. I think that one of our strong initiatives was to try to pool so that we get more share of the pension investment and venture capital. I think that will be a good example to grow businesses, because what the problem is, is not just starting the business. What the problem is, is having access to capital to grow an idea, to grow a business from that small startup where you can mortgage your house and actually start the business to now you want to expand it from the 10 or 20 employees to the 50 employees. Your access to capital is very limited. In spite of what the big banks are trying, et cetera, it is still very, very hard unless you have outside capital to grow your business. So I think this will help. The expansion and the relaxing of some of the rules on the venture capital will also help. What that will do is create more jobs and more opportunities and more opportunities for business to get capital, which is key.

We all know that small business is the main driver of the economy. We all know that it is very, very important to support them. That is why I like the lower corporate tax. It is wonderful. I like the lower small business tax, which is really good. I also like the fact that we are increasing the threshold at which business tax is paid, the tax rate. I think that is very important because a small business, if you are talking about \$400,000 worth of income, that is a very reasonable type to pay the lower threshold, and that way businesses do have a chance to grow and expand and employ more people.

I think it is great to plan to grow the economy by keeping more young people, and it is neat to see the trend where more and more young people are staying. It is also nice to see that we are working with the federal government to have about 10 000 people as immigrants every year. I think what we have to do is focus on growing the economy by adding skills, by keeping people here and also bringing people from other countries that can contribute positively to our society.

I would like to speak a bit on education. I like the fact that, as a former teacher, I look at public education being funded in a predictable way. I like the fact that we are finally doing capital improvements. I thought it was penny-wise and pound-foolish of the former government to stop capital expenditures. I thought it was very, very scary because I was working with Frontier School Division. I saw how very cheap repairs of a roof became quickly hundreds-of-thousand-dollars worth of repairs and a dangerous situation.

I look at my nephew who is part of the education faculty and is actually going to graduate this year. It was interesting how he said that he tripped over a bucket carrying rain water while he was attending one of the classes, and I thought it was kind of deplorable. Engineering is a key for our future. It is one of those faculties that are very, very key. Here that was there, and we had buckets of rainwater collecting in it. I think it is great that we are working with the university as a capital infrastructure program to rebuild not only the Faculty of Engineering but a number of other buildings and expand it, and I think that is key.

It is also passing strange how some members and some governments do not believe that tuition has any effect on attendance in university. I know when I went to university, I did not have unlimited funds. How much it cost meant how much money I actually had to go to school, and if I could not afford it, I would not go full time, I would go part time. So I believe that the 10% tuition rollback has a direct correlation with the huge increase in students being able to attend our schools, and this is proven time and time again. You look in the case of B.C. where the tuition has gone up

considerably, the actual attendance in university has gone down, and that makes sense.

*(16:30)

Apprenticeship. One of the things that we have ignored as a government for many years was apprenticeship. When we came into power in 1999, we started to focus on building the apprenticeship system. These are the people who build the bricks and mortars of our society. These are the people that have the skills that make this industry go, and we have done an 11% increase in apprenticeship over the last short little period.

We have also had 36 percent in the ACCESS Program. The ACCESS Program allows people who do not have the academic skills access to university. It provides the academic support so people can be successful, so that you do not have a difference in the exit, so all doctors, all nurses have the same skills, but what it does is provide the academic supports for people to be successful in post-secondary institutions. We have had a 36% increase in enrolment in ACCESS.

In health, I know that I have an older population in Assiniboia, and it is important to note the increase in capital equipment, a three-fold increase in nurses graduating, a 15% increase in doctors, and in both those programs what we have done is we have tied grants and monies to those individuals so that they will commit. We will give them some money as a bursary, and they will commit to working in our province once they graduate. That will ensure a longer supply of nurses and doctors. What will happen is, once they start practising here and work here for three or five years, they will set down roots, and it will be harder for them to move elsewhere. So I think that will help in the long term for our health care system.

We have done a lot of new technician-training programs. Again, it is no good to have the equipment until you have the technicians to run them. So now, since we hired the entire eight-student, graduating technician class, we can have people running our MRIs, et cetera.

It is nice to see the palliative care unit at Grace Hospital going up. It is a wonderful

facility. It will provide 12 units where people can go and have their final days in comfort, in privacy, in with their loved ones.

It is also nice to note that when we announce something, we build it. We do not announce something and then re-announce something and re-announce something. What we do is we make an announcement and then you see the building frames. I believe that that supports the trust in government and that is important as an MLA.

I look at the Pharmacare. I notice that many governments have been slashing and burning the Pharmacare. We are working hard to maintain as much as possible the Pharmacare, the coverage, the amount of coverage on the drugs that are coming.

Chiropractic services. We have maintained it, and we have a long-term agreement with the chiropractors to try to continue to fund this service.

We have come a long way, and people say, oh, you might not have ended hallway medicine, but we have gone from 30 and 40 persons in the hallway to one or two. We have gone from having waiting lists of months and months and almost years to weeks. Yes, we have not got the problem solved, but we have come a long way, and I think what we have to do as Manitobans, look at the progress that is being made and see it.

Some other things that I would like to talk about is affordable government. We have had about an 11% decrease in basic taxes. Also, education tax credits, property tax credits, et cetera, are in there. You have to sort of understand the costs of government, and I will give you some comparisons. A single person earning \$30,000, here are the basic taxes that they would pay. In Manitoba, they would pay \$1,830; in Saskatchewan, \$2,211; in Alberta, \$2,004; and in B.C., \$1,854. That is with taxes and health care premiums. See, when things are often compared, they will compare our basic tax rate without the health care premium. So in Alberta they would say, okay, your basic tax is \$1,476. They fail to mention that there is a \$528 health care premium for a person in that financial category that they must pay to get service. In B.C., again, they have a \$1,206 tax

and they have a \$648 health care premium. I do not care what it is named; a tax is a tax. So, when you compare apples to apples, the total level of costs government to government, we are very competitive.

Then when you talk about all the other things, the rent, electricity, transit, telephone, the basic living costs, and this is for a basic single person with a \$30,000 income, our total costs when you compare all those things is, on average, \$7,095 compared to Saskatchewan at about \$7,068, Alberta \$9,343 and B.C. at \$10,098. That is called the Manitoba advantage. When you compare all your living costs, we are a very, very reasonable place to be. We are \$2,029 cheaper than Alberta and \$3,080 cheaper than B.C.

Then we look at the single earner, family of four, at \$60,000, just to show that it is not just low income earners. Again, you have that wonderful comparison that many people use. Where we say that we have \$5,601 for that person for Manitoba tax, in B.C. if you look at tax alone it is \$3,455, but what they do not talk about is their wonderful health premium at almost \$1,300 for that family. When you add that, we are extremely competitive.

Then when you go into the following, when you start talking about mortgage costs, and you know the cost of housing in many of these places is tremendous along with heating costs, the cost of electricity, auto insurance and telephone. Just to compare, in Ontario if you take your whole living costs including taxes, your living costs for a family of four, on average, is \$25,546. In Alberta, it is \$18,398. In B.C. it is \$24,990. In Manitoba it is \$18,450. That is \$7,100 less than Ontario and \$6,540 less than B.C. That is the Manitoba advantage.

Then people say, well, why are people not flocking here? People are coming back. It is interesting to note how many people I have talked to who are coming back because they realize Manitoba is not only a good place to live but a good place to raise a family. You can talk about the same difference with the two-earner family of four at \$60,000, again we are at \$24,341 versus almost \$38,169 in Ontario, \$28,197 in Alberta and \$34,205 in B.C. We

actually have a very, very equitable place to live, a place where you can afford to raise a family. You can do things that you need to do. So we do have affordable government. We do have an affordable place to live.

