

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

Thursday, November 28, 2002

The House met at 1:30 p.m.

PRAYERS

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

TABLING OF REPORTS

Mr. Speaker: I am pleased to table the Annual Report of the Legislative Assembly Management Commission for the year ended March 31, 2002. Copies of the report have been placed on the members' desks.

Also I am pleased to table, in accordance with section 28 of The Auditor General Act, the Value-for-Money Audit on the Student Financial Assistance Program, Department of Advanced Education, that was conducted by the Auditor General. Copies of the report were distributed intersessionally to members of the Legislative Assembly.

I am also pleased to table, in accordance with section 28 of The Auditor General Act, the report on the Investigation of the Rural Municipality of St. Clements and Review of Municipal Financial Accounting and Reporting Standards in Manitoba that was conducted by the Auditor General. Copies of the reports were distributed intersessionally to members of the Legislative Assembly.

Introduction of Guests

Mr. Speaker: Prior to Oral Questions, I would like to draw the attention of all honourable members to the Speaker's Gallery where the six individuals who were appointed to the Manitoba Legislative Internship Programme for the year 2002-2003 are seated. In accordance with established practice, three interns were assigned to the Government caucus and three to the Official Opposition caucus. Their term of employment is 12 months, and they have been performing a variety of research and other tasks for private members. These interns commenced

their assignments in September and will complete them in August.

They are, working with the Government caucus: Ms. Florence Monica Dominguez of the University of Winnipeg, Mr. Patrick Sarginson of the University of Winnipeg and Ms. Rachel Whiddon of the University of Manitoba.

Working with the caucus of the Official Opposition: Ms. Janelle Marie Bordass of the University of Winnipeg, Ms. Carlee-ann Dueck of the University of Winnipeg and Ms. Theresa R.A. Vandean of the University of Winnipeg.

* (13:35)

Copies of their biographies have been distributed to members. The interns are accompanied by Professor Khan who looks after the academic portion of the internship. The administration of the program is carried out by our Clerk, Patricia Chaychuk, and the caucus representatives on the Internship Administration Committee are the Member for Carman (Mr. Rocan) and the Member for Radisson (Ms. Cerilli).

I would like to take this opportunity, on behalf of all members, to congratulate the interns on their appointment to the program and to hope they will have a very interesting and successful year with the Assembly.

Also I would like to draw the attention of honourable members to the public gallery where we have with us today a class in politics and the mass media from the University of Winnipeg under the direction of instructor Donald Benham.

Also seated in the public gallery from Carpathia School 24 Grade 6 students under the direction of Mr. Emanuel Tavares. This school is located in the constituency of the honourable Member for Tuxedo (Mrs. Stefanson).

Also in the public gallery from St. François Xavier Community School we have 29 Grade 5 students under the direction of Mrs. Betty Tiltman. This school is located in the constituency of the honourable Member for Morris (Mr. Pitura).

Also in the public gallery from Garden City Collegiate we have 23 Grade 9 students under the direction of Mr. Matthew Siebert. This school is located in the constituency of the honourable Minister of Health (Mr. Chomiak).

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

ORAL QUESTION PERIOD

Taxation System Reductions

Mr. Stuart Murray (Leader of the Official Opposition): Mr. Speaker, instead of looking in the rearview mirror, Manitobans are looking for a government with new ideas. They want vision, hope and a plan for the future.

Yesterday, instead of new ideas for Manitoba's future, we saw a government that is devoid of new thinking. After three years of the Doer government more people are leaving Manitoba. Employment growth last year was half the national average, capital investment was well below the national average and Manitobans under the Doer government continued to be the highest taxed west of Québec.

Will the Premier commit today to provide meaningful tax relief in his next Budget so Manitobans can start down the road of being competitive?

Mr. Speaker: Order. Prior to recognizing the honourable First Minister, I would like to remind our guests in the public gallery there is to be no participation, and that includes applauding.

Hon. Gary Doer (Premier): The Speech from the Throne yesterday must be so adequate for purposes of the future of Manitoba that the Leader of the Opposition did not have a question on it. He wants to ask questions on the Budget that is not before this Chamber yet. Obviously, I am pleased the Leader of the Opposition is

supporting the Speech from the Throne that was presented to the people of Manitoba.

Mr. Murray: Well, Mr. Speaker—

Mr. Speaker: Order. I know we had a little break and members are anxious to get into it, but we have the viewing public in the gallery and on television. I ask the co-operation of all honourable members, please.

Mr. Murray: Yesterday the Premier had the opportunity to provide Manitobans with his vision for Manitoba's economic future. He had the opportunity, the chance to tell us what he will do to keep Manitoba business strong and to attract new businesses to Manitoba by creating a more competitive tax environment and stem the flow of people out of Manitoba. Yet there was no mention of any new tax cuts, no mention of making our province more competitive, no mention of private-sector involvement in our economy.

Why does the Premier feel that the Government and not the private sector should be driving Manitoba's economy? Why does he believe that?

* (13:40)

Mr. Doer: Mr. Speaker, the question is devoid of substance from the Speech from the Throne.

In the 1990s, under former members opposite, the number of jobs in the province of Manitoba averaged a growth of 3000 a year. In the three years we have taken office the growth rate in jobs in the province is twice that.

We may not be perfect, but we are performing twice the time on job creation as members opposite did through their 11 years.

Mr. Murray: Mr. Speaker, the Doer government is a government that just sits on its laurels. The Premier's Throne Speech yesterday clearly proved that he thinks government and not the private sector should be driving our economy. We on this side of the House know it is the private sector that drives the economy.

On Monday we provided an economic vision that will make Manitoba more competitive, that will attract new businesses to

Manitoba and it will drive our economy and our province forward.

My question to the Premier is this: Will the Premier commit to meaningful tax relief in his next Budget in order to keep the businesses we have in Manitoba and to attract new businesses to our province?

Mr. Doer: The member opposite talks about the situation in Manitoba. We had a situation when we came into office that the corporate income tax was the highest in Canada. We are lowering it for the first time since the Second World War.

We had a situation where the income taxes in Manitoba were the highest east and west of Québec before we came into office.

Every year we make progress, 11% reduction in taxes. We have promised to increase the property tax credits. We have done that. We have promised to phase down the ESL, Mr. Speaker, something members opposite never thought about. We are doing that. We have a seven-point economic plan.

I want to point out in two areas the Government will be having greater partnership with the private sector. In immigration, we will be passing a new law to have the private sector involved with the Government in planning for the future. In tourism, we will bring in new legislation to have the private sector more involved.

I would like to ask the member opposite. We believe in both the private sector and the public sector for economic growth. How can any member of the Manitoba Legislature or any leader of any political party have an economic vision when they do not state that Manitoba Hydro is crucial to our future?

You left Hydro out of your statement. You do not have a statement.

Mr. Speaker: The honourable Leader of the Official Opposition, on a new question.

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Speaker: Order. I am sure we all want to hear the question. The honourable Leader of the Official Opposition, on a new question.

Health Care System Private/Public Agreements

Mr. Stuart Murray (Leader of the Official Opposition): On a new question, Mr. Speaker. We know that a strong economy is fundamental to our ability to provide the quality services that Manitobans require and deserve.

Manitobans want and deserve choice and access to timely health care, not more broken promises. Hallway medicine has no end in sight. Long waiting lists are not acceptable. Ideology and the status quo is what we are seeing from the Doer government. For Manitobans, it is simply not acceptable.

Earlier this week we offered to work with the Doer government to develop a framework with regional health authorities so they can offer Manitobans choice and accessibility by contracting out health care services.

Mr. Speaker, we just heard the Premier talk about a private-public relationship. Will he accept our offer to work together to develop the framework so the RHAs can start contracting out services?

* (13:45)

Hon. Gary Doer (Premier): Mr. Speaker, in the early or the mid-nineties, the members opposite attempted to privatize home care and there were even signs in Tuxedo opposed to that kind of regressive action in Manitoba. Subsequent to that ill-fated venture into profit health care, the Americanization of health care, the former government had a study on waiting lists and surgery between '97, '98 and '99. They, the Filmon government, compared a system of lists in both the private and public sector; cataract surgery, for example. They came to the conclusion that with a two-tiered system, the waiting lists would be longer, the costs to the public sector would be greater. They, therefore, rejected that kind of model.

The Romanow Commission today again goes through hard research, hard numbers, real facts, instead of ideology from members opposite. They have come to a conclusion, Mr. Speaker, in improving and innovating in a public

non-profit health care system. We are committed to doing that. The member opposite stands with Stephen Harper; we stand with the nurses in Manitoba.

Mr. Murray: Mr. Speaker, despite that political rhetoric that we just heard, we on this side of the House stand for timely access and quality service for the patients of Manitoba.

Mr. Speaker, we clearly presented Manitobans with our vision for an accountable, transparent and accessible health care system this week. The Premier continues, and we see it again today, lets his ideology get in the way of what makes sense for patients.

I will once again ask the Premier: Is he willing to work with us, as we offered to work with them, to work with the RHAs to develop a system that will allow them to start contracting out service to provide timely access and quality care to Manitobans? Will he do it today, Mr. Speaker?

Mr. Doer: Mr. Speaker, the member opposite had an opportunity to really be concerned about timely access to health care during a very difficult time at the Health Sciences Centre, and he asked me, quote, to intervene with a Labour Board process and to intervene over and above the Labour Board to illegally ask for a vote when a matter was before the Labour Board. The member opposite was so interested in scoring political points, the words "patient care" did not even appear in his press release. We find his words hollow. When we were faced with a major shutdown of a hospital, patient care did not even appear on his lips, and I find it regrettable that political ideology should come above patient care services here in Manitoba.

Mr. Murray: Mr. Speaker, the Premier used the word "hollow." The only hollowness was when he stood in front of Manitobans and said: I will end hallway medicine in six months with \$15 million. That is hollow. It was hollow then and it is hollow today.

Mr. Speaker, we on this side of the House do not care who owns the bricks and mortar. Patients, in fact, do not care who owns the bricks and mortar. They care about getting timely

access to quality care. Manitobans should be able to walk in with their Manitoba health card and get the services they need. That is what it is all about. We are willing to work with the Doer government today to make that happen.

I will ask the Premier one more time: Is he willing to work with us to ensure that patients get timely access and quality care by working with the RHAs to develop a framework that would allow them to start contracting out services to ensure that patients in Manitoba are put first, instead of his ideology, Mr. Speaker?

* (13:50)

Mr. Doer: Mr. Speaker, the last time the member opposite asked to work with us in health care was on the Romanow Commission. I said, yes, we would make sure that they were able to present their alternatives and their ideas, hopefully with some research because we have the research that they conducted in 1998 and it does not support the ideological position they have.

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Mr. Doer: Yes, Mr. Speaker, we said yes. We should all, as Manitobans, express our views, use our research and present our opinions to the Romanow Commission. We made it possible for members opposite, the Leader of the Opposition to appear before the Romanow Commission. We made it possible for them to come forward with their ideas on how they improve health care.

Mr. Speaker, opposition parties and opposition leaders all across Canada came before the Romanow Commission. When the members opposite had a chance, they did not show up and that is why they have no credibility on health care here.

