

Tuesday, November 13, 2001



## LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

### VOTES AND PROCEEDINGS No. 1

THIRD SESSION, THIRTY-SEVENTH LEGISLATURE

1:30 O'CLOCK P.M.

This being the first day of the meeting of the Third Session of the Thirty-Seventh Legislature of the Province of Manitoba convoked by Proclamation of His Honour Peter LIBA, Lieutenant Governor for the dispatch of business, and the Members of the House being assembled,

His Honour Peter LIBA, was pleased to open the session with the following gracious speech:

Mister Speaker and Members of the Manitoba Legislature:

I welcome you to the third session of the thirty-seventh Legislative Assembly of the Province of Manitoba.

We come together in this Legislature for the first time since the tragic events in the United States. The impact of this tragedy is brought home to us by the loss of Christine Egan, a Manitoba nurse, educator and health care advocate, who was killed while visiting her brother at the World Trade Center.

I ask that we stand for a minute of silence in memory of the thousands of innocent people who lost their lives on September 11 – in New York, in Washington, in the fields of Pennsylvania – and in the days following.

Thank you. Please be seated.

After the terrorist attacks two months ago, we live in a less certain world. Our most pressing challenge, as citizens and as elected members of this Chamber, is to assure ourselves that we have taken all steps necessary to address the new dangers we have witnessed.

The work of reviewing and improving security measures in Manitoba began immediately after September 11 and has been carried through with the active support of all parties in this Legislature. In the coming week, my Ministers will introduce a set of legislative changes that strengthen our ability to respond to security threats in Manitoba.

This must be your first order of business: to respond to the anxieties felt by our citizens with actions that are measured and practical.

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Collectively, our longer-term challenge is to ensure that these anxieties do not deflect us from the course we have democratically chosen. We must rededicate ourselves to the goals we have set as a community:

- Building together to strengthen the services all citizens depend on;
- Ensuring a better future for our children through access to education, stewardship of our resources and a commitment to sustainable growth; and
- Striving on all fronts to create a more inclusive society.

In short, we will dedicate ourselves to achieving security for Manitobans in the broadest sense, which is to protect and enhance those things we hold most dear.

On September 11, Manitobans responded to the tragedy in the U.S. as we have responded so many times to crises within our own communities – with compassion and practical assistance.

Travelers who were stranded on that day were taken in and afforded every possible courtesy. In the weeks that followed, thousands of Manitobans came forward to donate blood, to sign the Book of Condolences sent to the American people, and to make personal contributions to the relief effort in the U.S.

From the onset of the crisis, our health officials and emergency personnel have worked with their counterparts across North America to coordinate anti-terrorism measures. Last month, an All-Party Committee of the Legislature was formed to advise on Manitoba's response to the new security challenge.

To date, that response has included:

- Development of a Bio-Terrorism Plan, which was proposed as a model to the federal government;
- Enhancement of laboratory testing procedures for suspicious materials;
- A dedicated phone line, allowing physicians to consult in a more timely way with medical officers of health;
- Added measures to improve the safety of airports and air travel;
- A review of security at major infrastructure sites, leading to added levels of precaution;
- Improved guidelines for First Responders who are dealing with suspicious packages or suspected biological agents;
- New procedures for mail handling and delivery, implemented in cooperation with Canada Post; and

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- A formal liaison with bordering U.S. states, to coordinate with the Homeland Security initiative.

The security measures taken to date will be reinforced by a set of legislative changes to be introduced for early consideration this week. These include:

- Changes to the Public Health Act, to better coordinate responses to public health emergencies;
- An expanded role for the Fire Commissioner in coordinating emergency response services;
- More secure procedures for acquiring certificates of identification;
- New requirements for safely transporting hazardous materials, and for the safe storage of pesticides, industrial chemicals and explosives;
- Safety requirements covering the sale and operation of aerial sprayers;
- Mandatory training for security guards; and
- New standards for municipal emergency response plans.
- In addition, bills will be introduced which:
  - Preserve voting rights and other benefits for members of the Canadian Armed Forces called to serve overseas;
  - Extend the presumptive benefits for Manitoba firefighters suffering from job-related illnesses; and
  - Recognize the important role of community volunteers.