Other things that we believe are essential, and it is interesting to see the members for Fort Garry (Mrs. Smith) and Whyte Ridge (Mr. Loewen) screaming for an underpass. When you look at it, we have put as a priority water projects versus an underpass. An example this year is that 63 municipalities had provincial grants that enabled sewer and water projects to go forward at a rate of \$25 million for clean water, clean, safe drinking water. I am proud to be a government that puts clean, safe drinking water in front of waiting for 10 minutes or 5 minutes for a train. What is interesting about it is where these grants are coming from. It is interesting, because many of the grants are coming from Tory ridings, ridings where we have incumbent MLAs from the Tory party, and yet they are screaming for underpasses versus water projects in their own community. I find it passing strange.

I also like our focus on conservation districts where we have funded over \$3 million and now have 19 conservation districts. I think that is really important for the long-term conservation.

Cottage lots, when we are talking about disposable income, I look at Manitoba, where we can afford to actually have a house and pay for it in our lifetime, as opposed to many other jurisdictions. What is nice is that many of us also enjoy growing up and having access to a cottage. I think opening up a thousand new cottage lots and a thousand new campsites will ensure Manitobans have a chance to enjoy a great quality of life and be able to enjoy our great province.

* (16:40)

We also talk about our province's support for the City of Winnipeg. We give an unconditional grant of almost \$20 million to the City of Winnipeg annually; a transit grant of about \$16,339,000; a special support grant of \$7,775,000; an urban community development grant of \$7,672,000; and even a Dutch elm disease grant of almost a million dollars.

We have tried to also help the City of Winnipeg out with the street problems as far as fixing the streets. We have this year been able to provide \$4,500,000 as a special allotment for street repairs throughout Winnipeg. I think that was really nice, because I think that as three levels of government we can work together to deal with this problem. It would be great.

It is also \$14 million over five years to the building communities to rehabilitate older neighbourhoods.

We have been investing in the city, in the city infrastructure, in the city human infrastructure to make a difference, to build our city and make it a better place to live.

Our Century Summit has also shown our general philosophy. Rather than dealing with just one group, just business, what we are doing is we have dealt with labour, Aboriginal people, education, community leaders. Politicians have worked together to come up with a strategy. The strategy is based on growing, building for today, building for tomorrow and building with care. I think what we have done is we have done a very balanced plan, where what we are trying to do is we are trying to work with all groups—I underline that, all groups—to make this province a better place to live. I think we have been doing that.

I think we have shown a great deal of fiscal responsibility as far as funding the pension plan. I cannot believe that we as 30 years of previous governments had never funded the pension plan liability. I think that all governments were responsible for that in the past. I think it is really nice that we have chosen to start funding the pension liability. I think that it is something that all governments should do in the future, because you cannot have a pension liability. We would not legally allow any business to operate without funding their pension liability. So I think it was very, very good that our Government started a trend when we came into power to start funding that pension liability. There needs to be real money there so that we do not leave our future generations debts they have to cover.

Other things I am pleased to see is the rebuilding of Portage Avenue. As a city MLA, I know that when I was elected there were almost

30 buildings empty along Portage Avenue in my constituency alone. I am pleased to see that building cranes were there, I am pleased to see there are new buildings, new structures there, new stores. It is really interesting to note that I did four openings in one month, four openings. We had a seniors centre, the Lions senior centre, which we helped open; we had a TD Bank, a new TD Bank; we had a drug store; and we had a new KFC-Taco Bell, all in one month. So it is nice to see that that is moving forward.

It is also nice to see that we are caring about the community. In the last three years we have been enabled to have new play structures in all the schools in the area. I have taken the time and energy to work with a lot of parent councils and a lot of play structure councils and the Community Places grant to ensure that kids have a safe place to play in the neighbourhood. I think that is very important.

I like the fact that we had Optimists Park and we had Maurice Kohut, who has worked many years to make a wonderful international baseball facility. What we have is a facility where North American Indigenous Games took place. It was wonderful, it is a very competitive facility, and we have managed to put more and more money into building trees, into fixing the structure, into fixing the diamonds so that we can have and host more competitions.

I look at what we have done for day cares. I think it was wonderful that we have had more spaces in day cares, and not only more spaces in day cares, but we are giving day care workers an affordable wage. We are giving them hope. Just recently the Member for St. James (Ms. Korzeniowski) and I had the pleasure of working very hard to try to open and create spaces for a new day care in Jameswood School, to help the Stevenson-Britannia Adult Literacy Program and the Jameswood program, so that the adults going to those programs could get day care while they attend. I think it makes a difference in each one of those cases.

It is also important to note that we are generally helping the day cares and working with day care staff to create a wonderful environment. I look at what we have done as far as affordable housing, working with community

groups to build houses, to rehabilitate houses. So what we are doing is we are fixing up older neighbourhoods. We are fixing up areas. How does that help the average person, people say. Why would we want to put money into the core?

It is quite simple. Three years ago houses were selling for \$6,000 or \$10,000 in the core. The housing values were nothing, so the tax that these houses were paying was virtually nothing. What we also had was we had a huge problem with vandalism, a huge problem with fires. That created huge demands in the system, created lots of work for the police and the fire department, et cetera. By rebuilding the core, what we have done is we have increased the housing prices, in some cases threefold. By doing that, what we do is we decrease the whole tax base. Again, by increasing the size of the pie, what you do is you do not have to pay as much tax. So the citizens of Assiniboia actually have benefited greatly by having downtown Winnipeg rebuilt.

The other things we have done. We have done some wonderful initiatives to keep kids busy, keep them positive and busy. In my former years I used to coach a senior men's Aboriginal volleyball team, and what happened with that is a lot of kids would go and practise with a team. We would have 30, 35 kids out on a night, three nights a week practising with the team. That kept kids busy. Kids that are busy, that are focussed, are good kids. I think this Government has taken that and we have used that to our advantage.

What we are trying to do is keep kids away from the gangs. So, in the 1990s, gangs kept on increasing at a huge rate, at a scary rate. Now what we are trying to do is give kids positive alternatives. We give them education that they can afford. We have reinstated the bursaries, student bursaries. We have created access positions so that these kids have a hope as far as getting legitimate, long-term careers. We give them positive recreational activities so that they can facilitate positive things, so they do not get involved in trouble.

So what is happening with gangs? Well, what is happening is we are trying to get rid of the basic cause of gangs. By working at that, it is a lot cheaper than hiring more and more cops. It

is a lot cheaper than building more jails. What we are trying to do is fix that.

I am also very, very pleased at a government that focusses on kids. All you have to do is read Doctor Mustard and look at what they are doing, and you realize the importance of early intervention. You realize the importance of nutrition, of looking after the kids when they are young, of supporting young parents and building skills with them. So I am pleased that we are spending \$25 million on our future.

When I say spending, it is more like an investment. If we sit and spend money and make money in the future, in business that is called an investment. In government, the members opposite often call it spending. I call it investing in our future, building for our future. So, with the \$25 million, if you start talking about incarceration, you could talk about FAS. If you talk about any of the major problems, it would be nothing if you take that \$25 million investment, and say, hey, this is what we are doing so that we have a brighter, more capable future. We are investing in our kids.

I look at seniors and it is just simple. You look at all the projects that we have done for seniors to make housing affordable. Just the fact of increasing to \$400 from \$250 the property tax credit. Well, what that means is that seniors can afford to stay in their house longer, and that is critical because it really improves quality of life.

* (16:50)

The other 10% elimination of the ESL, education support levy, is also good because it is dropping the cost of seniors to sustain their house. It is dropping the taxes, and that is very important.

Again, one of my pet peeves is, when governments are comparing taxes to taxes, they often do not take into account the property tax credits, and these can be targeted to very specific individuals. You know, it is funny when you start talking about other governments. I was talking to my brother, and he was commenting about the fact that it is really expensive in Alberta for kids, for daycare, and there is virtually no subsidy. So what happens is that it comes dollar for dollar out of your pocket. So I am

pleased to be part of a government that looks at affordable child care spaces.