Health Care System Orthopedic Surgery Waiting Lists

Mr. John Loewen (Fort Whyte): Mr. Speaker, a constituent of mine has written indicating that a year will pass between the time she first saw her doctor until her knee replacement operation is scheduled in May 2003. In the meantime, this

79-year-old woman is housebound. She is in great pain and she is forced to use Tylenol 3 to ease the pain. As a matter of fact, she writes: I am in very great pain and require Tylenol 3 to help me deal with it. I am taking too many, but it is the only way to get through the day.

Mr. Speaker, I would ask the Minister of Health if he would explain to Mrs. Silva and to her daughter Elizabeth, who is in the gallery today, why the health system that he is responsible for has failed her so miserably.

Hon. Dave Chomiak (Minister of Health): Mr. Speaker, I thank the member for that question. I think he did send me a letter in that regard. As the member knows, I get dozens and dozens of letters as has always been the case in this Chamber, as opposed to the hundreds I used to have to send when I was opposition critic. I get lots of letters and we try to follow up. Where there are difficulties, we try to follow up and try to do follow-up to solve individual and particular problems. I ask the member, and I will meet with them and discuss that issue. It is a significant issue and we always follow up on those issues.

Mr. Loewen: Mr. Speaker, this is a much bigger problem than one letter. In this letter Mrs. Silva asked the minister if he will give her a real answer and I would quote: "I would like some real answers and not his standard line." So I would ask him to take this seriously and give Mrs. Silva a real answer as to why he will not work in collaboration with the private clinics that are out there so this 79-year-old lady can have her problems solved and not have to, as she says, wait in agony for months on end.

Mr. Chomiak: Mr. Speaker, I will just take a look at that specific problem the member has raised. They are always difficult to deal with these problems and we always try to deal with them.

I just point out to the member, the last study done cited in the CIHI reports indicates that Manitoba has the highest hip and knee surgery rates per capita in the country. While it is not perfect, Mr. Speaker, it is much higher than it was. In addition, we are doing more which is why we have expanded surgeries and doubled surgery at Pan Am, something members opposite

were against, and one of the reasons why we are moving orthopedic surgery to Concordia Hospital in order to do more. It is not perfect, but we are doing more and we will continue to work at it every single day.

* (13:55)

Mr. Loewen: Perhaps if the minister had a heart he would have spent the \$4 million on surgeries, not on bricks and mortar.

Will he answer to Mrs. Silva, who indicates in the letter, as to why he has been unable to resolve the wait list for orthopedic surgeries; why she says she has, and I quote: No option but to stay in a system that gives me no choice but to wait in agony; and why she is firmly of the belief that as a result of his mismanagement of the system, and I quote from her: The Government is hoping seniors will die before they receive surgery so they do not have to worry about them any more? That is her belief, thanks to your management.

Mr. Chomiak: As I indicated, as we always do, we will take a look at that particular situation. I want to add, to the member opposite, before he makes a generalization, the member opposite should note that the waiting list for that type of surgery is way lower than when members opposite were government. That is the first thing.

The second thing is members opposite want us to go to their friends at The Maples and give surgery to their friends at The Maples, but when we transferred surgeries to Steinbach, I guess they were opposed. When we transferred surgeries to underutilized operating rooms in Steinbach and Ste. Anne, they were opposed. When we transferred surgeries to Thompson from Winnipeg, they were opposed. We have operating rooms all around the province. The member should talk to the members in rural Manitoba about their operating rooms instead of being so fixated on The Maples clinic because they oppose our moving of surgeries to rural centres. I think that is deplorable for members opposite.

Health Care System Private/Public Agreements

Mr. Leonard Derkach (Russell): Mr. Speaker, Manitobans know the Premier has broken his

promise to them in ending hallway medicine in six months. That is right. This Premier has broken his promise.

The President and CEO of the Winnipeg Regional Health Authority, Dr. Brian Postl, cites examples using the region's health calendar news series as wonderful examples of what can happen when private industry and health care work together. I have a copy of that calendar in my hand where Doctor Postl makes those remarks.

My question to the minister is: Why, if the private sector can work with the regional health authorities in this instance, can they not work with the private sector in order to be able to reduce the waiting lists for people like Mrs. Silva who has been waiting for more than a year to get her surgery? Why does the minister allow this? This is not acceptable in Manitoba.

Hon. Dave Chomiak (Minister of Health): A couple of points, Mr. Speaker. I hope members opposite have a chance to read the Romanow report that came out today. It is a watershed report with respect to dealing with some of these issues. It cites a whole number of processes undertaken in Manitoba.

I want the member opposite to know when he was a member of the government when they privatized a form of surgery, their own study, the study undertaken by the Conservative government of Gary Filmon, indicated that waiting lists went up on cataracts. Since that time, not only did we reduce waiting lists but we reduced waiting lists for hip and knee.

I admit it is not perfect. Some people wait too long. That is why we have expanded surgery in rural Manitoba. That is why we have expanded surgery in Thompson. That is why we have doubled surgery at Pan Am. That is why we are moving surgery to Concordia to expand it around the system. We have done much, there will be more and we will deal with individual problems, but going to the ideological panacea that members opposite talk about of going just to The Maples will not cut it.

Mr. Derkach: And the waiting lists go on, Mr. Speaker.

Why did the Premier of this province cite in his address to the Chamber of Commerce in Steinbach that a partnership of public and private sectors allows upgrades and leading-edge courses at the universities and colleges, yet when it comes to the pain and suffering of Manitobans like Mrs. Silva he refuses to allow the private services to help reduce the waiting lists?

Manitobans are getting tired of this ideological rhetoric. They want some answers. They want some solutions to the health care in this province.

* (14:00)

Hon. Gary Doer (Premier): Mr. Speaker, the system has a mix already. There is a good example of private-public health care. First of all, it is in the report. Actually, the report deals with cataracts. After we brought into public ownership the clinic and expanded the numbers of surgeries, doubled the surgeries at the Pan Am Clinic—

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Mr. Doer: After we proceeded with that initiative, Mr. Speaker, the cost of cataract surgeries in the private sector went from \$1,000 a procedure under the private system that we inherited from members opposite down to \$700. So members of the community can get the cataract surgery at the private clinic or they can get it in a public non-profit clinic, but the bottom line is through our initiative the costs have gone down \$300 for that procedure.

The member from River East talked about hips and knees. When she left office, the operations were being dealt with in a limited number of facilities. Soon there will be hip and knee surgeries conducted at the Concordia Hospital, which will be again an improvement in health care in Manitoba, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: Order. I had recognized the honourable Member for Russell (Mr. Derkach) on his last supplementary question.

Okay, the honourable Member for River East, on a point of order.

Point of Order

Mrs. Bonnie Mitchelson (River East): I would just like to point out to one of my favourite constituents that Concordia Hospital certainly is of benefit and value to northeast Winnipeg.

Mr. Speaker: The honourable member does not have a point of order.

* * *

Mr. Derkach: Mr. Speaker, I would like to ask the Premier (Mr. Doer) or the Minister of Health if they can explain to Manitobans why they find it acceptable to spend something in the neighbourhood of \$15 million using a private system in the United States to treat Manitoba patients and yet they will not allow the private system in Manitoba to deal with patients like Mrs. Silva in the province of Manitoba.

Hon. Dave Chomiak (Minister of Health): Mr. Speaker, I am not entirely certain of what the member is referencing. I do know that we, net, take more money in Manitoba from patients that come for care in Manitoba than we pay for patients to go outside of Manitoba. But if the member is referencing—

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Speaker: Order. The honourable member is not very far from me and I cannot even hear his comments. I would ask the co-operation of all honourable members, please.

Mr. Chomiak: As members are aware, there is a reciprocal agreement in the Canada Health Act for all payments across—and Manitoba happens to do some things very well. If the member is referencing the fact that we sent patients during a crisis period to reduce the cancer-waiting list, that has worked, Mr. Speaker. We have cut them in half from the time the member was a member of the Cabinet. We have cut the waiting list for radiation treatment in half and we have hired the entire radiation therapy class when members opposite let them go away. So that is why the system is improving, because we have invested in the system and in the people of Manitoba.

Livestock Industry Tuberculosis Control

Mr. Jack Penner (Emerson): The livestock industry in this province is better than a billion

dollar industry in this province of Manitoba. The health of that industry has been cast in doubt and there is a dark cloud over the industry as we speak today. I would like to ask the Minister of Agriculture what she and her department have done over the last while to secure the health of that industry by taking action to eliminate the tuberculosis outbreak that we saw last spring in this province.

Hon. Rosann Wowchuk (Minister of Agriculture and Food): I thank the member for this issue because it is a very important issue for the livestock industry in this province. The member knows full well that the responsibility of TB falls under the CFIA. We have been working very closely with the CFIA to address the TB issue. We have a TB strategy that is in place, but I can tell you the members, the producers in Manitoba also take this issue very seriously. They are volunteering to have their livestock tested in order to prove their status.

Mr. Speaker, the Department of Agriculture and Food in Manitoba is working very closely with these producers.

Mr. Jack Penner: Can the minister tell this House how many cases of tuberculosis have been found in this province over the last couple of months while the testing has taken place?

Ms. Wowchuk: Mr. Speaker, in the last while there have been no cases of TB found. However, there have been some suspicious testings. When they are tested suspicious, there is a follow-up test that has to take place and those are taking place now. We all hope that when those second tests take place we will indeed have a TB-free status in this province. The positive testing we had in this province took place a few years ago.

Mr. Jack Penner: Mr. Speaker, yesterday at the AMM meeting the cattle producers told me there were three herds on quarantine in this province as we speak. Is that true or is that not true?

Ms. Wowchuk: Mr. Speaker, I said to the member people are now testing their herds. They are asking for them to be tested. There have been some that have tested suspicious and, yes, those herds are in quarantine, but that does not mean they have TB. So I would ask the member not to start to raise panic in this province.

Producers are taking a progressive step in having their herds tested. It is not confirmed as positive cases yet. Let us go through the process. Let us have the testing done. Should there be a positive TB, those herds will have to be put down, as is the policy under the federal jurisdiction.

Diabetes Treatment Standards of Practice

Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights): Mr. Speaker, a credible case can be made that the death of Mr. J. Henry Poirier on April 17, 1999, was a direct result of the lack of province-wide standards for the treatment of patients with diabetes in Manitoba hospitals.

His wife is in the gallery today. I ask the Minister of Health why he has not in more than three years acted to put such province-wide standards in place.

Hon. Dave Chomiak (Minister of Health): With respect to the specifics of the question of a death that occurred in April 1999, Mr. Speaker, I will look into the details of that. Obviously, it was before we came to office with respect to that particular instance.

The member is looking for specifics with respect to a diabetes treatment in the province, I take it. Is that the question?

Mr. Gerrard: Mr. Speaker, my supplementary to the Minister of Health. I would ask the minister to indicate to this House why it is that the present policies for monitoring patients with diabetes in Manitoba vary from RHA to RHA and hospital to hospital to the extent that some RHAs and hospitals have no policies at all, as demonstrated by the information which I table today.

I would ask the minister why he is operating a checkerboard system instead of having province-wide standards.

Mr. Chomiak: Mr. Speaker, I think the member attended a conference with me, sponsored by I believe it was the Kidney Foundation—or, pardon me, a conference where we talked about the diabetes strategy for Manitoba. I think Manitoba

got rated as having, in terms of diabetes and diabetes prevention, one of the best strategies in the entire country.