While facing up to Manitoba's security challenges in the coming year, your government will also face up to the challenges posed by a slow-down in the international economy.

Manitoba will not be immune to this slow-down, which has already affected our major trading partners.

We do, however, possess advantages to offset the effects of an economic downturn: the diversity of our provincial economy, the skills and resourcefulness of our people, and the cost advantages of low hydro rates and affordable communities.

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Current forecasts project a slowing in the economic growth Manitoba has achieved in recent years. Resource sectors, including forestry and mining, will be affected most significantly by declines in world commodity prices.

Maintaining consumer confidence is critical to the prospects for a timely recovery. With interest rates at such low levels, this is actually one of the best times to make a long term investment in a home or a car.

This is also the time to be moving forward with capital investments. Your government will proceed with several major construction projects in the coming year, including the expansion of the Brandon Regional Health Centre, the construction of a downtown campus for Red River College, and preparations for new hydroelectric generation in the North.

These projects will be matched by private sector construction, including the new \$120 million Simplot plant in Portage la Prairie, expansion of the Albchem plant in Virden, and planned expansions at Standard Aero and Canada West Foods in Winnipeg.

Investments in innovation will continue to have priority. Two weeks ago, the governments of Manitoba and Canada announced the creation of a \$25 million Centre for Nutraceutical and Functional Foods Research at the University of Manitoba. The new Centre will be a driver for agricultural diversification based on leading edge research – drawing on investments in basic health research and Manitoba's growing biotechnology industry.

Your government is also working with Manitoba Hydro and local industry to seize opportunities in the rapidly evolving energy sector. The Energy Development Initiative is a new program to promote the development of our vast energy resources and to keep Manitoba at the forefront on alternative, renewable energy sources – such as ethanol, wind, biomass, geothermal and hydrogen.

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Laying the foundations for future growth is as important now as ever. The pillars of Manitoba's new growth strategy are investments in education and youth, new partnerships to build and revitalize our communities, and sound management of public resources.

Two years of strategic investment in post-secondary education in Manitoba is paying off dramatically, with a 12% increase in enrollment at our public colleges and universities. The bulk of new investment has gone to creating new spaces and programs, in keeping with the provincial commitment made two years ago.

In addition, public investment in education infrastructure is being used to attract private sector donations. At the University of Manitoba, for example, a \$50 million commitment from the province has led to the creation of a combined \$100 million fund for campus building projects.

The province's affordability initiative has also had a far-reaching impact. Hope is a powerful motivator; and it is important for young Manitobans to know that, if they work hard in school, we as legislators will work hard to make a college or university education accessible.

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The growing number of young people enrolled in post-secondary programs will help stabilize our workforce during a period of reduced growth and position us with the skills Manitoba will need to take full advantage of the economic recovery.

Your government's education strategy is an agenda for inclusion as well as growth. It includes a commitment to stable investment and quality options in our schools. It also includes a commitment to *early years* programs that support new parents and prepare children for success in school. The Healthy Child initiative has established 25 Parent-Child Centres across Manitoba to promote nutrition, literacy and positive parenting, and has introduced Canada's first pre-natal benefit.

Inclusion also means recognizing and celebrating the distinct communities that make up our province. In March of the coming year Winnipeg will host the nationally-televised Aboriginal Achievement Awards. In July, Manitoba plays host to the North American Indigenous Games, which is a celebration of cultural as well as athletic achievement.

The international face of Manitoba has become one of our economic assets, opening doors to international trade and opportunity. Total immigration to Manitoba last year was 24% higher than in 1999. Your government is committed to further increases in immigration, working in partnership with Manitoba business, labour and multicultural communities.

At the same time, your government remains committed to establishing new partnerships for local community development. Partnerships with local neighborhoods for housing and youth opportunities will be continued this year, building on the early successes of Lighthouses, Neighbourhoods Alive! and the Winnipeg Housing and Homelessness Initiative. Three government service centres will be established in Francophone communities, and a new Issues Office will be opened to assist Manitobans with disabilities.

A special focus will be the development of partnerships with First Nations and the Metis community for resource management and development. One model for partnership is the equity and training agreements recently signed by Manitoba Hydro and the First Nations of Split Lake and Nelson House. Other models of resource co-management are being developed with First Nations and Metis organizations.