When people opposite, when members opposite start talking about no plan, well, I look at it this way. We have a plan in education, which is getting more trained people, more skilled into direct jobs, working with industry, in partnership. That is a good plan.

I look at creating long-term capital funding, capital investment, et cetera, money for business to grow. That is a plan, a slow, steady, affordable tax cut, which is very good. You know, we do not want to be like B.C., where you take a whack at the taxes and then have to go into a billion-dollar, or actually a \$4-billion deficit. I think it is much, much better to go slow and steady as you can afford it, et cetera. By keeping it affordable, by keeping it at 2 percent or 3 percent a year, you can sustain it. So what you are doing is you drop your debt 2 percent or 3 percent a year, you drop your tax rate 2 percent or 3 percent a year, and then it is sustainable. That is essential.

I also look at what we are doing as far as the plan for our environment, and I think this is critical. You look at our environment and you say, okay, we have conservation districts, we are doing water and sewer projects. You know, it was a Tory government that cut the water services in Ontario, and then that led to the Walkerton tragedy. I am pleased to see that we put water, safe water before we put in an underpass. Now, yes, I do get calls. What I tell my constituents time and time again is I would rather have clean, fresh, dependable drinking water than an underpass, and that is the facts as I see it.

Mr. Speaker in the Chair

I think that what we have been doing is we have been working together. It is interesting to see that we have worked with all groups to develop a plan. I am pleased to see our ministers are working hard in all the critical areas, and in spite of an economic slowdown, in spite of a lot of challenges, we have managed to balance the budget, pay down debt, look after the young, provide services for seniors and improve the health care.

When people look at us and throw rocks and say, hey, you have not fixed everything yet, you have not done everything, well, I am pleased to see that we have moved a long way. We have a strong balanced approach, and we might have not moved to an A+. What we might have done is moved from the F to a C+ or a B, but we have a long plan that is improving the situation day after day, project after project. This is much better than whacking the system negatively or positively.

What we want to do is a slow, steady approach. That is why now, three years ago, we set up the first nursing program. We are getting the graduates. We are getting people there. As we get more people there, we will have less overtime, less stress in the environment, and actually that will be a nice break-even point. What will happen is that, as more people get into the system, we will have more option, so that is the same as doctors, same as nurses, same as technicians and same as all specialists in our province. I think that now, with a very, very low unemployment rate, actually the lowest in the country right now, we have limits on our growth. The limits are basically human ones. So I think what we have to do is work with the feds to move forward.

Anyhow, in closing, I am proud to be part of a government that has a caring approach. I am proud to be part of a government that has a good plan for the future, and I am proud to be part of a government that has very capable ministers that are looking for the future of all Manitobans for this generation and in the future. So, on behalf of Assiniboia, thank you very much. Best wishes to a government in its long future.

Mr. Larry Maguire (Arthur-Virden): Mr. Speaker, it is my pleasure to rise in the House today as the MLA for Arthur-Virden and as the critic responsible for the Department of Finance. It is a privilege for me to rise in response to the Speech from the Throne. First of all, I would like to welcome the interns to the Legislature and make comment in honouring the three retirees that have announced that they will not be seeking re-election in the Conservative Party of Manitoba.

My congratulations go out to the Member for Morris (Mr. Pitura), the Member for

Minnedosa (Mr. Gilleshammer) and certainly the Member for Lakeside (Mr. Enns), the senior member of this Legislature and most of the legislatures in Canada, if my facts are correct.

I would also like to congratulate all of the newly elected mayors, reeves and councillors across Manitoba, but particularly those that I will continue to work closely with in Arthur-Virden and congratulate all of those who have retired and sought election and were unsuccessful in the election in October as well.

On November 25, the Progressive Conservative caucus of Manitoba released an alternative Throne Speech. We did so because Manitobans are beginning to raise concerns that the Doer government is not listening and not representing or dealing with the needs and concerns of Manitobans. The response to our alternative Throne Speech was immediate and positive. The headline on *The Winnipeg Sun* editorial read: Tories hit the mark. We did. Our Caucus has embarked on the road to a better Manitoba. We have provided our vision, our priorities, and we have given Manitobans a preview of our plan for the future. Our leader has brought forward new ideas and a solid agenda that will provide results.

Unfortunately for hard-working Manitobans, the Doer government's Throne Speech chose to talk about the past. Our alternative Throne Speech put Manitobans first, all Manitobans. It did not pander to the special interest groups and union bosses that surround and control this Government. It was a first step to show you how a Progressive Conservative government will meet the needs of all Manitobans so that they can reach their full potential.

In our alternative Throne Speech, we set out our plans to tackle the problems facing our province so Manitobans can compete and succeed in a global and ever changing economy; so our health care system can provide timely access to quality care for our aging population and all Manitobans; so our kids get the best start in life from an education system that works for them; so our parents, spouses and children feel safe and secure in their own homes and in their community; and so we can make Manitoba a place where people choose to live.

Since October of 1999, Manitobans have been forced to accept a government that sets its sights to achieve mediocrity. Worse than that, Manitobans have had to endure a Doer government that has broken its major campaign promise, which was to end hallway medicine. Manitobans want choice and timely access to care.

Unfortunately, the failures and the broken promises of this Government do not end there. Our Manitoba children are finishing below the national average in standards tests. Instead of working to find a solution for our children, what does the Doer government do? It forces school divisions to amalgamate without any evidence of educational or financial benefits. Manitobans want excellence in our schools.

When it comes to the issue of justice, the Doer government stood on the sidelines as the Hells Angels opened up for business. The Doer government stands by as some of our most vulnerable children are forced to prostitute themselves. Manitobans want real justice.

The Doer government has increased spending by almost a billion dollars. That is a thousand dollars for every Manitoba, four thousand for the average Manitoba family.

The Doer government uses Crown corporations as a slush fund to pay for their overspending. This year they raided Manitoba Hydro to the tune of a million dollars every day, effectively eliminating the rainy day fund to give the appearance that they have balanced the books of this province.

* (17:00)

Mr. Speaker, the people of Arthur-Virden and Manitobans around the province are just beginning to understand that the Doer government has no intention of slowing down its spending habits, even though it is running out of revenue options. The legacy of balanced budget legislation left to Manitobans by the Filmon government is in jeopardy. There is no reason to trust this Premier (Mr. Doer) or his Government to preserve this important and necessary legislation. In fact, their actions prove they cannot be trusted.

Our pledge is to ensure all Manitobans that a Progressive Conservative government will maintain that trust for the people of Manitoba. The people of Arthur-Virden, and, for that matter, all Manitobans want a government committed to responsible spending. They want a government that will listen.

Manitoba is a strong province, but it is standing still. We are becoming known as the province of missed opportunities. The people of Arthur-Virden and all Manitobans deserve a government that will work with the people to ensure they have reached their full potential. Manitobans want a government that is progressive, not regressive. They want to move forward and capture the opportunities of today and tomorrow.

Mr. Speaker, the Progressive Conservative government will meet the needs of Manitobans and allow them to reach their full potential.

I said in my earlier remarks that the Doer government is not listening to Manitobans. This is especially true when we talk about the Manitoba economy. Well, the people of Arthur-Virden and all Manitobans want me to urge this Premier and this Government to listen up. They have some very important things to say. I hope that the Premier is listening today.

Too many young people are leaving Manitoba for jobs in other provinces. Manitobans believe that the Doer government's failure to stop our personal tax rates from becoming among the highest in Canada is becoming a real problem for families and individuals. Manitobans are concerned that our economy is falling further and further behind other provinces and we are no longer competitive, not even with Saskatchewan.

Manitoba must have a strong and vibrant economy. This is fundamental to providing the services Manitobans need. It is obvious that only a Progressive Conservative government understands this, that only a Progressive Conservative government knows how to build a strong economy and knows how to make it grow. With a strong Manitoba economy, we will be able to meet our needs and reach our potential.