With respect to this particular incidence of a particular case that occurred three years ago, I will look into the factors concerning that.

* (14:10)

Mr. Gerrard: Mr. Speaker, my supplementary to the Minister of Health. I ask the Minister of Health why he has failed to put in place normal standards of practice and normal accountability procedures. Surely the minister did not need Mr. Romanow to tell him that this was important to do.

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Speaker: Order. The honourable Minister of Health has the floor.

Mr. Chomiak: Mr. Speaker, there was a death that occurred in April of 1999, according to the member opposite. I will look into that with respect to the circumstances surrounding that because I do not think we should deal with those things lightly. As I say, I do not have immediate access to that today.

With respect to standards for diabetes and standards with respect to testing, Mr. Speaker, we have authorities, we have medical personnel who are responsible for putting in place safety and security as well as standards with regard to that. They are accredited. There has been a series of accreditations across the province with respect to RHAs and hospitals, and I look to those experts for their advice.

Canadian Embassy (Philippines) Closure

Mr. Conrad Santos (Wellington): Reports in the mass media indicate the Canadian Embassy has just been closed in Manila. Can the honourable Minister responsible for Immigration provide this Assembly with further details?

Hon. Becky Barrett (Minister of Labour and Immigration): Mr. Speaker, I thank the member for that information. There are many people in

the province of Manitoba who are very concerned, as we all are, about the closure of the Embassy.

For the information of people in Manitoba, there are no services for immigrant or temporary residence applicants at this time. There are no staff in the Canadian Embassy in Manila. There is no idea when the Embassy will be opened. Of course, it will not be opened until people can be assured of safety. The visa section will be returning all visas that have come in.

The Government of Canada Foreign Affairs number is the best source for the current information. I would like to beg the indulgence to give these two information—

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

Kyoto Protocol Comprehensive Assessment

Mr. Ron Schuler (Springfield): Mr. Speaker, in yesterday's Throne Speech, the Government mentioned a comprehensive assessment of the cost of implementing the Kyoto accord. Is the Government now prepared to table the comprehensive assessment referenced in yesterday's Throne Speech?

Hon. Tim Sale (Minister of Energy, Science and Technology): First of all, Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the member for the question. I would refer him to our Web site on climate change, where he will find the plan which was tabled by Manitoba. I would also refer him to the Manitoba Chamber of Commerce Web site which, if it does not already have, it will have very shortly the very thorough presentation we made to them yesterday morning which outlined the impacts on prices. For example, in the current federal plan, a barrel of conventional oil has a price impact in the federal plan of 3 cents. The gasoline on Pembina Highway goes up and down more than that every day per litre. So the price impacts are modest to negligible in terms of raw material. *[interjection]*

Mr. Speaker: The honourable Member for Springfield.

Mr. Sale: Mr. Speaker, I had not finished my response.

Mr. Speaker: Order. For clarification of the House, the only time a member should be seated is when the Speaker stands. I was in my seat when I called for order. So, when a minister sits down, to me that is the end of the answer.

Mr. Schuler: I ask the minister if he would please refer back to the Throne Speech, where it says: "Ours was the first jurisdiction to comprehensively assess the costs of implementing the Kyoto accord." Is he now prepared to table that comprehensive assessment of the costs to Manitoba?

Mr. Sale: What we have already tabled is the material that anyone would need to cost out implications, particularly when you look at the cost of fuel.

Mr. Speaker, the implications for Manitobans in terms of costs of fuel are negligible. The questions of job loss, which have been much touted in fact in Manitoba, will turn into job gains because of the east-west grid.

The development of an ethanol strategy, the development of methane capture from the Brady Landfill, the development of our environmental industry sector, which I had the opportunity to address about two weeks ago, were very, very positive about the fact that we were standing firm in support of moving on climate change in an aggressive manner.

The industry groups I have spoken to, the Chamber of Commerce, all understand that this is a great opportunity for Manitoba. This is an opportunity for innovation for electric hydro generation, clean hydro. It is an opportunity for ethanol.

Mr. Schuler: Mr. Speaker, then the minister should be aware of the letter from his department, which I will table for the House. We received documents on an assessment done by the minister's government in which it says: Among 10 provinces, Manitoba possesses a GHG emission to GDP ratio that is fifth highest overall. As a result, Manitoba is more vulnerable than most other provinces within Canada to the impacts of GHG abatement policies. Is this the reason why the Government will not release documents to the public so that we can have an open and fair debate on this issue?

Mr. Sale: In regard to this particular issue of cost, I think the Opposition simply does not understand there are three kinds of emission issues in the accord. One of them is the opportunity, which is being misunderstood by members opposite, I hope not deliberately, that we have the opportunity for carbon sequestration in our boreal forest and in our agriculture industry which allow us to make considerable gains in carbon reduction and thereby earn the credits which in fact put us on the positive side of the ledger.

When we explored hydro-electricity and helped the overall Canadian economy to reduce carbon emissions by 5.4 megatonnes, that is an incredible contribution to making our goal and far over what our province is required to make under Kyoto. That is just one of the issues in which we will be a net winner, not in any sense a net loser.

In any case, we are a province that seizes opportunity and seizes innovation. That is what we are going to do.

Mr. Speaker: Time for Oral Questions has expired.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

German Language Education

Mr. Harry Schellenberg (Rossmere): Mr. Speaker, I had the pleasure of attending the annual fundraising breakfast sponsored by the parent organization known as Manitobans for German Language Education. This event was held Saturday morning, November 23, at the Nor-Villa Hotel on Henderson Highway. There were 150 people in attendance. Parents, seniors, teachers, administrators, trustees, students and MLAs from this Legislature were in attendance.

Parents invited to this event were from Donwood and Princess Margaret elementary schools, Chief Peguis Junior High, River East Collegiate, Westgate Mennonite Collegiate, MBCI, South Winnipeg Kinderschule, the German Saturday School and the Seven Oaks heritage language program. This event brought all the stakeholders of the community together that are interested in promoting language education. The money raised at this event will be used to promote language education.

The morning program consisted of a buffet breakfast and performances by students. Two teachers from the Donwood Elementary School, Elsie Tessmann and Elma Dyck, had their classes sing, which was the highlight of the morning. There was strong applause from the audience for the good work that the teachers are doing to promote German language education in our schools. All indications are that the community supports the good work done in the classroom. The strongest support for German language education, however, is from the River East-Transcona School Division, where the English-German bilingual program began in 1981 at the Princess Margaret School. It has since expanded to include Donwood Elementary School, Chief Peguis Junior High and River East Collegiate. Today, about 800 students are enrolled in German-language education in the River East-Transcona School Division.

* (14:20)

Parents appreciate and support the language education program, not only for the language skills students obtain but also for the overall strong academic achievement in all courses offered.

Oak Park Raiders

Mrs. Myrna Driedger (Charleswood): Mr. Speaker, on November 26, I was pleased to attend a recognition assembly to honour the Oak Park Raiders football team. This high school in the constituency of Charleswood develops many excellent sports teams as well as excelling in academics and the arts. The football team won the provincial championship for the third year in a row by winning the Anavet Cup on November 8 at the Canad Inns Stadium. They defeated St. Paul's Crusaders by a score of 37 to 34. They demonstrated courage and tenacity to come from behind in this game to win in overtime. This accomplishment earned them the Order of Sport Excellence from the Province of Manitoba as well as the Winnipeg High School Football League Championship medals. The Anavet most valuable player of the game was Tom Miller.

Anavet, which stands for Army, Navy and Airforce Veterans, has sponsored this high school provincial championship for some time now and were in attendance to present the Anavet trophy. I think they should also be

recognized for their commitment to promoting excellence in sports for our youth.

This Oak Park team has an enviable record of being undefeated in their last three seasons, having won 33 consecutive games. This season they scored an amazing 500 points over 11 games, for an average of 45 points per game. They are currently ranked No. 3 in western Canada. Congratulations to coach Gill Bramwell as well as the players, numerous other coaches, manager, trainer and other support personnel. I would also like to wish Mr. Bramwell all the best in his retirement next year. This was his last year of coaching the football team at Oak Park High School, and he will be greatly missed. Once again, Oak Park had the support of many staff and parents in bringing together this extremely talented group of athletes to perform at such a high level.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to congratulate all of the players, parents and team members for an outstanding season. They have brought recognition to the community of Charleswood by rising to excellence with support from the coaches and from each other.

Boni-Vital Council for Seniors

Ms. Linda Asper (Riel): I wish to acknowledge the work of the Boni-Vital Council for Seniors formed in 1991 and committed to helping seniors better access programs and services in our community. A year ago the council launched a pilot project called the Emergency Response Information Kit or ERIK. Available in French or English, these information kits provide paramedics with essential health information they can use when they arrive at the scene of a 911 call. The kit contains a brochure, a health information form, a living will and an organ donor card, as well as a door decal and a magnet to increase visibility of the kit. The information is placed on a senior's refrigerator so that, in the event of an emergency, paramedics will have access to information on the patient's doctor, medical history, pharmacy and any medication used. By providing this critical information, ERIK helps seniors to live independently despite having health or communication difficulties.

Over the past year, the ERIK program has been adopted throughout the city of Winnipeg,

and dozens of groups have implemented ERIK programs in communities across Manitoba. In recognition of its valuable contribution to the lives of seniors in the province, the Boni-Vital Council for Seniors received a Manitoba Council on Aging Recognition Award presented by the Minister responsible for Seniors (Ms. McGifford) on October 30, 2002.

The Member for St. Vital (Ms. Allan), the Member for St. Boniface (Mr. Selinger) and I were very pleased to nominate the council for this award. Congratulations to the Boni-Vital Council for Seniors that initiated ERIK and to their partners, Youville Centre, Winnipeg Fire Paramedics, Centre Fontaine and 233-Allô for all their work done in implementing ERIK. I want to congratulate also all the volunteers who made this program possible across the province. Without their efforts, ERIK would never have reached the high level of success it has. ERIK is improving the quality of life for Manitoba's seniors on a daily basis by allowing them to live independently.

Winkler City Designation

Mr. Peter Dyck (Pembina): Congratulations to the community of Winkler on officially becoming a city. On August 11, I had the pleasure of attending a number of ceremonies marking this momentous occasion, including a formal dinner, a main stage ceremony and fireworks.

Had the release of the census data not been delayed, Winkler would have in fact officially become a city on April 7 of this year, 48 years to the day after Winkler was recognized as a town and 96 years to the day after it became a village. It is no surprise that Winkler has become a city. Between 1996 and 2001 alone Winkler's population surged an amazing 9.7 percent.

The seeds for the August ceremony were planted decades ago as settlers including Mennonite, German, Lutheran, Jewish, Dutch and Anglo-Saxon immigrants came to the area.

There were challenges for the early residents, the ones like Valentine Winkler, who were seized by the region's tremendous potential. They overcame the challenges of the wars and the depression, the hardships caused by floods,

fires and tornadoes to create a vibrant community. Muddy wagon trails were replaced by gravel and then paved roads. Churches, a hospital, a mental health centre, personal care homes, schools, recreational facilities and a wide variety of businesses and industries sprang up to meet the evolving spiritual, physical, educational and economic needs of the growing community.

I would like to remember the late Henry Wiebe and his legacy in Winkler, both as mayor and as private citizen. Mr. Wiebe was a man of great vision. He recognized the tremendous potential for development in this region and he actively promoted the growth of this beautiful community.