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Maintaining a balanced fiscal framework remains a fundamental requirement for meeting our public commitments. My Ministers have worked hard to meet their budget targets, to make progress each year on debt repayment and transparency, and to strike the proper balance between investments in our citizens and sustainable tax reductions.

This balanced approach will continue, while adjusting to the new challenge posed by a slowing economy. Clearly, some hard choices must be made.

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Your government will focus its resources to maintain critical investments in health, education and security. Ministers will work directly with service providers to streamline administrative costs and ensure that frontline services are the priority.

- School administration will be reduced through amalgamation, to direct more of our education investment into the classroom.
- In the North, a “closer to home” strategy will be launched, with flexible training options brought directly to remote communities and routine medical procedures such as tests and dialysis treatment delivered at community sites – thus reducing the need for costly medivacs.
- The range of government services delivered over the internet will be expanded, as part of the province’s “e-government” initiative.

Notwithstanding the economic slowdown, your government reconfirms the tax reductions scheduled for January 1, 2002 – which are targeted to middle income families and small businesses. In total, Manitoba personal income taxes have been reduced by \$147 million, or 9%, over this government’s mandate.

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Since the election two years ago, substantial progress has been made in restoring public health care in Manitoba. In 1999, Manitoba had the highest level of per capita health spending in Canada – and yet at the same time we were not preparing to meet our human resource challenges.

Your government has put in place a new strategy to expand the training of health professionals. The number of health training spaces has increased by over 400, following the reinstatement of the Nursing Diploma program and the expansion of the medical program at the University of Manitoba. The number of nursing graduates in 2002 will be triple the number that graduated in 1999. Of the medical students currently enrolled, over 100 have received training grants tied to future practice in Manitoba.

Manitoba’s health spending is now fourth highest in Canada. Measures taken to contain health costs since 1999 include the introduction of a more efficient day surgery model, and the combining of the two health authorities in Winnipeg.

We must state plainly, however, that no province in Canada can sustain the growth in health care costs without increased federal support. The increase in federal CHST for 2002 is \$45 million – to support a base budget of \$3.5 billion for Manitoba health, education and social programs. This increase will only deal with a fraction of the demand in all those areas, and will place a special burden on health care.

A national strategy for health care is an urgent and critical need. Across the country, pharmacare costs alone are increasing at a rate of between 15% and 20% each year. In the absence of a Canadian drug strategy, these increases are being covered entirely out of provincial revenues. Your government will continue working with other provinces to secure an adequate level of federal support for health services.

In Manitoba, improvements in patient care will proceed, but on a sustainable basis. In the past two years, waiting lists have been reduced for breast screening, bone density testing and prostate cancer treatment. The strain on overtaxed emergency wards has eased considerably, due to improved bed management and better use of home care services. In the future, more nurses at the bedside will continue the trend of keeping patients out of the hallway.

Health capital investments are proceeding on plan and within budget. This year, major capital improvements are underway at regional hospitals in Beausejour, Brandon and Thompson. New diagnostic equipment has been installed at Seven Oaks and Victoria hospitals, and \$25 million in capital improvements were recently completed at the Health Sciences Centre.

Health innovations are also proceeding on a sustainable basis. To improve preventive care, and “closer to home” treatment, Community Health Access Centres will be opened in two Winnipeg locations and a new dialysis unit will be established to serve the Island Lake communities.

New initiatives will be introduced to improve citizens’ access to care providers, and to timely and accurate health information. This year, your government will establish a Family Doctor Registry, enabling Manitobans who do not currently have a family physician to be linked with doctors who are accepting new clients.

Improvements in preventive health include new measures to ensure that Manitobans are safer in their workplaces, in their cars, and in their own backyards.

- New legislation will be introduced to reduce workplace injuries in Manitoba. The changes follow extensive consultations now underway with Manitoba workers and employers.
- Legislation will also be introduced allowing the Minister of Health to mandate mosquito control measures in response to a public health emergency. At the same time, the provincial government will work with municipal governments to implement expanded larviciding programs and to evaluate their effectiveness in reducing mosquito populations.
- A provincial Drinking Water Office will be established, as recommended by the Drinking Water Task Force, and new regulations will require mandatory certification of drinking water plant operators.
- Graduated licensing of Manitoba drivers will be fully implemented this year, drawing from the experience of other jurisdictions in Canada where traffic fatalities were significantly reduced.