Manitoba must be competitive. The people of Arthur-Virden and all Manitobans clearly

understand this. How the Doer government, in its Throne Speech, failed to recognize that is beyond me. Here is the fact: middle-income Manitobans are the highest-taxed Canadians west of Québec. As other provinces continue to cut taxes and as the Doer government continues to stand still, Manitoba will continue to fall further and further behind.

Mr. Speaker, a Progressive Conservative government will put a stop to this. We are the only ones with the political will to lower your taxes. With almost a billion dollars in new spending since 1999, the resources for meaningful tax reduction have always existed. What has not existed is the political will.

Our leader has made the commitment that our government will raise the threshold and take thousands of Manitobans off of the tax rolls. We will tear up the tax system and rebuild a system that makes your taxes fair, simple and competitive. We will rebuild the trust between business, labour and government by immediately repealing Bill 44 to send a message that Manitoba is open to business and opportunity.

The current chair, Gord Peters of the Manitoba Chambers of Commerce, said, and I quote: "It is easier to do business in Alberta than it is in Manitoba." While he may be right at this point in time, that is not acceptable to the future of business in Manitoba. It is simply not right.

Mr. Speaker, our PC government will put more money back into your pockets and will drive our economy forward and attract people to Manitoba. We can be trusted to make Manitoba competitive, so we can keep Manitobans here as well as attract others and expand our tax base. Remember it is only with a thriving economy that we can afford to invest in health care, education and safety.

The people of Arthur-Virden and Manitobans across this province and those on this side of the House know that it is the private sector that makes the economy vibrant. It is not up to government to create jobs. That is up to the women and men of our business and industry sectors.

Mr. Speaker, the people of Arthur-Virden and the people of Manitoba have confidence and

believe they can solve the economic and social problems they face, not government. What the government can do is to create an environment to let the private sector do what the private sector does best, and that is to create jobs. If we all do our jobs, our children and their children will not leave this province for a future somewhere else. These are the resources we cannot afford to lose.

The prosperity of the city of Winnipeg and the Capital Region are vital to the growth of Manitoba. While we must work towards revitalizing our downtown area, we cannot ignore the health and vitality of the city as a whole and the surrounding Capital Region. We must significantly reduce property taxes and we will. Our urban strategy will include improving Winnipeg's road system. We are developing a plan for urban residential street renewal which will be released in the months ahead.

We are also committed to modernizing Winnipeg's water treatment system, so major sewage spills into the Red River do not take place. We will work with the City of Winnipeg to help create a tax environment that will attract business and housing development back to our downtown.

Mr. Speaker, by making Winnipeg's downtown safer, by encouraging economic development and by improving our infrastructure through projects that make sense we will address the important challenges facing our capital city.

Our government will make it a priority to fix Manitoba's deteriorating roads and crumbling infrastructure. The people of Arthur-Virden know that now more than ever the economic well-being of our province is dependent on our highway system. Our roadways are Manitoba's economic arteries.

To address both the economic needs of our province and the safety concerns of local citizens, our Leader has committed a Progressive Conservative government to the following initiatives: To twinning the Trans-Canada Highway from Virden to the Saskatchewan border and to building an underpass at the intersection of Kenaston and Wilkes.

Mr. Speaker, when speaking of infrastructure development, it is so important that

governments start putting an emphasis back on our rural communities. We will invest in key infrastructure, such as roads and sewer and water treatment facilities to help reap the benefits of our rural communities and to attract new investment opportunities. We will pursue community priorities where feasible.

Our policies will focus on such areas as export diversification, employee-owned enterprises, innovation, skills training and infrastructure investment. We will strengthen our communities by providing a long-term outlook that is accountable and responsible. We will emphasize sustainable development, partnerships with the community, wealth and job creation, and we will acknowledge and focus on the fact that locally driven business and youth development remain the key engines of growth and opportunity for our rural economy.

Mr. Speaker, let us stop wasting VLT money on advertising and start using more of it in our rural communities to create economic opportunities. Further, the management of our water resources is vital to the sustainability and growth of our rural communities and our industrial and business sectors.

As important as any initiative we need to undertake, we must work to preserve our rural lifestyles. Manitobans have always been able to count on the Progressive Conservative government to stand up for rural Manitoba and all of our province's farmers. They can count on us to immediately become full participants in the Agricultural Policy Framework. Mr. Speaker, the Doer government's Throne Speech was silent on this needed support for our farmers, and to this day, the Doer government refuses to sign on completely to the framework and contribute Manitoba's 40% share of the cost-share transitional farm assistance. The Doer government is not listening to the people of Arthur-Virden or to the people of Manitoba.

* (17:10)

Mr. Speaker, I say to all Manitobans and all members on that side of the House, and especially to the Premier (Mr. Doer) and the Minister of Agriculture (Ms. Wowchuk): Give our farm families their money now. Our farmers

are not 40 percent less valuable than their neighbouring farmers in Alberta and Ontario and should not be treated in a second-class manner by their Government.

Creating new opportunities for value-added production is also essential for our agricultural sector and our rural communities, and we are committed to the jobs and opportunities that it creates in rural Manitoba. Our Progressive Conservative government will remain committed to loan guarantee and investment programs, and research and development initiatives that will help farmers and rural businesses diversify and add value to their operations. We are committed to initiative incentives that will help our producers grow their operations and in turn grow the Manitoba economy.

Mr. Speaker, provincial parks play a critical role in protecting the environment and unique ecosystems. Duff Roblin created the provincial park system in Manitoba, and it is essential that they be preserved for generations to come. We are committed to putting a stop to the potential carving up of our parks, starting with Clearwater Park. Our pledge to the future generations of Manitoba is to protect our provincial parks by putting a stop to the insanity being proposed by the Premier and his Government. Right now there is only an agreement that says parkland will not be sold. Our leader, the Member for Kirkfield Park (Mr. Murray), will put in law to ensure it cannot be sold.

Decisive action is also needed on the uncontrolled fishing in Manitoba. Once again, we witness the Premier and his Government potentially destroying the Manitoba sport fishing industry. We will examine the Province's fishery legislation and regulations and make all the changes necessary to ensure that our fish stocks are protected for future generations. Reckless overfishing cannot and will not be tolerated. If this means designating the usage of certain lakes for either sport fishing or net fishing, it will be done.

Mr. Speaker, I am proud to say that our Progressive Conservative government would immediately focus efforts on priority environmental projects here at home. Our leader is committed to initiatives such as dealing with the

Red River sewage problem before embarking on international accords of those costs and benefits are not even known. The fact is the Doer government needs to worry about cleaning up our own backyard before we wildly rush out to sign on to international accords. Our leader has pointed out that the Doer government, in its Throne Speech, said that Manitoba was the first jurisdiction in Canada to comprehensively assess the costs and opportunities of implementing the Kyoto accord, yet, when he was asked for a copy of this so-called comprehensive assessment, the Doer government was silent and remained silent. They cannot tell us how much it will cost. They cannot tell us how many jobs will be lost and why because they do not know.

Mr. Speaker, we are committed to protecting our environment and to reducing greenhouse gas emissions, but before any decision is made on Kyoto, we firmly believe that the cost and implication to Manitoba must be assessed on a sector-by-sector basis by the Manitoba government and made public for discussion. Manitobans deserve better than a government that just takes it for granted that the Kyoto accord is the only thing to do, and they certainly deserve better than a government that misleads Manitobans in their own Throne Speech.