All progress occurs because people dare to be different. The early Winkler residents could have packed up and moved on when the challenges seemed too much to bear, but they said: Let us be different, let us not become a ghost town. Let us move forward and build a community that is strong and vital and that will provide for our children and our children's children. That is why Winkler has officially become a city.

MPIC Claim Centre (Arborg)

Mr. Tom Nevakshonoff (Interlake): It is with great pleasure and pride that I stand to speak of the recent opening of a state-of-the-art 7000-square-foot claim centre in Arborg. On October 4, 2002, Manitoba Public Insurance planted its roots in the Interlake region. This new facility signals the beginning of a new era of customer service for more than 30 000 Manitobans who live in 24 communities throughout the region.

In the past, residents of the area had to travel to Selkirk to place their claims, which was an inconvenience. However, MPI saw a ball being dropped and picked it up. MPI heard these emerging needs and responded to its clients by meeting a previous commitment to build a claim centre in Arborg.

Thirty thousand people who live 30 minutes from Arborg will have access to this new state-of-the-art claim centre. Last year the centre handled about 2500 claims. The Arborg claim centre is located on Sunset Boulevard. It

provides a full range of services from adjusting and estimating to casualty and rehabilitation. As well, it will be wheelchair accessible and customer friendly.

I want to commend Manitoba Public Insurance as an excellent Crown corporation that is committed to providing the best possible service for all Manitobans. As well, by building the Arborg claim centre, MPI demonstrates their commitment and ties to the community.

Mr. Speaker, recently Manitoba Public Insurance celebrated their 30th anniversary of serving Manitobans and meeting their emerging needs. I want to thank them for their excellent service and wish them the best as they strive to serve all Manitobans. As well, I would like to thank them for making an effort to reach remote communities across Manitoba. MPI efforts make Manitobans' life a lot easier.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

GOVERNMENT BUSINESS

House Business

Hon. Gord Mackintosh (Government House Leader): Mr. Speaker, on a matter of House business, I would like to advise the House that the Standing Committee on Privileges and Elections will meet on Monday, December 2, at 10 a.m., to consider the appointment of a conflict of interest commissioner.

Mr. Speaker, further to the all-party agreement and to formalize, and, I guess, for your benefit, on a matter of House business, would you determine if there is unanimous consent that December 12 will be the last sitting day of the session in December and that when the House adjourns on that day it stands adjourned until the call of the Speaker.

* (14:30)

Mr. Speaker: On a matter of House business, it has been advised that the Standing Committee on Privileges and Elections will meet on Monday, December 2, at 10 a.m., to consider the appointment of a conflict of interest commissioner.

Is there unanimous consent of the House that December 12 will be the last sitting day of this session in December, and that when the House adjourns on that day, it stands adjourned to the call of the Speaker? Is there unanimous consent?

Some Honourable Members: Agreed.

An Honourable Member: No.

Mr. Speaker: Unanimous consent has been denied. *[interjection]* I have heard very clearly that unanimous consent has been denied.

The honourable Official Opposition House Leader, on a point of order.

Point of Order

Mr. Marcel Laurendeau (Official Opposition House Leader): Mr. Speaker, I think if you were to repeat that, you might find that there was unanimous consent. I think there might have been a little bit of confusion on what the question was.

* * *

Mr. Speaker: As requested I will ask the question again: Is there unanimous consent of the House that December 12 will be the last sitting day of the session in December, and that when the House adjourns on that day, it stands adjourned to the call of the Speaker? Is there unanimous consent?

An Honourable Member: Agreed, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: Unanimous consent has been granted.

THRONE SPEECH DEBATE (First Day of Debate)

Mr. Speaker: As Orders of the Day, consideration of the speech of His Honour the Lieutenant-Governor, the honourable Member for Selkirk.

Mr. Gregory Dewar (Selkirk): Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the Member for the Interlake

(Mr. Nevakshonoff), that the following address be presented to His Honour the Lieutenant-Governor.

Mr. Speaker, we the members of the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba thank Your Honour for the gracious speech delivered to us at the Fourth Session of the Thirty-Seventh Legislature of Manitoba.

Motion presented.

Mr. Dewar: Mr. Speaker, it is a great honour to stand today to be the first speaker on our side to move this Speech from the Throne.

Mr. Speaker, this is our Government's fourth Speech from the Throne. This particular speech outlines our Government's plan to improve the quality of life for Manitobans and for their families, one, by building our economy, to continuing to improve our health care system and education—I might add, a public health care system. Today it became very obvious in Question Period the agenda of the members opposite. When it comes to the presentation of health care, the members opposite are already beginning to advocate a two-tiered system for health care, a position that this side of the House rejects.

Mr. Speaker, as well, a part of our Speech from the Throne will be designated, of course, to improving the environment for Manitobans. Of course, another one of the key elements of the Speech from the Throne is enhancing flood protection for our capital. That, of course, will be done not at the expense of any other resident either upstream or downstream from the floodway.

Mr. Speaker, we have done more things as a government in three years than the Tories did in their whole term in office, and we are exceptionally proud of that.

I would like to begin by welcoming all the new pages we have at the Legislature. I know that you will find your job here to be a very fascinating one, probably a very humorous experience as well, but I want to say that we as members of the Legislature certainly value the service that you provide to us.

Mr. Speaker, I want to recognize the hard work of all the staff who provide us with countless assistance, from all of our new interns who were introduced here today to our caucus staff and to the table officers. I want to recognize the hard work of our Clerk and all the table officers. I remember last August, as members of this Legislature, we basically stayed up all night until 7 a.m. working to end the session. All of us remember that we had to juggle committees. We were running from this committee to the other. At one time there were five different standing committees we were running on that particular evening, and that was all done in the span of a couple of hours. I remember the Clerks. They were running from room to room, ensuring that the committee work was accomplished smoothly and correctly. I do not even know if they had a chance to eat that night because they were so busy. *[interjection]* Apparently they did not, but I want to commend them for their hard work.

Like many in this Chamber, and it was mentioned earlier, I had the great opportunity over the last number of days to attend the annual meeting of the Association of Manitoba Municipalities. I wanted to take this opportunity to congratulate all those municipal leaders who were elected or re-elected in the most recent municipal elections. I want to thank, as well, the thousands of Manitobans who put their name forward for elected office for either reeve or councillor or school trustee.

I understand there was a poll done recently where it said that political representatives are not held in very high esteem by Canadians in general, but when you ask the average Canadian about their own particular representative, they think, well, you know, he or she is doing a good job. So I think all of us can take a little bit of comfort in that. Because of all the thousands of Manitobans who put their names forward for elected office in the most recent municipal elections, we can ensure, Mr. Speaker, that democracy is strong and healthy here in Manitoba.

Mr. Speaker, there have been a couple of individuals, a couple of MLAs, who have decided not to seek re-election, have publicly announced that they are not seeking re-election. We know the Member for Morris (Mr. Pitura), the Member for Minnedosa (Mr. Gilleshammer),

and the current Minister of Labour and Immigration (Ms. Barrett) has announced that she, as well, is not seeking. I want to thank all of them for making such a lasting and significant contribution to this Legislature and to this province. They served their constituents well.

I want to pay, if I could, special tribute to my own colleague, the Minister of Labour and Immigration. She and I were elected on the same date: September 11, 1990. That September 11 always had a special significance to me. Of course, because of the events last year, that day has been blackened a bit, but she and I were elected on the same day. I have turned to her over the years for advice and support, and I have valued both.

I was very proud of her recent accomplishments as the Minister of Labour and Immigration, where she brought a rebalancing into Manitoba labour legislation. The Tories, when we brought that in, oh, the sky is going to fall, gloom and doom, you know, negative Nellies across the way. The Member for Springfield (Mr. Schuler), he said he was going to fight that legislation to the end. Well, he failed; he failed. What do we have? We have probably the least amount of days lost to strike in Canada. We have got the lowest unemployment rate in Canada. We have got the second highest economic growth projections in Canada. The members opposite were wrong. The sky did not fall.

As well, she brought in presumptive legislation for full-time firefighters and the commitment to examine, rule on part-time firefighters as well, and she has developed a plan and legislation to improve the workplace safety and health of Manitobans. I have comfort in knowing that the men and women who go to work every day in my community and communities across this province go to a safer workplace, thanks to the leadership of this minister. You know what? On another note, she will no longer need the permission of the Whip to go and visit her grandson, but I will miss her as a colleague and I will miss her as a friend.

*(14:40)

Mr. Speaker, I want to talk a bit about my home community and some of the ways our

Government has benefited our community. I want to begin by talking about health care. Now, when the Tories were in government, in terms of health care, they closed the Selkirk School of Psychiatric Nursing. Our Government has trained 25 LPNs in Selkirk. They are currently providing care to the broader region. The Member for Lac du Bonnet (Mr. Hawranik), I am sure, is interested, because they are in his area, as well, providing care. We now have enhanced diagnostic services at the Selkirk hospital.

I want to talk to you a bit about a situation that happened to me in my own encounter with the health system here. Early on this spring, I damaged my finger, in fact, here at the Legislative Building. I know the Member for Elmwood (Mr. Maloway) was aware of this, and helped me seek medical advice and suggested that I perhaps get some medical examination of it. After the session was over, I went to Selkirk. There was a relatively short wait to see a doctor, I might add, a newly recruited doctor, to the community. I had my finger X-rayed on a brand-new X-ray machine purchased by this Government, by an X-ray technician who was very proud of her new equipment she gets to work on. She tells me that as well our Government purchased a new sonogram machine, new equipment for the labs as well. She was being trained to operate the new CT scanner that will open next year in Selkirk Hospital. The CT scanner will provide service to over 5000 area residents from all over the Interlake and the Eastman region in this province as well.

Mr. Conrad Santos, Deputy Speaker, in the Chair

I think I have a little bit of difficulty in accepting the fact that my good friends the Member for Gimli (Mr. Helwer) and the Member for Lac du Bonnet, whose residents will be able to access service closer to their homes, voted against the Budget which provided that service to their constituents, but I think we will take the opportunity later on to remind their constituents of their decision.

An Honourable Member: How is your finger?

Mr. Dewar: My colleague asks how my finger is. It has improved significantly, thanks to the health care system here in Manitoba.

As well, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I had the honour of opening up the Telehealth link at the Selkirk Mental Health Centre. This link will provide psychiatric services to medical practitioners throughout the province.

In the dark days of the Filmon government, one of the first things they did in 1988 was to kill a plan to develop Selkirk's waterfront and downtown area. I think my Member for Elmwood (Mr. Maloway) might remember this. That was back in 1988, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Had they not and had we proceeded with that plan, we would have seen a rejuvenated downtown in Selkirk, but unfortunately Tories killed the plan. I am pleased to announce that our Government and our Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs, in partnership with the municipal and federal governments, are currently rebuilding that area. The area will be open, well, actually they are working on it now, they worked on it all fall and they expect that next spring the area will be open for public use of that valuable asset in our community.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I want to talk about the Tories' operation of some of our Crown corporations, for example, and their vision when it comes to using Crown corporations. Members opposite, as we all know, sold off the telephone system. They promised at that time there would be no job loss. There would be no reduction in services. There would be no increase in rates. Well, they were wrong on all three counts. In fact, there is only a handful of MTS employees left in Selkirk. Hundreds of workers have been laid off. Recently there has been another announcement that MTS will be laying off more and more workers.