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- The provincial government will also enact changes passed by the previous government in 1998, authorizing local governments and police to use new photo technology for enforcing traffic light infractions. As part of the same package, photo radar devices will be allowed for use at intersections (where two-thirds of car accidents occur) and in designated safety zones such as schoolyards, playgrounds and construction sites.

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Strong community schools are at the center of your government's strategy for K-to-S4 education. The recently announced amalgamation initiative will reduce administration costs while maintaining the level of provincial support for schools – allowing more resources to be directed to the classroom.

At the same time, my Education Minister will work with schools to improve reporting of education outcomes to the community, using a best practices model developed in Manitoba schools. In the coming year, your government will launch the first Annual Report on student outcomes in Manitoba, tracking educational achievement across subject and grade levels.

Manitoba parents will be provided with more information on the curriculum expectations for their children at every stage of learning.

Your government will ensure that social studies programs now being developed for our schools will give a prominent place to Canadian history, geography and citizenship, so that our young people develop a strong sense of their heritage. Schools will continue to be encouraged to award credits for the learning of heritage languages and for the volunteer work of students.

Your government has taken the first steps in its commitment to reduce education taxes, by introducing a \$150 property tax credit for every homeowner or renter. As a result, many Manitobans saw the first reduction in their property tax bills in over a decade. Further efforts will be taken to reduce education taxes, working in consultation with local governments and school boards.

In the coming year, your government will also build on the significant improvements already made to post-secondary education and training in Manitoba.

There is no doubt that the increased enrollment in post-secondary institutions bodes well for our future. But to meet our goals, the momentum behind the College Expansion Initiative must be maintained.

Special partnerships have been developed to expand apprenticeship programs in Manitoba, to dramatically increase nursing training, and to introduce new aboriginal training initiatives related to Hydro development. Training for Manitoba's growing aerospace industry was significantly upgraded with the recent expansion of the Stevenson aviation facility.



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New initiatives this year will include legislated guidelines to improve the administration of adult education throughout Manitoba and an expansion of the college and training options available in remote northern communities.

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While addressing the potential security threats associated with international terrorism, your government is also committed to addressing security issues in our neighbourhoods.

Citizens need to feel a sense of ownership of their own communities. Legislation introduced this session will allow authorities to deal with fortified gang houses. In the coming year, citizen patrols will be expanded with new training and coordination support. And the successful Lighthouses initiative, which keeps school gyms and computer rooms open for evening activities, will be expanded with support from other funding partners.

Another priority is to improve protection for children and seniors. Your government is working with the federal government to develop new protection for children on-line and a national Sex Offender Registry. A package of new safety measures for Manitoba seniors is being developed across provincial departments.

A special commitment has been made to carry out the recommendations of the Aboriginal Justice Implementation Commission. Several initiatives are already underway, including the development of new partnerships with First Nations and the Manitoba Metis Federation to establish child welfare authorities, and expanded Aboriginal roles in policing and sentencing.

Next steps include the establishment of regional Aboriginal probation services and the creation of an AJIC Roundtable. The Roundtable will be the leadership body which monitors progress on AJIC recommendations.

Other changes are underway to improve access to justice for Manitoba citizens. Legislation introduced this session will:

- Make it easier for Manitobans to pursue class action remedies in the courts;
- Bring Manitoba's Limitations of Action Act in line with legislation in other provinces;
- Strengthen civil orders of protection for victims of stalking or domestic violence; and
- Ensure that Manitoba laws comply fully with the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms.

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In the coming year, your government will be moving from consultation on sustainability policies to action.

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The Report of the Climate Change Task Force, which was released in September following extensive consultations, will be the blueprint for making Manitoba a leader in clean air and alternative energy strategies.