Mr. Speaker, the people of Arthur-Virden and all Manitobans have talked to us about their concerns in health care, and we have, in our alternative Throne Speech, laid out plans to address these problems when we form government. But there are some things that simply should not wait. As our Leader has said many times, it just makes sense that if the private sector can help to reduce waiting lists by providing services within our publicly funded system, government should not stand in their way. You know from sitting in this Assembly that our leader has offered every day over the last week to work with the Doer government to develop a policy to allow private health clinics operating within the publicly funded system to reduce waiting lists. The Doer government, the Premier has refused to help Manitobans. Even though Manitobans walk into private X-ray clinics for services, the Doer government refuses to allow Manitobans to walk into places like the Maples Surgical Centre to get speedier access to services such as orthopedic surgery, cataract

surgery, pediatric dentistry or general surgery such as biopsies and hernia repair. What is next? Will the Doer government buy up all the private X ray clinics as well?

On behalf of the people of Arthur-Virden and all of the people of Manitoba, let me be clear. It just should not matter to government who owns the building. What does matter is your Manitoba Health card should give you access to the service you require. It is not fair to patients and their families for politics to be allowed to cripple our health care system and prevent it from offering choice and timely care.

The people of Arthur-Virden and all Manitobans already believe that they could have shorter waiting lists if they were able to visit private clinics and be covered by their Health card. The Doer government must put its ideology second to the needs of Manitobans. The people of Manitoba must come first, not the manifesto.

Unfortunately, even Roy Romanow is telling us that health care costs will continue to escalate, and the only solution is to spend more money. The truly sad part for Manitobans is that the Doer government is blindly following him. They have broken their pledge to renew health care.

Manitobans are looking for leadership and meaningful reform in health care. They believe there should be choice in health care. The Premier and his government said no even before they read the report. The Doer government is putting its politics before patients. Manitobans should not have to wait for this. We should be moving on it today, because it is not about politics, it is about doing what is right for patients.

We also need safe communities. The people of Arthur-Virden and all Manitobans know the negative impact crime has on our economy. Our parents, our spouses, our children deserve better. They deserve to feel safe.

What we continually hear from the Doer government is that it is a federal or municipal problem. Our leader does not accept that. There is a lot that can be done. It just takes making fighting crime a priority. To that end we will put

more police officers on the street, because a Progressive Conservative government is committed to running gangs out of Manitoba. Accused criminals being able to walk away from their crime due to lengthy court delays is unacceptable. We will put a stop to it. We will reduce the court backlog by contracting with private law firms to provide prosecution services on an as-needed basis. Manitobans want real justice. A Progressive Conservative government will make sure they get it.

All Manitoba children deserve to have a solid education. When our kids leave school, they should have received an education that allows them to face the world with confidence, sure of themselves and sure that they are prepared for the challenges that lie ahead. Almost one-half of all 13-year-olds in Manitoba do not meet acceptable levels in math as defined by national testing. Below average is not good enough for students and for parents, and it is certainly not good enough for any provincial government. Some will say that standard tests are not fair because children in schools in disadvantaged areas will not score as well. It is precisely these children, those schools who will benefit most from finding out where our education system is lacking. That is our responsibility.

* (17:20)

Our leader has recently pointed out that last year's Grade 3 assessments were not good news. Six out of ten kids did not meet expectations when it came to adding and subtracting to ten. The Premier called these results, and I quote, positive. Not only is that outrageous, but Manitoba children who are not meeting expectations do not need false praise from government. They need a government that cares enough to find the source of the problem and fix it. Government's goal must be to ensure that not one Manitoba child is left behind in this process. The reality is that parents have a right to know if their children are learning, and children have a right to learn. If we allow our children to leave school without the tools they need to get and keep a job, if we ask less of them and give less to them, then we are failing them.

We also recognize that our teachers got into the profession because they have a thirst for

knowledge and a desire to help our kids become the future leaders of tomorrow. But just as society changes and technology advances and curriculum is altered, our classroom teachers must constantly be on top of their game. It is only right that government provides classroom teachers with the supports needed to do so. To meet the needs of our children, we will provide those services to our teachers. A Progressive Conservative government will create a professional development fund for classroom teachers to access for additional training. Every single child has the potential to be a leader of tomorrow. We will ensure that they have the tools they need to reach their full potential.

Building a quality education system does not stop at our high schools. We must ensure that our post-secondary institutions are able to provide quality education to our future leaders in quality facilities. Further, we must enhance opportunities by making these facilities more affordable and more accessible to all. A Progressive Conservative government will introduce a component to student loans to increase accessibility to rural and northern students. We will implement a new graduate tax credit to encourage new grads to start their careers and build their futures right here in Manitoba.

Building in Manitoba that is a good home to all includes ensuring there is assistance for those most in need. One way to successfully do so, to break the cycle of dependence is to help people learn new skills and make new connections. Welfare is not and will not be a career option. A PC government will proclaim the amended Employment and Income Assistance Act that we passed in 1999 because able-bodied people should get the skills they need to find long-term employment.

We also believe that parents who opt to stay home to raise their children are carrying out one of the most important jobs society has. It is time that government recognizes this by levelling the playing field so stay-at-home parents are treated the same as those who choose to go out of the home to work. To do this, we will implement a tax credit for stay-at-home parents so they receive the same tax breaks as parents who have children in daycare.

In concluding my remarks today, I want to say that we live in a truly remarkable province built on grit and determination, built on the optimism of the generations who have gone before us. We have confidence that Manitoba has the ability to achieve great things. The people of Arthur-Virden and all Manitobans know that, with a little common sense in the decision making in government and in our daily lives, we will also be able to reverse the dangerous backward slide we have begun. Mr. Speaker, for the sake of the future generations of this province, we must move forward with an attitude that continues to make Manitoba strong. Thank you very much.

Hon. Steve Ashton (Minister of Conservation): First of all, Mr. Speaker, I want to welcome you back. Certainly we appreciate your role in this House as Speaker, the first elected Speaker of this province. I know that it is inappropriate to comment beyond general terms on the kind of work you do in this House, but I think I speak for all members in saying that we respect your role in this Legislature. Certainly you work very hard I think to bring the kind of order and decorum and proper process in this House that sometimes we tend to lose sight of as being one of the important elements for a democratic process in the House.

I also wanted to particularly commend a number of members who are undertaking to leave public office. To my mind the ultimate luxury in politics is when you retire yourself, you do not get retired by the voters. We know there are going to at least be four members of this Legislature who sometime soon, we do not know exactly when, but will be making that decision. I did want to reflect that the Member for Morris (Mr. Pitura) and the Member for Minnedosa (Mr. Gilleshammer) have made that decision after their years of contribution in this House.

What is interesting is I make a point of reading the media from throughout the province. I have always felt that if you want to find out what is going on in Manitoba, yes, you read the *Free Press* and the *Sun*, but you also read the community newspapers, I know in my own community the *Thompson Citizen*. I think some of the reflection that we see in those

communities, something that should be reflected in this House, is the remarkable, I think, good will from the communities. The many kudos that have been coming in to the Member for Morris and the Member for Minnedosa are being reflected certainly in the communities.

Of course, the Minister of Labour (Ms. Barrett) has also announced she is retiring, someone I have worked with for many years. I can say I appreciate her role. I have worked with her as a colleague. She has actually been involved in the political sphere for many years. I know her from previous lives. I think people will join with me in thanking her for her contributions.

Of course, how can you even begin to comment on the contribution of the Member for Lakeside (Mr. Enns), who after being elected in 1966 has now indicated his intention to retire after the next election. Given the remarkable longevity of MLAs for Lakeside, I just say to constituents in Lakeside that given the fact the previous MLA for Lakeside was in for 44 years and that the current MLA is heading into his 37th year, they better choose wisely, because you elect an MLA for Lakeside, they are likely to be around for quite some time. I certainly want to comment that I think that 36-37 years is probably one of the longest service records anywhere in the Commonwealth and would certainly rank very highly with Legislatures across the world.

So I want to really commend the Member for Lakeside along with the other members who will be retiring. If I am honoured enough to be back here, because we should never assume these things, I will certainly miss his contributions. Whether I am back here or not, I think we will miss the members who are retiring. Of course there may be others announcing over the next few months, but I particularly want to put on the record that Manitobans will particularly miss the 36 years-plus.