In terms of the Selkirk generating station, for example, they had no vision, they had no plan other than to run it illegally against the environment licence. Our Government took a different approach. We converted the operation of the plant from coal to gas. This is good for the environment. It helps us meet our Kyoto targets. It is good for the local economy. It is a major taxpayer in the R.M. of St. Clements. It is also good for the more than fifty employees whose jobs we saved at that plant.

As well, at the end of the Speech from the Throne, it was mentioned that in August of next

year our community of Selkirk and Stonewall, Gimli and Beausejour were hosting the 2003 Western Canada Summer Games. Our community will benefit from the new Selkirk Community Stadium and Sporting Complex. I invite all MLAs and their constituents to get involved to ensure the success of those games.

The Throne Speech predicts economic growth to be above the national average, as I said. I reached into a *Winnipeg Sun* article from this past week, in bold headlines, strong growth forecast. The TD Bank, and I will quote from the article, predicts big things for Manitoba's economy over the next three years. The TD Bank study estimated Manitoba's GDP to grow by 2.6 percent in 2002 and another 3.1 percent in 2003, the second highest in Canada. We are one of only three provinces to achieve investment growth in each of the past three years. Our annual job creation since 1990 is double the annual rate of the prior 10 years. This was raised by the First Minister today in Question Period. We have the lowest unemployment rate in Canada, including the lowest youth rate.

College and university enrolment is up by 19 percent; 11% increase in apprenticeship training due to new initiatives; welfare recipients down to a historic low level; immigration to Manitoba up by 50 percent since 1990 to a high of 4500. We do have a plan to double that as well.

We have a plan to rebuild and improve health care, as I mentioned earlier on. It is not perfect, we accept that, but I must say that I do receive less complaints now than I did when we first formed Government. Less concerns are raised by constituents, certainly a lot less than when members opposite were in government.

We continue to focus on training professionals and investing in health care as well as innovations in service delivery and preventive care. We plan on working with Ottawa to ensure that we implement the recommendations of the Romanow Commission.

I want to take some time and talk about another major concern raised, positive, I would say, in the Speech from the Throne. That was the issue related to the expansion of the floodway.

As members know, this has been an issue for quite a while. It has been an issue in my constituency for well over the last year. There have been certain groups that have raised concerns about it, generally spreading information, regrettably fearmongering.

It is led in the way by the Liberal leader. When the Member for River Heights (Mr. Gerrard) is in the Legislature, I recall last spring he was saying, well, I kind of support it. When he was asking questions about our infrastructure priorities he was saying, well, I think I support it. Then he comes up to Selkirk to his party executive out there, he says, I kind of do not support it. This has created a lot of confusion in the area, but fortunately very few people listen to him.

It was not an election issue in the recent civic election. I spoke with the new mayor of Selkirk just yesterday here at the Legislature. He agrees that Selkirk is not vulnerable to overland flooding from any expansion of the floodway. We recognize that there could be some problems associated with sewer backup. It is generally conceded that Selkirk is on fairly high ground. We know that when the early settlers here in Manitoba decided to rebuild Fort Garry after many, many floods, after many times that it was destroyed by flood, they chose the highest ground in the Red River Valley, and that is the current location of the Lower Fort Garry near Selkirk, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

*(14:50)

But the bottom line is, as MLAs and as a government, we must protect our capital from being destroyed by flooding. The KGS report identified that there is a 33% chance of this occurring in the next 50 years. It is not a matter of if, it is a matter of when. It is going to happen. They have identified in there between \$6 billion to \$17 billion worth of damage is likely to happen to the city of Winnipeg if we have a flood event higher than what we did in 1997, and that is coming.

So we know and, as MLAs, we recognize that our first priority has to be to our own constituents, but we are Manitoba MLAs. We must be concerned about what happens in

Thompson, in Dauphin, in Steinbach, in Flin Flon. We have to as well be concerned about what happens to our capital. Winnipeg is our economic engine or social engine, has, of course, the bulk of our population.

We have to, as a government, take action, and I support our Government in the initiative. I read the KGS report. I was involved with the Clean Environment Commission here. I attended a hearing in Morris, and I know the members opposite, they lined up at the mike saying, oh, we cannot proceed with Ste. Agathe. It is impossible to build a dam basically across southern Manitoba and flood southern Manitoba. I have no problem with that. I agree with them on that, but it is important that the concerns of the residents who live north of the spillway are addressed, and despite all the fearmongering of the Selkirk Liberal Party and the Liberal leader here in the House, the vast majority of area residents trust this Government to do what is right for them, and I want to say that yesterday when we announced that we have a pledge to cover compensation and legislation, we are living up to that trust.

I know that the area residents will be reassured that anyone who lives in the valley, whether it is south or north, anyone who is impacted by the floodway expansion or the floodway operation will receive compensation that will be covered in legislation. The legislation will enshrine a compensation for individuals who experience artificial flooding beyond the state of nature levels specifically as a result of the operation of the expanded floodway.

We are planning later on—hopefully this session or if not, in the spring—to put out a discussion paper. The intention of the Government is to introduce the legislation in the spring.

I must say we have done additional work this past summer. We have done Wide R imaging of the area, and we have done additional engineering work as well. We are meeting with the new mayor of Selkirk and the new reeve of St. Clements and St. Andrews. The Premier (Mr. Doer) and myself will be out there next week meeting with them to share the information with them, to once again assure them that their

concerns will be addressed by our Government when it comes to this matter.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, the Speech from the Throne talks about an affordable government. We, of course, are once again committed to balanced budget legislation. We are committed to carry through on the income tax cuts that were announced in past budgets. By 2003 Manitobans will see 11.5% reduction in their personal income taxes.

We will continue with our five-year plan to phase out the residential Education Support Levy. We have already started. Last year it saved Manitobans \$10 million in property taxes. For the first time residents in the Lord Selkirk School Division last year had a virtual tax freeze because the school division needed to increase their taxes by 0.8 percent, and our 10% reduction in the Education Support Levy basically lowered taxes by 1 percent. So, for the first time in 10 years, 12 years, in decades, the first time they have seen a tax freeze and when you add up the money that they have already saved, \$150 that they have already saved in property tax credits, they are doing much better now than they ever did under the members opposite and they know that.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, also planning on following through on our corporate tax cuts for 2003, the first one since the Second World War. We are planning on continuing to reduce the debt as budgeted. Our cost to service our debt is now, I believe, the second lowest in the country, which frees up more money for health care, for education, for social services, things that Manitobans need and deserve.

The Speech from the Throne calls for a new target to double international immigration to 10 000 annually. We will be bringing forward the legislation to create a new Manitoba council on immigration. We are bringing forward legislation for a stand-alone agency to promote Manitoba as a tourism destination.

We will be working on building on our energy advantage, which would be expanding the transmission grid to increase exports of renewable power. We will be expanding the use

and production of ethanol in gasoline. We will be researching hydrogen fuel opportunities. We will be increasing use of thermal heat pumps. We will be working on extending the Power Smart program to Winnipeg homeowners and businesses through the merger of Manitoba and Winnipeg Hydro.

I held a meeting in my constituency about two months ago, invited the community to it, had a wonderful turnout. People who were there were extremely excited about the possibilities of the Power Smart program. Many of them took advantage of it. I plan on getting an audit done to my own home to find out if I can save energy costs. *[interjection]* Well, we have equalized hydro rates to all Manitobans. We have the lowest hydro rates in North America. We have to look at the members opposite. We need to look at the Kyoto challenge as an economic advantage.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, there are new jobs that will be realized from this, hydro, ethanol, buses. We have a huge and growing bus industry here in the province. As well, we have one of the largest window manufacturers in Canada. We have, again, the ability to create employment through geothermal, through doors. We have many great advantages in Manitoba if we were to take advantage of the Kyoto opportunities there.

Members opposite, dinosaurs, I am afraid.

We plan on extending the summer vacation. The school will not return after Labour Day. We plan on opening up 1000 new cottage lots, and 1000 new campsites to be opened, legislation to create a client advocacy office for the Manitoba Public Insurance Corporation, legislation to prevent MPI from being sold without public consent, like they sold off the telephone system, the members opposite.

I read their little "speech from the throne" here and it is full of so many promises. The only way they are going to pay for these promises is by selling off our Crown corporations like they did before.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, there is going to be legislation to improve accountability in lotteries and gaming. There will be new rules governing disclosure of third-party campaign spending.

There will be an all-party effort, and I am sure all of us will appreciate this, to develop new rules to improve citizen access to public hearings on legislation.

As I mentioned earlier on in my speech, last year we stayed here on August 8 until about seven o'clock in the morning to end the session. Now that did not do us any good but that was not any good to the public either. They found it very difficult to be involved in that type of public hearing process. We have to improve that. Our Government is and all parties in this Chamber, I might add, are. I congratulate all parties in this Chamber as we work to improve those rules of this Chamber. As well we are going to have, we hope and we assume, all-party support for the appointment of a conflict of interest commissioner.

This Speech from the Throne outlines, I think, an exciting agenda for the province. What I find is kind of unusual, and I raised this with some of my colleagues, that usually in the fourth year of a government the Opposition, they have the confidence to call for an election, you know, call for an election, go to the polls, Mr. Deputy Speaker, but the Opposition, they have been silent. They have been silent on this. Not once did I hear it from a single member opposite. We will have to wait and see. We will wait and see as a Legislature, as the session progresses, to see if any of them will stand up and call for an election because you know what. They do not want one. They do not want one; they are scared of an election. They know they have no vision, no plan. They got all their big promises with no idea as to how to pay for them. They are going to tear them apart, tear apart the tax system. The diehard Tories in Selkirk are coming up to me, and they are saying that they have no confidence in the Leader opposite. They have got no confidence in the leader opposite. An editorial in the *Winnipeg Sun*: Members opposite are rudderless. They are rudderless. Charles Adler, their great Tory friend, the great rightwing friend, he said that they should bring back Eric Stefanson or, failing that, the Member for Tuxedo (Mrs. Stefanson) should be the new leader of the party across the way.

An Honourable Member: We want Harold.

* (15:00)

Mr. Dewar: Well, the Member for Elmwood (Mr. Maloway) suggests that the Member for Minnedosa (Mr. Gilleshammer) would be a good one. He was. He was the leader for a short time, Mr. Deputy Speaker, but he has decided not to seek re-election.

I would invite the members opposite to join with us. Do not do the predicted. Do not do the typical motion of non-confidence. I would suggest that they abandon that, that they join with us as Manitobans want them to do. In their heart of hearts, they know they would like to, too.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, it has been a great pleasure for me to move the Speech from the Throne, to say a few words about it. Obviously, I intended voting in favour of this motion and the broader agenda that this motion represents, and I invite members opposite to do the same. Thank you very much.

Mr. Tom Nevakshonoff (Interlake): To Mr. Speaker, before I begin, I would like to congratulate you on your administration of this Chamber over the past three sessions and commend you on the fairness and impartiality that you have displayed in adjudicating between the Government and the opposition benches as we have worked our way through many different difficult issues. Your leadership has been a boon to this Legislature, and I expect this fourth session will be conducted in a similar fashion.