Our province is well-positioned to play a leadership role. Thanks to our natural advantages of forests, lakes and rivers, and our investments in renewable hydro-electricity, Manitoba already has one of the lowest levels of greenhouse emissions of any jurisdiction in the world. Recent decisions to replace Manitoba Hydro's coal generator in Selkirk and to set aside protected forest and wetland areas will further reduce emissions in our province. Manitoba has formally declared to the federal government our support for ratifying the Kyoto Accord.

Your government is also committed to an alternative energy strategy that seizes on the economic opportunities arising from Climate Change. Through our Hydro exports, Manitoba has become a regional supplier of renewable energy and has contributed in a major way to the displacement of carbon-fuel emissions.

Through new initiatives on ethanol use and production, new research on alternative fuels such as hydrogen, and new legislation to expand Manitoba Hydro's conservation mandate, our province can be at the forefront of an emerging clean energy economy.

The development of a comprehensive Climate Change Strategy is already underway and will be carried through as a partnership between national and local governments, First Nations, non-governmental organizations and educators. A Climate Change Hub will be established to serve as a focal point for ideas, implementation strategies and curriculum.

Water quality and improved water management are critical challenges for all regions of our province. Your government's new Water Strategy includes:

- Restoration of public support for water testing, and new infrastructure investments to ensure that Manitoba communities have access to clean drinking water.
- Increased support for drainage projects and watershed planning throughout rural Manitoba; and
- A major initiative to improve flood protection for our capital city.

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It is critical that rural Manitoba remains strong and healthy.

That is why your government is launching a new Rural Development Strategy, building on recent initiatives such as the equalization of Hydro rates, reductions in farm property taxes, extension of the ethanol incentive, and a new, province-wide program to improve drainage and watershed management.

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Manitoba will continue to seek a more effective partnership with the federal government to support a farm economy that is threatened by subsidized competition from abroad and unstable weather at home. Provincial flood insurance has been extended and improved, and farm safety net programs are being reformed to better meet the needs of producers.

More will be done. The Livestock Stewardship Initiative, developed through close consultation with industry and community stakeholders, will allow for growth in the livestock industry that is economically sound and sustainable. Livestock production is the fastest growing component of the agricultural economy, accounting for \$100 million in direct investment per year and over 50% of total farm receipts.

Initiatives taken to date are based on the idea that more information will make the local approval process more decisive. These initiatives include:

- Increased inspection of manure storage facilities;
- Upgrading of provincial groundwater maps;
- Initiation of a major soil sustainability study;
- Assisting municipalities to upgrade planning bylaws; and
- Expanding the role of Technical Review Committees.

In the coming year, your government will implement remaining recommendations of the Panel, focused on training, research, and streamlining of the municipal approvals process.

Your government recognizes the need to develop innovative approaches to the challenge of rural development. Project 2000 is a program that will ease the transition between generations of farming families, providing retiring farmers with financial security and allowing young farmers to get a solid start. Investments in agriculture research, including the new Nutraceutical Centre, will support farm diversification and product development.

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The Northern Development Strategy was launched this fall as a new initiative focusing on the housing, health, transportation and training needs of northern Manitoba. The initiative builds on the repriorizing of northern infrastructure projects, including new dredging at the Port of Churchill, and major new investments in northern roads, airstrips and air terminals.

The East Side of Lake Winnipeg is home both to a unique expanse of untouched boreal forest and to communities that do not have access to the transportation networks most Manitobans take for granted. Your government is beginning the second phase of a sustainable planning process for the East Side that will include a new engineering study for a road to the community of Bloodvein, the designation of protected areas, and economic development opportunities for local communities.

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Federal partnerships are essential for developing a comprehensive approach to northern development. Your provincial government has committed to expanding the college and training options available in remote communities and to delivering routine health services closer to home.

Manitoba Hydro has initiated training programs linked to new Hydro developments, and new partnerships have been forged with First Nation, Metis and other northern communities to increase participation in resource management and social services.

Creating new linkages within the north and new access to northern attractions is a major part of our development strategy. Agreements signed between the province and Nunavut have created the basis for expanding trade and services exchange within the northern region. Your government will make a major new investment this year to promote Manitoba tourism and develop eco-tourism destinations. As part of this initiative, a new province-wide program will be introduced to upgrade provincial campsites.