I had a discussion with the Member for Lakeside once. I think he has had the unique distinction, I say it is the ultimate luxury to have gone from government, to opposition, back in government, but he went from government, to opposition, to government, to opposition, and,

you know, I mean, that is remarkable in and of itself.

Now, speaking of going from government to opposition brings me to the main part of my contribution to the Throne Speech debate, because I think, after three years, we are finally getting to see some of the real contrasts in this province between the Government, Mr. Speaker, and I think our agenda has been very clear for the last three years. But now we are starting to see an attempt by the members opposite to put forward their—and I hate to use the word "vision," because I do not think it comes to that level— but trying to put forward their view of the world and trying to I think perhaps deflect some of the criticism that has been out there.

* (17:30)

I say to members opposite, I mean, I have seen in terms of opposition parties sometimes there is criticism, that they are critical. Certainly when we were in opposition, we were somewhat critical at times to the government of day. Of course, there was quite a bit to criticize, so it was not that hard.

Beyond that, I think that they have really gone above and beyond I think virtually any opposition party I have seen, because what they will do in a single question period is they will get up and they will talk about tax reductions, and then two questions later they will be hammering the Government for not spending enough money.

Now, Mr. Speaker, I say about question periods, they even put out a so-called Throne Speech, an alternative Throne Speech, something we did when we were in opposition. Imitation is the sincerest form of flattery, except I can tell you that there was an interesting letter to the editor today from somebody who said, you know, if the members opposite could accomplish what they put in their Throne Speech to cut taxes and increase spending.

I have been trying to add up the amount. It is in the hundreds of millions of dollars, but if they are able to do that. Actually the suggestion was I think that rather than be premier, the Leader of the Opposition (Mr. Murray) would have to be a

wizard, I would say a magician, because I have never seen clear evidence on the record of a party that has perhaps been in government before but is nowhere close to realizing the reality of putting forth a program, a platform, an alternative, now in this session of the Legislature or in an election.

Their platform, if you want to put it, the beginning of the platform, I would say, would be condemned by anybody who was looking at sort of the structure of it. I do not think it has four legs to stand on, Mr. Speaker. It is tilting over as we speak. It shows how restricted the vision of the Conservative members opposite is when it comes to the province of Manitoba.

Now, I want to talk about vision or lack thereof. I want to start with something, by the way, that I find most remarkable from members opposite, and that comes with the Kyoto accord. I just want to put on the record here that the Kyoto accord is nothing new. The science is out there showing that climate change is a reality. The science has been clear since the late 1980s. There has been a process leading through 1992, 1993 in Rio that led to the signing of the Kyoto accord in 1997.

Now, Mr. Speaker, I am not going to give a 40-minute speech on the Kyoto accord. I am more than glad to speak on the Kyoto accord anywhere anytime. But you know what is interesting is that when the Kyoto accord was signed, what was the position of the then-Conservative government? Did they come out talking about a made-in-Canada plan, I mean sort of the buzzword of Alberta and the oil industry today. No.

They talked about implementation of Kyoto. I can show members opposite the press releases. I begin to wonder sometimes with the experienced members who were part of the Cabinet and those in caucus, where they were during the debate on Kyoto in their internal discussions in 1998, and where all of a sudden in the year 2002, because Ralph Klein says something, they jump.

I mean, Mr. Speaker, I think what we have seen is the clear evidence of what really is driving the members opposite because, you

know, what we are really seeing on Kyoto is what I would call Ralph Klein lite. I mean, let us put aside this made-in-Canada talk because, first of all, the plan that Alberta has put forward on Kyoto is not a climate change reduction plan. We will not see reductions in greenhouse gases according to the Alberta plan until the year 2050 at the earliest, 2050. The Kyoto accord called for a 6% reduction from 1990 levels by the years 2008 through 2012.

Now, second of all, I do not think it is a made-in-Canada plan. I think it is made in the U.S.A., because, quite frankly, when you look at it, it is the same plan that George Bush put forward when George Bush said they would not ratify Kyoto. I want to put that on the record.

Now, Mr. Speaker, I do not want to suggest that the oil industry, which is driving the campaign against Kyoto and the so-called made-in-Canada campaign, would have had any connection into that government, but I find it passing strange that in 1998 they were in favour of Kyoto and now when Ralph Klein and the oil industry say jump, they jump.

I will put forward our position in Manitoba as a leader in terms of supporting the Kyoto accord and the ratification and implementation of the Kyoto accord against the U-turn taken by members opposite and the clear fact that they speak more for the oil industry in Alberta than they do for Manitobans.

Now, I will say to members opposite, they still have time to bring it back, you know, to reconsider, but their lack of vision on Kyoto I think is something that shows how little they understand about where Manitobans are at in terms of this and other key issues. Most Manitobans you talk to are supportive of action on climate change. Most Manitobans support the ratification of Kyoto. What they want is what we push for at the national level, a plan that accomplishes it in a way that spreads the benefits and limits the costs across the country.

You know, I heard members opposite, the previous member, and I appreciate this is the official party line, but he talked about job losses. Well, I have news for members opposite. There may be job losses, according to some. There is

concern about what? Impact on the fossil-fuel sector, oilsands job losses. What about the job gains? You know, we have the opposition critic for Energy. Now, this is the same opposition critic that accused the Minister of Energy (Mr. Sale) and myself of hanging around with the champagne socialists, I think, the left wing. I am trying to remember, you know, he does not use this in the House anymore.

What an embarrassment, Mr. Speaker. Who were those champagne socialists? Well, yes, you know, he could attack the environmental communities, the Suzuki foundation in particular. Who else was there as part of the network that we are part of? The forestry association. In fact, the president, the CEO of Tembec, has endorsed nationally on behalf of his own company, his own position in terms of Kyoto. Who else was there? The Federation of Canadian Municipalities. Who is the Federation of Canadian Municipalities? It is all municipalities from across Canada who have taken on the Kyoto challenge. A hundred municipalities have taken on the Kyoto challenge, and they get up and they call them champagne socialists. That is news to the forestry association and that is news to the FCM.

I say to members opposite, you know, that kind of rhetoric, that embarrassing rhetoric has no place when it comes to serious public debate. I tell you, when you are as far right wing as some members opposite are, it is not hard I guess to criticize everybody else for being left wing, but when it gets down to the point where the forestry association and the FCM, you think they are left wing, that is more of a comment on how far right you are, right of Attila the Hun, and how far out of touch you are with mainstream, Main Street Manitoba.

Well, Mr. Speaker, let us look at just how far out of touch members opposite are on another key issue, health care. You know, there has been I think a very good public debate, mostly because of the discussions of the Romanow report, to some extent because of the Kirby report. Quite frankly, it is a debate that we need to deal with, because this is really dealing with the bottom-line approach we have to one of our most treasured social programs, something that defines Canada, that defines us as different from the United States.

I am hoping members will take these chains from the hearts of medicare, because that is what indeed the privatization agenda is dealing with. That is the real issue when it comes to health care. Let us just not kid ourselves here. The real issue is health care delivered for the public by the public sector or health care in which profit increasingly plays a role. On the one hand, where patient care comes first, the other hand, where you have an incentive for profit at the expense of patient care. Every study that has been conducted shows the bottom line is that public health care is more efficient than the private health care system. Dare I point to our friends in the United States, where 50 million Americans have no health care insurance and yet they spend 5 percent more of their GDP on health care.

I say to members opposite, when they attack the Romanow Commission report, you know, the only thing the Leader of the Opposition (Mr. Murray) could say the day after was the NDP Premier from Saskatchewan. Well, first of all, Roy Romanow has not been Premier for some time, but whether he is an NDP premier or any former premier, I think the content of the report should be taken with the kind of due respect it deserves, and I say to members opposite: Who better than a former NDP Premier of Saskatchewan, the province that under the CCF and NDP pioneered medicare? Who better to understand what the principles of medicare are about? I say to members opposite the bottom line here is that, if they would only listen, I would think they would see the error of their ways, to talk as they have increasingly.