I want to welcome the new pages to the Chamber and congratulate them as well for achieving the scholastic excellence required to be chosen for this role. I am sure you will find your time here most interesting, and I ask that you be patient with us if at times we get somewhat bombastic here. Bear in mind that we adhere passionately to our beliefs and have gravitated towards this Chamber because of our natural inclination to express ourselves and defend the pillars of our ideology.

I also welcome back the Clerk of the Assembly, as well as the Sergeant-at-Arms and their assistants, secure in the knowledge that they will guide us unerringly through the process as we work our way through this Fourth Session

of the Thirty-Seventh Legislative Assembly of Manitoba.

It is an honour, indeed a great pleasure, for me to rise in this Chamber to second the movement of this Speech from the Throne by the honourable Member for Selkirk (Mr. Dewar).

As this is the beginning of the Fourth Session, so, too, is it the beginning of my fourth year of service to the people of the Interlake, who I represent here, and I would just like to express my gratitude to them for giving me the opportunity to do so. Truly, it is an unparalleled experience in that, in the course of my duties, I have met so many fascinating people, visited so many wonderful places and learned so much about the region where I grew up and about myself as a person. I have travelled every highway in the constituency and can safely say that process has become considerably smoother over the past three years thanks to the efforts and consideration of the honourable Member for Thompson (Mr. Ashton) who as the former Minister of Transportation and Government Services did a lot to address the decade of neglect that this region experienced prior to 1999. I have a clear picture in my mind of the watersheds in the region and can again safely say that over the past three years I have discussed probably all of the provincial drains with one constituent or another and have gotten to know the staff who administer this system very well.

Of course, the waterways all have a destination which in the Interlake is either Lake Manitoba or Lake Winnipeg. Both of these bodies of water, I might add, Mr. Deputy Speaker, lie in their entirety in my constituency of the Interlake. Thus, I have truly come to grasp the concept of water management because even when it has all been drained off, the land where my farmers work, it is still in my constituency and is still an issue to a lot of people from commercial fishermen to environmentalists, from cottage owners to the First Nations people who live along the shores. I have come to appreciate that a sound water management strategy, not merely drainage, is an absolute necessity if all end users are to receive equal treatment.

When we came into office, quite frankly, there was no strategy and no governing body, for that matter, in that a judge had become so fed up with the neglect of this critical system and had basically dissolved provincial jurisdiction over municipal and on-farm drains. Of course, this was rapidly leading to chaos and anarchy in rural Manitoba until the honourable Member for The Pas (Mr. Lathlin), the former Minister of Conservation, took matters into his hands and reconstituted The Water Rights Act. That was one of our first acts in government, and I am proud to say that we have continued to build on this noteworthy achievement in the years that followed.

If I might speak further on the topic of proper water management for a moment, I would like to say that one of the things I learned after being elected as an MLA was the Conservation Districts Program which was initiated in 1972 by the first NDP government of Manitoba led by a man of courage and vision, the Right Honourable Edward Schreyer. We today are more familiar with his other major accomplishments, such as the expansion of Manitoba Hydro, but establishing the CD Program was a stroke of genius that continues to resonate today within our society.

At this point, I must acknowledge the good work done by the Deputy Premier and Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs, the Member for Wolseley (Ms. Friesen), who in her three years as minister has set up no less than seven new conservation districts to bring the total to sixteen today. Truly this must be seen as a giant leap forward, and I can assure her that this will be a big part of her legacy in the eyes of rural Manitobans when she moves on to other things in her life.

In terms of the water strategy of this Government, I would also like to emphasize that we have focussed on water quality as well. To begin with, the federal-provincial infrastructure program has been very green in its objectives, and many of our rural new communities have new waste disposal grounds while others have been blessed with sewer and water systems which in conjunction with other initiatives such as the newly constituted Office of Drinking Water will go a long way towards ensuring that

the people of Manitoba will never experience the horror of E. coli contamination as did the people in Walkerton, Ontario.

When one thinks of water tables and aquifers, it is difficult to do so without thinking of the livestock industry. As a rural MLA, I am keenly aware that the production of livestock is absolutely necessary in our province for a number of reasons, not the least of which is the poor state of the cereals and oilseeds industry in this country which is further exacerbated by our distance to the export markets in conjunction with the loss of the Crow freight subsidy. In the Interlake, we are further hampered by a lot of marginal land suitable only for grazing and the unavoidable fact that our grain elevators and rail lines have for the most part disappeared.

So I am fully aware that the production of livestock is fundamental to the development of my region. I will work in support of the expansion of it. However, I am equally aware that due to the nature of our topography, which has an abundance of ridge and swale country, our aquifers, which generally consist of highly fractured and water-eroded limestone, often have very little overburden protection.

*(15:10)

This is not a good mix with manure spreading unless the industry is developed with great caution. I think it is noteworthy that the former Minister of Agriculture, who served in the Filmon regime, the Member for Lakeside (Mr. Enns) who continues to sit in this Legislature, when confronted by citizens about the rapid rate of expansion of the hog industry frivolously replied that the Tory government was going to make pig manure smell like raspberry jam.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I submit that such a lighthearted and cavalier approach such as that was irresponsible, to say the least, and would eventually have led to problems in our province in the future if the Government had not changed in 1999.

We on this side of the House have taken a more considered approach to this issue and very early in our mandate constituted the Livestock Stewardship Panel to consult with all

stakeholders in order to find common ground amongst them. As a result, a number of policy, regulatory and legislative changes have been put into effect in order to improve the delivery of this industry while at the same time ensuring that the environmental integrity of the ecosystem remains intact.

I commend the members for Swan River, Wolseley and The Pas, the ministers of Agriculture and Food, Intergovernmental Affairs, and Conservation respectively for driving this positive process and look forward to further improvements in the days and years to come.

Expansion of livestock production is a classic example of rural diversification where considerable value is added to the end product. I have heard that the value of grain can be increased eightfold if it can be converted to feed and put through an animal as opposed to simply being exported.

To develop further on the theme of rural diversification, I would be remiss if I did not point to a major initiative that this Government acted upon immediately after taking over the reins of power. That was the construction of the Interlake natural gas pipeline. Rural gasification is seen as a critical step if diversification is to be truly effected in the countryside. Our communities must have alternative energy options available if industry is to be attracted into the various different regions.

The next frontier that we will now aspire to is the development of alternative fuels, which will create further opportunities for diversification for rural Manitoba in the form of the development of an ethanol industry. Although I have a soft spot for the fossil fuels in that I have worked in the oil fields of Alberta for 18 years, still it is obvious that development of a renewable fuel such as ethanol is critical to our future.

Ethanol will be a major component of our energy strategy in conjunction with the fuel of the future, which is hydrogen. Clean water and electricity are the ingredients for the production of this fuel, both of which we have in abundance here in Manitoba.

In terms of electrical power generation, I am very excited about Manitoba's potential in this

regard. First of all, focussing on Power Smart conservation efforts has created for us a virtual dam where over 200 megawatts of energy have been saved. This equals the potential output of the Wuskwatim Generating Station and is enough energy to power the city of Brandon. Renewal of the \$1.6-billion contract with Xcel Energy in Minnesota has added great stability to our future export sales, and talk of expanding markets in Ontario and possibly western Canada have renewed talk of the Conawapa project which was shelved by the Tory government.

In terms of the creation of long-term, good-paying jobs, which lead to a high quality of life for our citizenry, this industry is full of potential. I am especially pleased that our Government is partnering with Manitoba First Nations to share in the profits, the employment and the training opportunities from the next generation of low-impact hydro-electric plants on the Nelson River.

Education. Mr. Deputy Speaker, I am especially excited about the leadership our Government has shown in the field of education. From the very beginning, the former Minister of Education, the Member for Brandon East (Mr. Caldwell) showed his mettle by canceling the YNN program, which was the slippery slope for corporations and their privatization agenda seeking access to the young and impressionable minds of our school children. He immediately increased funding to the public school system at record levels and put in place a commitment to fund the system in future at the rate of economic growth, thereby ensuring that the system would not deteriorate over time as it did in the past decade under the administration of the Tory regime. He also merged school divisions which had as its objective channeling funds away from administration into the schoolrooms where they belong.

This Government has also committed to the elimination of the Education Support Levy and began that process with a 10% reduction in the last Budget.

Many long overdue capital upgrades took place in the Interlake under his administration, including boiler upgrades in Riverton, new Tyndall stone exteriors on both schools in Fisher

Branch and similar work currently underway on the Arborg Early Year School. I want to add that he has been fair in his delivery of capital upgrades and would point to the new early year school which was just built in the community of Gimli.

At the post-secondary level, we are seeing the positive effects of this change of attitude and that post-secondary enrolment is up by almost 20 percent. Tuition freezes and a new bursary program have made education more affordable and the construction of the Princess Street Red River College facility will go a long way to increasing the number of spaces available for training. Three years of funding increases have also led to a 36% increase in the enrolment through the ACCESS Program for Aboriginal professionals. Expanding on education opportunities for First Nations people is absolutely critical in terms of developing their future, and I am proud of our record in this regard.

In terms of health care, which was our No. 1 priority at the time of the election and remains so to this day, I cannot even begin to list the accomplishments of the Member for Kildonan, the Minister of Health (Mr. Chomiak) as they are too numerous to count. I will say that I have never seen any man work harder at his job than he has in the face of a most determined opposition which is obsessed with the desire to privatize the system in order to benefit their already rich friends who see the Health budget as a huge cash cow ripe for the slaughter.

Our defence of the public system, on the other hand, has been unequivocal, based on the belief that when you introduce a profit margin into the mix, which is the ultimate Tory objective, you do so at the risk of eroding the quality of service delivered to the people. Our sick, our elderly and our disadvantaged should not be looked upon as consumers as regards their health care needs, and they should not under any circumstances be pushed to the back of the queue by those who can afford to do so. That is the fundamental difference between New Democratic and Tory philosophies in terms of health care. I am proud to defend our position on it. Indeed, were I on the other side of the fence on this issue I would hang my head in shame.

Remember, these same Tories who so deservedly occupy the opposition benches today are the same bunch who would have privatized the home care system in this province if they could have gotten away with it, thereby putting the most vulnerable people in our society at the mercy of the marketplace.

* (15:20)

Concluding my comments on this topic, I want to share with you all a quote that I once heard spoken in this House by the honourable Member for Wellington (Mr. Santos). That is: Money has no heart, no soul, no homeland. I do not think that profit should drive policy in the health care field.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, before I conclude my remarks I just want to make brief reference to the alternate Throne Speech recently released by the Leader of the Opposition, the Member for Kirkfield Park (Mr. Murray). Once again, as in their 1999 election campaign platform, the Tories are promising to implement massive tax cuts while at the same time committing to huge spending increases in a variety of areas. We all recall the billion-dollar promise, do we not? We recall that. They were going to cut taxes by half a billion dollars. At the same time they were going to increase spending by half a billion dollars and balance the budget. Let us not forget that.

When I envision the Member for Kirkfield Park concocting this magic formula I cannot help but think of that famous scene from Macbeth where the three witches are casting a spell and are muttering the words: Double, double, toil and trouble, fire burn and caldron bubble. I can just see the member opposite attempting to cast his spell over the people of Manitoba. He throws in massive tax cuts to begin. He follows this with huge spending increases. Then he adds some powdered bat wings and the eye of a newt and, presto, he emerges with a budget that is balanced, typical of the planning strategy on that side of the House.