The settlement of First Nations and Aboriginal entitlements has been accelerated over the past two years. Manitoba Hydro has worked closely with Northern Flood Agreement communities on development projects selected by the communities. Partnerships with First Nations governments in the north and rural Manitoba have been developed alongside new partnerships with urban Aboriginal organizations. The new AJIC Roundtable will provide a forum for Aboriginal representatives to monitor progress on the whole set of initiatives recommended by the Commissioners.

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The urban centres of Winnipeg and Brandon have benefited from new investments intended to revitalize our downtown areas and strengthen the role of our cities as hubs for higher education, research and specialized health care.

Your government's commitment to rebuilding our college and university campuses is in line with recent studies demonstrating the central role that research and education plays in the economic life of cities. Capital and research investments recently announced for the hospitals of Brandon and Winnipeg demonstrate an ongoing commitment to excellence in health care.

Productive partnerships with city governments and with groups working in our urban neighbourhoods reflect a new approach to housing and safety issues. Your government will continue to use this partnership approach to build and rehabilitate housing, to expand recreational opportunities for youth, and to promote the use of citizen patrols.

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At the same time, the provincial government is committed to modernizing its relationship with city governments. A provincial Task Force has been appointed to develop a more effective model of governance for the capital region, starting from shared objectives such as region-wide drinking water standards and more effective mosquito control. The province has also begun a joint review of the City of Winnipeg Act, with the intent of modernizing the Act and creating a less prescriptive framework for City governance.

The urgent need to improve long-term flood protection for Winnipeg was made apparent by the flood crisis of 1997, and has been the focus of joint studies undertaken since that time by the Province, the City and the federal government.

We are now close to reaching a decision on the appropriate project to enhance flood protection. The engineering studies prepared over the past six months will be released shortly for public review and comment.

Your government is committed to moving as quickly as possible to put in place a new level of flood protection for our capital. Federal partnership was critical to the construction of the Winnipeg floodway and is just as critical today for the enhancement of flood protection.

Public consultations will be held at the design stage and during the licensing process, and an all-party committee of the Legislature will be formed to advise the government on all aspects of the project. Whichever project is chosen, special care will be taken to protect the interests of Manitobans living to the north and south of Winnipeg, and to put in place more effective and timely protocols for flood damage compensation.

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Members of the Legislature and invited guests, I would like to close by observing that the year 2001 was designated the "International Year of Volunteers." It has indeed been a year in which we are prompted to reflect on the contributions so many selfless and outstanding individuals make to our communities and our way of life.

I am pleased to note that members of this Chamber will be giving early consideration to a Bill allowing for more Manitobans to be selected for membership in the Order of Manitoba. I invite all citizens to take this opportunity for recognizing outstanding contributions to our province by nominating worthy individuals for membership.

I am also pleased to note that Manitoba will have the honour of hosting Her Majesty Elizabeth II, Queen of Canada, in October of next year. Her Majesty's visit to Manitoba, the first since 1984, is part of the celebrations marking the Silver Jubilee.

As you proceed to carry out the responsibilities the people of Manitoba have entrusted to you, I trust that Divine Providence will guide your deliberations in the best interests of all our citizens.

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His Honour, the Lieutenant Governor was then pleased to retire.

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**PRAYERS**

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Hon. Mr. DOER, by leave of the House, introduced Bill (No. 1) – An Act Respecting the Administration of Oaths of Office/Loi sur la prestation des serments d'entrée en fonction, which was read a First Time.

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Mr. Speaker then informed the House that Rachel GOTTHILF, Katie PARSONS, Meagan BALLANTINE-DICKSON, Heidi HAGENLOCHER, Meghan CAMPBELL, Sean CARNEY, Heather BRERETON and Megan MCLEAN had been appointed Pages for the Third Session of the Thirty-Seventh Legislature.

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On motion of Hon. Mr. DOER:

ORDERED that the Speech of His Honour, the Lieutenant Governor be taken into consideration tomorrow.

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Hon. Mr. DOER moved:

THAT this House do now adjourn.

And the Question being put. It was agreed to.

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The House then adjourned at 2:25 p.m. until 1:30 p.m. Wednesday, November 14, 2001.

Hon. George HICKES,  
Speaker.