* (17:40)

They have been pushing The Maples clinic agenda here. The Maples clinic agenda, I want to say to members opposite, by the way, I welcome discussion in health care. I do not know if anybody over there has really woken up to the fact that, in 1999, one of the reasons they were so soundly defeated is because people did not trust them on health care.

Anywhere you go in this province, I can tell you, Mr. Speaker, I can point in my community, I can point throughout the province of evidence of the improvements we have made to health

care. I want to start in my own community, the emergency ward addition, brought in by the NDP, the personal care home right now, the funding that is in place and a very successful community fundraising effort, which is going to have the first personal care home in the history of Thompson and our region put in place, a reality. I can go throughout the province. We can go to Brandon, the Brandon General Hospital. I mean, how many times did they promise to do something? They promised to do something. They did nothing. The Health Sciences Centre, that has been kicking around for 20-plus years. So I can take you anywhere in Manitoba and point to those specific improvements.

Now, Mr. Speaker, I go further. You know, it was interesting. They talk about having a health care professionals advisory council. That is their platform on health care. Well, first they fire the professionals, and now they want to consult with them. Their record goes back to the 1990s when they cut the number of nurses. They cut the amount of training of nurses. They even cut the number of doctors being trained. Now, to be fair, that was a part of a national reduction, but what they did in the 1990s set the stage for the kind of health care shortages that we have in place right now.

Now, what else did they do in the 1990s? They tried to privatize home care. Who can forget that fiasco? What also happened, Mr. Speaker, they played games with the capital projects again. They froze the capital projects in 1996-97, and by the time 1999 came along, one of the reasons it was hallway medicine is because of their direct decisions as government. I say to members opposite, let them raise questions about health care. Every time they raise a question about health care, it just reminds people of why they do not trust Tories on health care, Mr. Speaker, going back to 1999, going back a lot longer, and why indeed they will judge this Government, not based on the rhetoric of members opposite, but the actions we have put in place to make a real difference in terms of patient care, a real difference throughout the regions of this province. That is the reality of health care.

Now, I want to talk about education for a moment. Let us deal with education. Talk about

an indication of how out of touch the Conservatives are, have you noticed how they have aligned themselves with this idea that the freeze that we put in place, tuition fee reduction, somehow is a problem, that it is creating difficulties in post-secondary education? Mr. Speaker, we have had record increases in enrolment in post-secondary education in this province, record increases, up dramatically, at the university level, at the community college level. We are well on the way to meeting our target and our commitment of doubling the number of people in the college system.

The bottom line here is it has worked, and what is interesting to my mind is, when I talk to people, and I want to put on the table here, you have to declare conflicts of interest, I have two kids at university. I have seen their tuition statement. I know what a difference our decision as Government has made to my kids in terms of tuition they pay. I look around. There are others that have a similar conflict of interest. I put that in brackets because it is not a legal conflict, but you know what? I have had constituents say to me, I have had, more importantly, most importantly, young people who are attending university saying, boy, can you ever see the difference with an NDP government.

It is interesting. When you have a NDP government, as there was in B.C., lowest tuitions in the country. Now they have changed the government, dramatic increases. We have moved in the other direction. The members opposite really believe, I think, in the end that the higher the tuition the better. I do not think they care about the accessibility factor. I do not think they realize there are a lot of young adults out there who work very hard. They go to school, they work in various jobs, and cannot afford even to lose the kinds of benefits that have been put in place by our actions as a government.

This, indeed, is again something that shows the difference between the Conservative Party and the New Democratic Party. We have made education more affordable. We are moving dramatically in terms of providing the Red River College, the downtown campus, the classroom space that is going to provide the opportunities. We are looking in Brandon, northern Manitoba, the Throne Speech. Not a word from members

opposite about the University College of the North. In their alternate Throne Speech, I do not think the word "North" appeared once. I looked at it. I looked in the front. I looked in the back. I thought maybe there was an appendix. I thought at least the North would be a footnote in their Throne Speech. Not even a footnote. Not a reference to the University College of the North, the Hydro development that is taking place, the development in terms of infrastructure. You know, once again in terms of education in particular, members opposite, for 11 years, basically cut back in terms of education in this province, affecting the affordability.

I want to talk about the public school system because in the last Budget, we had a very significant increase, again the third year in a row, in commitment to public education. I know members opposite do not like the reference to that because the kinds of increases that we have seen for the public school system occurred in the 1990s only in terms of the private system. We have a system that is fair and invests money back in education. I tell you that when we had, in our own community, a 7% increase in funding, people who had been fighting for years for fairer funding under the Tories, people who probably were sympathetic to the Tories politically, were the first ones to say: We sure see the difference from the NDP when it comes to public school funding.

I have to get into a few other issues that may be fairly close to home here, one of which certainly is close to home is the members opposite's comments in terms of highways. I know the Minister of Transportation and Government Services (Mr. Smith) must have nearly fallen out of his chair when he heard the members opposite talking about reinvestment. They are going to invest in highways. I want to tell you the record. I want people then to judge the Tory talk and the NDP action. I want to tell you what the capital budget was in the 1990s. I want to tell you what it was and what it used to go like. It was cyclical. It varied between \$90 million and \$110 million. For some strange reason, before an election, it would go up. Year two, it would go up a bit. Year three, go up. Election year, there were special initiatives. There were announcements here, there and everywhere. You know what used to happen

right after the election? The tap was shut off. The signs were dismantled and all those stakes that were banged up on Highway 59 were put in the back of the Highways pickup truck. What happened? People started to say: Our infrastructure has crumbled.

You know what we did? We developed a long-term plan. Five years, \$600 million, \$120 million each and every year, before during and after an election. What an original idea. We put in place Vision 2020 to talk to Manitobans about their ideas about our transportation system. What I find interesting is the Tories have already made up their mind. They have listed two projects. This shows how out of touch they are. They put Highway 1 twinning, and they put in the Kenaston underpass. Did you hear any reference to the Yellowhead? Did you hear any reference to Highway 75, both parts of our national system? Any mention of northern roads? Any mention of anything in there? Do they really believe that Manitobans would say there are only two priorities in this province?

I want to deal, by the way, with Highway 1. We announced, when we signed the SHIP agreement—they could not get an agreement with the federal government—when we got the first federal money in place, we did invest in it. Where did we invest it? On Highway 1 and on 16. I say to members this is what makes a difference between a government that has to represent and will represent all the people, because that is what governments have to do, and an opposition party that is going to pick and choose. I say to members opposite, they made a huge mistake when they have only two projects in their list. I trust the Minister of Transportation and Government Services (Mr. Smith) to make sure all Manitobans are treated fairly, including Highway 1, including the city of Winnipeg, but not forgetting the rest of the province.

* (17:50)

Let us get into some of the other issues as well. I want to move into conservation. I mentioned about the Kyoto accord. The Tories brought out a Throne Speech. There is a word that does not appear in the Throne Speech anywhere. It is called water. There is no water policy. Okay? Right. It does not appear. You can check it. It is like the North. I am sure that the

Tory word processing programs here, there are some things that just do not appear. The North, we know that, but water, there is no reference in there. It is all about infrastructure. They want to put money into the Kenaston underpass, but no reference about drainage.

I know they have to be sensitive to the fact that when they were in government they cut the budget for drainage maintenance, dramatically cut it. We have reinstated a portion of that. They do not want to reference the fact that we have developed a water strategy. In fact, we have been out consulting with Manitobans, AMM, many others out there. We are starting to recognize I think as a province here that you need a comprehensive strategy that goes from drainage basins and aquifers, that goes through the whole process in terms of drainage, irrigation, sources of drinking water, sources for development, and ensures at the other end that you have proper investment in terms of drinking water safety and in terms of discharge. The bottom line is you have to have a comprehensive policy.