Perhaps instead of the powdered bat wings he simply plans to throw another Crown corporation into the mix, as Filmon and his gang

did back in 1995. We all recall that sad day in this province, do we not? They swore up and down that they would not do so and then immediately after the election, immediately within a matter of weeks they had consigned one of the large brokerage firms to dismember this Crown corporation that was built at the expense of the people of Manitoba and callously sold off with no consideration for those people whatsoever, and sold to whom? To who else, their friends.

I would like to just draw a little analogy of that sale. When I was in the Russian Republic a number of years ago, I was there when they were going to privatize all the state corporations, all the oil fields, oil companies and so on and so forth. What they did was they issued each Russian citizen 15 000 rubles in stock so that he could invest in these entities, these corporations. Immediately after that the Mafia was on the street buying up all of these stock certificates. They were offering 25 000, 30 000 rubles, double what they were worth in order to get these certificates. Within a time frame of maybe three or six months they had succeeded in buying up all these stock shares which they then used to buy up all of the state-owned enterprises which effectively led to a takeover of all the industry by organized crime in that country—a sad day, indeed.

I see the same thing happening in the sale of MTS. As I recall, when the company was privatized, you were only allowed to buy so many shares. Right? You were only allowed to buy so many shares. I remember all the Conservatives were scurrying around in my constituency, and some of my family members, as a matter of fact, were leading this process. I do not want to mention any names, but I am sure we can all guess who that was. Well, they all scurried around, same thing. They were telling people: Buy these stocks. This week we will buy them from you at an inflated value, an extra \$1,000 or \$2,000 these people could make just by buying one week, selling the next week, the same pattern, the same thing that happened in Russia. That same takeover by the gangsters in Russia was exactly what happened in the sale of MTS, and this proud Crown corporation was privatized and is now in the hands of the good old boys who sit on that side of the House, on

the opposition benches, where they very much deserve to be today. *[interjection]*

The Member for Lakeside (Mr. Enns) is confused. The Member for Lakeside is rambling on, and I would suggest that he go back to his book or maybe go have a smoke instead because you are not making any sense.

The former Premier of this province and Governor General of this country did a wonderful thing when he went to Russia and contracted for those turbines that are now working in the Jenpeg station. I refer you to an earlier speech that I gave, where those turbines continue to turn today and are producing in excess of 100 percent of the capacity that they were rated for. That was a fine deal and a classic example of international co-operation which Mr. Schreyer excelled at and which led to his appointment as Governor General and Trade Commissioner to Australia.

So I challenge the Member for Lakeside, if he chooses to do so, to stand up and dispute that. But I think we have already rehashed this issue. I recall, when he was speaking of the elevation of South Indian Lake and the options there, how skewed he was in his understanding of that issue and how he tried to bamboozle us in this House based solely on his long tenure here, which forced me to go to the former Governor General to get the truth of the matter. If we peruse Hansard, I think we will find the truth of the matter.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I have been speaking for roughly 25 minutes now, and I would like to give every opportunity to other members in the House to speak. So I will conclude my remarks, and I thank you for the opportunity to put them on the record today.

Mr. Stuart Murray (Leader of the Official Opposition): I am delighted today to stand in the House to put on the record my comments as I had the opportunity to sit in this Chamber yesterday to listen to the Speech from the Throne by the Doer government, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I think that most Manitobans would agree that, if they have had an opportunity, and I think those in this Chamber would also understand that, when you have a chance to put a

Speech from the Throne as a government, what you should really be doing is laying out a plan, a vision, something that offers hope and opportunity to the people of the province you speak, of course, to Manitobans.

Well, Mr. Deputy Speaker, it should be about charting a course because I think a Speech from the Throne really sets a bit of an agenda that you stand and maybe look a little bit higher than the horizon to look out into the future so that those people in this province can then have a sense of confidence, a sense of understanding of where it is that the Government is going. Unfortunately, yesterday, what we heard from the Doer government was really an opportunity for them to stand and look in the rearview mirror. As if you were driving down the road, they were looking in the rearview mirror over the past three years and talking about some of the things they might have tried to do for Manitobans. Obviously, they did not mention the things that they had failed. I will speak about a few of those, surprising as I am sure it is to my members opposite, but I would say that, when you are looking in a rearview mirror, as you are driving a car today, it could mean one thing, that you are going to drive into something, that you are not going to achieve the goal where you want to go. Indeed, I think, if you used an analogy, as most people do if they chart a course when they get into a boat, how do you know where you are going unless you have a course? I think what we saw yesterday was a little bit of a rerun from *Gilligan's Island*. A three-hour cruise and where did they end up? Nowhere. That is what we saw from the Doer government's Throne Speech yesterday.

* (15:30)

I think it is unfortunate, when you have a chance to put a vision out for Manitobans, that, rather than talk about the future, you really sit on your laurels and congratulate yourself for what you might or what you think you have done. So no vision for Manitobans. I know that, as we go through this debate, we have some very, very talented people on our side of the House who I know will be speaking to specific issues in the Throne Speech in terms of their areas, but today I would like to touch on a few of those issues, and, in particular, what I would like to do is touch on some of the issues that were not in the

Throne Speech and touch on some of the things that, when the tables turn after the next election and we are the government, we can then talk about the things that a Progressive Conservative government would do for the people of Manitoba.

There is no question that health care has become a big issue, not only in Manitoba but across Canada. I was very, very surprised that we did not hear a thing from the Doer government about health care in the sense of the biggest commitment they made to Manitobans in the spring. In the 1999 election campaign, it was the Doer government that said elect us, and we will absolutely end hallway medicine in six months and \$15 million to date. Their biggest commitment today continues to be their biggest failure.

Mr. Speaker in the Chair

We said yesterday that we believe very much that there is an opportunity in health care to work with the private sector. It is important to work with the private sector. If they can deliver services in a timely and an efficient and an affordable way, that is an important reason to bring the private sector to get involved in our publicly funded system. It is all about the public-funded system, not when you go to one of those clinics, the way that you get access to service is with your Manitoba Health card. That is what it should be all about.

We said in our alternative Throne Speech that a Progressive Conservative government would develop a policy framework, and I asked the Premier today if he would consider working with us to develop that policy framework, to go to the regional health authorities to start contracting out services so that Manitobans, rather than waiting a year for cardiac surgery, well over three to four months for an MRI, why would we not have a system that allows patients timely access to care? It should be no different than getting an X-ray. That is the process. It seems to work well there. Why does it not work well for CAT scans and MRIs? There is a way to solve this problem.

The members of the Doer government would say, well, we do not have a plan, but,

apparently, Mr. Romanow is coming out with a plan, and we support that. We have not seen it, and I know it is coming out after our Throne Speech, but we are supporting that. We think it is the right thing to do.

Well, Mr. Speaker, I understand when you do not have a plan and if somebody is offering something up, that, yeah, you might as well support that in absence of no ideas on your own side. Well, we on this side of the House, and I say that as a Progressive Conservative government we would not do that. We would have our own plan to offer the people of Manitoba. We would not rely on a former premier from another province to come in and tell us what we should be doing in Manitoba. No, we would stand for Manitoba patients and offer our own plan, and we talked about that. We talked about releasing a health care accountability and transparent report. Why? Because the health care system belongs to all Manitobans. It should not be something that the politicians decide, well, if we said we would do something and we cannot deliver, then somehow we better not come clean with Manitobans; somehow we better see if there is a way to hide those failings.

Well, Mr. Speaker, we on this side of the House realize there are always challenges, but in those challenges, when you are successful, trumpet it. Feel good about. Absolutely let people know that here is what your plan is and here is what you have decided. Here is where you are going and here is where you have had some level of success. That is great.

But when you fail, as the Doer government has failed with hallway medicine, Mr. Speaker, why then instead of hiding, why then do you not come clean with Manitobans and say: We made a mistake? We did this because we thought the political rhetoric was going to allow us to win an election campaign. Be honest and say: We made a mistake. We cannot do what we said we were going to do, and so we will work together with Manitobans and we will set a bar, but we absolutely cannot achieve the level that we said we would do.

Well, Mr. Speaker, we on this side of the House believe that transparency in the process is very, very important. When it comes to

rebuilding and improving our health care, we believe that a health care professionals advisory committee is very important. Why? Because frontline workers—and I learned this in business—always, always have a better way of looking at improvement to the system. Trying to devise a system around a table without consulting or listening to those frontline workers is really not allowing those people who can make a difference the opportunity to improve the system.

We believe that frontline workers should have a voice that goes directly to the Minister of Health. We believe that is an improvement. We talked about reducing waiting lists in our alternate speech to the throne by putting them up on Web sites so that people, Manitobans, patients, those who really matter, those people then can have access to those Web sites and decide for themselves. Nobody is going to say that you must go outside of Winnipeg, for example, to receive more timely access. Use Boundary Trails as an example. To talk to one of my colleagues, it is a wonderful place, and I have been there, and I celebrate that my Member for Pembina (Mr. Dyck) has been to that place and has taken me there. It is a great institution, but why, if somebody wanted to go to Boundary Trails, why should they not have that choice? Why deprive one Manitoban of a choice to get more timely access to care? That, Mr. Speaker, only seems to make sense and is something that we support on this side of the House.

Also, Mr. Speaker, yesterday in the Throne Speech—and, by the way, the Premier (Mr. Doer) pointed out a couple of things that were not mentioned, and I would like to get his attention to make sure that he hears my comments on those today. For example, he talked about a lot of things yesterday in his Throne Speech and never once mentioned wellness as a strategy in health care, and I say shame on the Premier.

It should not always be about how do we find and spend more money. What is wrong with having a wellness strategy to try to make those Manitobans who are in chronic pain or those, Mr. Speaker, that are looking at making a plan to be more fit, to be more active, to be proactive in terms of not looking always at how can the health care system be there on an ongoing basis but on a basis when you really need to use it?

We talked again on this in the last session. The Doer government felt that those patients that were looking at using chiropractic services—it was the Doer government that said no to those patients; we are going to do away with supporting you to go and see chiropractors, and they cut that, Mr. Speaker. Again, that is very short-sighted for all the members opposite, and not only did we raise the issue but some 50 000 Manitoba patients stood against this Government and said: What are you doing to us? Why are you letting your ideology get in the way? What is the point of taking away the money that we want in chiropractic services? What have you got against chiropractors? Well, we found out because the Premier (Mr. Doer) and others said: Well, apparently, the chiropractors drive big cars and they live in one of the areas in Winnipeg called Tuxedo. Apparently, there was something wrong with that.

* (15:40)

Well, again, does it matter where they live? Apparently, to the other side it does, to members of the Doer government. Certainly not to us, Mr. Speaker. When it comes to health care our principles are ensuring that Manitoba patients come first, that they have timely access to quality care. That is what will drive, what we believe, and that clearly is a difference between us and the NDP, the Doer government. There is no question on that.

Mr. Speaker, we did not hear a whole lot in the Throne Speech about justice. We on this side of the House understand that it is not all about photo opportunities and press releases. It is about getting some results. We know that in order to ensure that our streets are safer, we need to have more trained police on the streets in Manitoba. That is a fact of life. We understand that. That is something that the other side does not understand. They made no mention of it whatsoever.