We saw in the case of Ontario what happens when you do not, or when you try and put ideology in place, when you try and privatize, because it does not work. We have seen from other jurisdictions as well that you cannot take for granted one of the greatest assets we have in this country, which is the water, clean water, and clean air, I might add.

The members opposite, not once did they put in about drainage. I went to the AMM meetings, as I always do as minister. We had a meeting on drainage. There were a hundred municipal officials there. We had 85 requests for meetings from municipalities. What is the No. 1 issue out there? It is drainage.

I met with those municipalities. I know the Member for Portage (Mr. Faurchou), I do not have to preach to him, because he has been converted a long time ago. He knows about drainage. The Member for Morris (Mr. Pitura) most definitely does. I do not know why I would pick them out from others. I am not playing to the galleries here, Mr. Speaker, believe you me.

You know, I do not know whoever wrote the Throne Speech if they have ever really set foot

in rural Manitoba, but if they have and they have not noticed the fact that drainage is a big issue, I would suggest maybe you, starting with your leader, send them out on a little tour around rural and northern Manitoba, get them to learn first, because when you put in place a document that is supposedly your plan for Manitoba and you have nothing in there for drainage, there is a serious, serious problem.

You notice I am going through issue by issue here. I want to get into agriculture. I just love the—no, I cannot say that. Can I say the word? Yes, I can say it. Hypocrisy. Now, I am not referring to any member. I can say it in terms of a hypocritical approach to politics, because you know what amazes me, they get up and they talk: We have to cut taxes. We have to cut programs. Does anyone really believe that when they have done that they are going to find a hat and they are going to pull a rabbit out called significant aid to agriculture? I will tell you why it is not the case. I always ask this question when I am in rural Manitoba. You know what I say? I just ask them a straightforward question here. I ask them to give me a rough idea of what the expenditures on agriculture were under the Tories and compared to what we have done in three years. Without pulling rabbits out of the hat, we have done more for agriculture in the last three years than they ever did.

It is very easy to spend the Monopoly money of opposition, when you say you are going to cut taxes on the one hand and you are going to increase this, that and the other on the other side, but action speaks louder than words.

It brings me to the basic theme of my speech today. I notice the Member for Arthur-Virden (Mr. Maguire) even put it in. I think the exact quote was: You can always count on the Conservatives to speak for rural Manitoba. That reminds me of sort of the way that the Mulroney Tories used to talk about a good part of this province, a good part of the country. You know he used to go around, you know, the kind of smugness, the kind of arrogance that goes with, ah, yup, you know, people have always voted for us in those areas. They are always going to vote for us. You know, the yellow dog sort of country analogy that was used.

I would suggest to members opposite they be very careful about those smug kind of statements because you cannot take rural Manitoba for granted anymore. No one can take for granted the support of people who may have supported historically for this that or the other, Mr. Speaker, when the reality is not there. I just want to deal with that because increasingly what I found when you go to rural Manitoba—and I tried to invite members opposite who were not able to go to the MM to talk to some of the municipal councillors. You will find it reflected there. I think you will find it when you travel, as I do, when you meet with people, whether it is coffee shops or it is a form of public meetings.

A lot of people, including in a lot of areas that have not traditionally supported the NDP, are starting to reflect on the fact that this NDP government is accessible, it is visible, it is bringing in programs, not just in certain areas of the province but throughout the province, Mr. Speaker. I could count a number of times I have been to areas like Morden and Winkler and Steinbach. I could run through the programs that we have put in place that are making a real difference in those communities, in southeast Manitoba, in terms of the way we have worked with people, southwest. I mean, you could run through the different communities, but you know what is interesting, again, this concept of, well, you know Tories have always spoken for rural Manitoba. You know what, I ask people, very simply a lot of times, same thing in northern Manitoba, you would probably do the same thing in the city, ask them to define what the Tories did in the 11 years they were in office. I mean, let us put aside the fact that essentially the Conservatives are arguing now, after 3 years in opposition, their big—if you were to sum up what most of their questions are in Question Period, they come down to this. The Tories, if they were to be really up front about this, they would say: We, the Tories, created a mess in the 11 years we were in government. How come you have not cleaned it up quicker? That is their position on health care. They get up and say you still have people in the hallway, you know, three people. We had 97 on the same day three years ago, so you are bad.

I mean, Mr. Speaker, most Manitobans, I think, if they saw this, they would laugh at it, but

that is what it comes down to. Now, I ask this question, and the funny part is there is a blank. People just go, yeah, what did they do, let me think, 11 years. Then I ask the question: Did they equalize Hydro rates? No. Did they start dealing with drainage issues? No. Did they deal with highway issues? No.

I start running down the list. How was health care in rural Manitoba under the Tories? Well, they do not want to talk about that, Mr. Speaker. They still remember those years. So I start running down the list. Now I also have another question, by the way, and this goes down particularly well in northern Manitoba. It goes down well elsewhere. With their complete lack of any view of rural northern development, talking about Hydro, I ask the question: How many hydro dams did the Conservatives build, going back to 1969? I will give you a hint here. It is a trick question. The answer is none, zero, not one, not a thing, not a megawatt, not a watt—not even a watt. They did not build enough capacity to fire up a light bulb, a 60-watt light bulb.

I just say you can talk all you want, and I encourage members opposite to campaign in the next election, to say that the Tories always talked for rural Manitoba. Well, you know what, yeah, they do talk, Mr. Speaker, and when elections come in, boy, do they talk, but you want to see action on things that really matter in rural Manitoba, look at the NDP government, look at our record on highways, look at our record on Conservation, look at our record in Agriculture.

Now you see, that is what it comes down to, because you read through these speeches here again; they are playing sort of the typical Tory approach. I will tell you what. They are better than this. They are better at one thing than we are, the New Democratic Party. They never pretend to speak for everyone. They do not even try. We saw that when they were in government. There are all sort of people, Aboriginal people. Do not miss the subtle, little references in this document in terms of Aboriginal people. No, they do not count. The North, not even a footnote. I already dealt with that. You have eliminated two-thirds of the province. Then,

what they do, it is like their urban strategy, they pick one infrastructure program in southeast Winnipeg. No reference to the rest of the city. So you start running through. It used to be called divide and conquer, but we saw the ultimate expression when the Leader of the Opposition (Mr. Murray) got up and gave us his lecture about this kind of view that somehow only Tories, and only Tories who have run a business are qualified to be MLAs. Well, I will tell you what, Mr. Speaker, he was wrong. There are MLAs on this side who have run businesses and continue to run businesses in Cabinet and out of Cabinet. Once again, the smug, arrogance of members opposite. I also say to members opposite, they do a disservice when they talk that way because our role as MLAs and, in fact, our role as a government is to represent all Manitobans.

Anyone that gets the support of their constituents is qualified to be an MLA. Anybody who suggests differently shows their true elitist sense of the way this place operates. That is what I want to get to in terms of the difference between the NDP and the difference between the Conservatives. Is there any surprise, when you look at this, that only the NDP has representation in all three regions of the province, urban, rural and North? Tories have not had an MLA in northern Manitoba for years. I wish they would try. I hope they do. Start by putting something in your Throne Speech that references the North.

We work hard to represent all the ethno-cultural diversity of this province as well as the regional diversity. I was really proud when we were part of announcing four ethnocultural centres under the infrastructure program. The work we have done in terms of immigration reflects the diversity. We believe you have to speak for all Manitobans, and we are ready any place, any time to debate the Tories in their elitist view of the province.

Mr. Speaker: Order. When this matter is again before the House, the honourable Minister of Conservation (Mr. Ashton) will have four minutes remaining.

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

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Tuesday, December 3, 2002

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