We believe that it is important to put additional funding in place to ensure that those police are on the streets and that that funding does not go off somewhere else into a general revenue account. We say we need more police on the streets in Manitoba, we are prepared to make a commitment to fund that, and we are

prepared to make a commitment that that funding goes to ensure that there are more police on the streets in Manitoba.

We also know from talking to the various levels of police forces in our province that a joint forces unit is mandatory if we are going to ensure that we attack gangs and high level crime in this province. Well, that is something that our party believes in, and that is something that a Progressive Conservative government would do. We would ensure that the funding is there for a joint forces unit because that, Mr. Speaker, allows us to ensure that our streets become safer.

We also talked that the Doer government continues to see a backlog in terms of getting our people through the court system. We continually see a backlog with the Doer government. Well, Mr. Speaker, again, I know they are devoid of ideas. So the Progressive Conservative Party, a government that I would lead, would ensure that we would reduce the court backlog by contracting with private law firms to provide prosecution services on an as-needed basis.

Why would we do that? We would do that because we do not want to add to the bureaucracy. The Doer government would love to add more to the bureaucracy, but that costs taxpayers money. You know, I find it interesting, and I am sure the Premier (Mr. Doer) would find this interesting, that there was a case where it was well documented in a 7-11 robbery. Witnesses. Everything was in place to have a quick prosecution, but, no, the court backlog delayed and delayed again, Mr. Speaker, and delayed yet again, and during that two-year period, what happened? Well, the case fell apart because one of the key witnesses died, died waiting for this case to go to court. I say to the Doer government: Shame on you. What we have got as an opportunity to bring in prosecutors on an as-needed basis only makes sense.

Mr. Speaker, we will ensure that there is a safe house for prostitutes. We have heard lots of discussion from the other side and lots of photo ops, but we believe that part of our most vulnerable part of our society, those young women that are forced to prostitute themselves is abhorrent and something that we are opposed to. What we would do is ensure that there is a safe

house. We would also ensure that we would be able to get restraining orders so those that would be the pimps for those young children would not have the ability to have access to them. This is a start in ensuring that those young women have a chance to live a solid life and make a positive contribution to our community and take them out of the level of crime that they are forced to because of the pimps and because of the fact that they have no safe place to go. Something the Progressive Conservative government would do is act immediately to make sure we had a place for those young children.

We talk about education. What do we see from the Doer government on education? Well, after hearing the Premier (Mr. Doer) say to MAST that we will not force any school divisions to amalgamate, why, well, because it is not the Manitoba way, Mr. Speaker. That is why we will not force any school divisions to amalgamate. Well, no sooner were those words out of his mouth then, wham, down goes the amalgamation hammer on a bunch of unsuspecting school divisions that have no idea why this was taking place. Oh, except that, by the way, we have an answer. Oh, no, we have an answer. We have an answer, and that is, well, we are going to save \$10 million. Oh, is that right? So the question is asked: Could you show us not a \$10-million saving, not 9, 8, 7, 6, 5, 4, 3, not even 2, can you show us a \$1-million saving? The answer is they cannot. Why? Because expenses are going to go up through forced amalgamation. We know that; they already have.

I am delighted, by the way. I am delighted. I would love to go on record, and I am looking at one of the members opposite who shares one of the school divisions. I can only thank my member opposite from St. James, who, I am sure, played a key role in ensuring that our school division was not going to be amalgamated. I am sure she played a key role, and I thank her very much for ensuring that our St. James-Assiniboia School Division escaped that big hammer of amalgamation. I do not know what it took, but I say to you thank you very much. It was great. I am delighted.

Mr. Speaker, we have said, and I will say again, that we believe it is important that all Manitoba parents that have children in schools

know how their children are doing. So what we said we would do—[interjection] You know, I hear an echo in the Chamber. That echo is saying get us back into government, and we will buy back MTS. Get us back in, and we will buy her back. That is what it is all about. That is all we need. But, apparently, that, too, was just another hollow promise. In terms of education, we believe that children have a right to learn and parents have a right to know how their children are doing. So we will ensure that we will bring in mandatory standards tests in Grade 6 and Grade 9. Why? Because it is important that those children that may be having difficulty are not left behind but that there is help provided to ensure that those children have the same level of education as those that maybe are doing better in school. It is not about how do you look and challenge, it is about how do you help and ensure that every single Manitoba child has the best education that we as a government should and must be able to offer them.

We also believe that as curriculum changes we should ensure that those teachers who have a thirst for knowledge are able to bring that into the classroom at the highest level. That is why we hear nothing from the Doer government. But a Progressive Conservative government would ensure that we have a professional development fund for classroom teachers to access so that they can have the latest ability to ensure that they can bring into the classroom the kinds of levels that they as classroom teachers want to do.

*(15:50)

Mr. Speaker, yesterday the Premier (Mr. Doer) tried to take a lot of credit for ensuring that everybody knows that we have more children, students in our post-secondary education. Well, we on this side of the House acknowledge that that is a positive attribute for Manitoba, that our post-secondary education institutions are full and growing. But the interesting thing about it was that I did not hear anything in the Throne Speech that would say to those young Manitobans that graduate: We want you to stay in Manitoba. We want you to put a stake in the ground because we want your future and your hope and opportunity to be here in Manitoba.

For the first time in Manitoba history, under the Doer government young men and women are

fleeing this province for opportunity. Where? To every other province in Canada except Saskatchewan. That is unfortunate. That is why we would introduce a new graduate tax credit to allow those young men and women who graduate from our post-secondary institutions a chance to make Manitoba their home. We believe that that is very, very important.

Mr. Speaker, yesterday we heard the Premier say a lot of things, a lot of things about nothing. When it comes to the economy, we understand on this side of the House that a Progressive Conservative Party understands how important the economy is to ensure that we have the ability to fund our health care system and our education system, because without a strong economy it is the linchpin that allows us as government to do the kinds of things that we must do for our society. We said that we would immediately recognize that we have to do something with the tax system. That is something that the Doer government, the NDP, they will never have a look at the tax system in a serious way. Tinkering at the edges is the best that they might do, but it must be taken apart. Why? Because it has to be made fair, simple and competitive.

If we are to grow the economy and if we are to, say, reach out to those in business here and say that we want you to remain here, our tax system must be fair, competitive and simple. That not only allows our businesses here to flourish, but it gives an opportunity for all businesses across Canada, North America to look at Manitoba on the radar screen and say: That is where I want to be. That is where I want to expand. That is why I want to start a business. Why? Because I see a return on my investment. As a private entrepreneur, yes, I am prepared to take the risk and the reward, but I want to ensure that I get the best return on my investment. That is why I said that we as a Progressive Conservative government would take apart the tax system and build one that makes sense.

Mr. Speaker, we also believe that there should be a tax credit for those tradespeople that need their tools to do their trade properly. That only makes sense, to recognize those hard-working tradespeople. That is something that we

believe. Of course, we heard nothing about that in the Throne Speech yesterday.

We also talk about the fact that we would look at Bill 44, that bill that I would like to pay tribute to the current Minister of Labour (Ms. Barrett), who, I know, is not going to be running in the next election. Of course, on a personal basis I wish her well, and I have said that in the media and I echo that in the Chamber. But I think, Mr. Speaker, as a businessman, I also am delighted that she is going to be moving on, because Bill 44 was one of the most regressive pieces of legislation that ever came into this province. I am afraid that what we saw was nothing more than how do we put a roadblock in front of business. I believe that a Progressive Conservative government would not do those sorts of things. In fact, I have said and I will say it in the House, when we form government after the next election the first thing that we will do is take Bill 44 and rip it up, because it is not the right thing for Manitoba. We will make sure that labour laws in Manitoba are fair and equitable to all, not to one side. We think that that is absolutely, absolutely wrong.

When it comes to our Aboriginal community we have a lot to do. We have a lot to do as a government and as a province to recognize some of the challenges out there. I have heard from people. They say, well, it is a federal problem. Well, it is not a federal problem. Those are Manitobans that live in our province. We believe on this side of the House that we have to ensure that we work with them.

I can tell you, Mr. Speaker, I was at a business council conference where this was a huge issue that was talked about. I will tell you this, when you come back and talk about the economy, the difference between our side of the House and the New Democrat's side of the House is they always believe that let us get the government involved to create jobs. Let us get the government involved to stimulate the economy. Let us get the government involved to do it all. There is a major difference between that side of the House and our side, because I look around the caucus table every day and I see the kinds of entrepreneurs that we have in our party. We know that it is the private sector that creates jobs, the private sector that creates wealth and

the private sector that creates opportunity. Our government understands that, our party understands it. They do not, and I say shame on them, it is a loss.

So, when it comes to the Aboriginal problem, the challenge that we face is to ensure that the private sector plays a meaningful role in ensuring that those people have a chance to make a positive contribution by getting involved in business, learning, being a part of it. There have been some success stories. Those are the kinds of success stories that we must grow and we must take advantage of.

We know that there are Manitobans in need. To that point we said in our alternative throne speech that we would have taken immediate action to reduce the tax burden for all those Manitobans by raising the threshold and taking Manitobans off of the tax roll. We believe that welfare is not a job option. We do not want that to be the case. We want them to have a sense of making a contribution and ensuring that at that level they keep that money in their pockets.

We also talk about proclaiming the amended Employment and Income Assistance Act that was introduced in 1999 but never proclaimed by the Doer government. *[interjection]* It is getting better, though. I will send you a copy.

Mr. Speaker, the other thing that we also will do is implement a tax credit for stay-at-home parents. Why? Because one of the most important things that any parent can do is to be at home to nourish, nourish their children as they start their life in order to be the parents. It is about choice. If somebody wants to take their child to day care, that is absolutely a choice that they can make. But should not that same choice be allowed for those parents who would love to stay home with their children at the early stages and raise and nurture them? That is something that we believe in, and that is something that we would absolutely support.

We would ensure that we remove the PST off of diapers and incontinence products. Those items are not a luxury. They are a necessity. Again, we heard nothing about that yesterday.

We believe that we need to establish a mental health advocate that would report directly to the Health Minister. Why? Because there are some that cannot navigate their way through the system, a very important piece that we believe in.

We also on this side of the House would start diverting MLCC advertising funds to pay for fetal alcohol syndrome. Why? Because we do not believe that advertising liquor stores in Manitoba makes sense. They have a monopoly anyway. It is all about recognizing those young fetal alcohol syndrome people that need help. That is something that we would ensure we would do.

I want to just make a couple of comments about this Premier's desire to rush out with the new minister to sign the Kyoto accord. Well, Mr. Speaker, they clearly have not got a clue what they are signing, and the minister himself has said: Well, costs are irrelevant. It does not matter. We just better sign it, costs are irrelevant. But having said that, we on this side of the House believe and will stand by the fact that costs are relevant, very relevant when it comes to this, especially when there is no plan. But while they are out trying to sign a national accord that has some bearing certainly on Canada, we understand that we want to reduce greenhouse gas, but we need a plan. In the meantime, we are seeing 57 Olympic-size swimming pools of human waste going into the Red River, right in our own backyard. Whatever happened to that common-sense approach of cleaning up your own backyard before you started throwing sticks and stones at other glass houses? Where did that go? That is something that I think was missing terribly.

* (16:00)

We believe, Mr. Speaker, that the twinning of the highway from Virden to the Saskatchewan border is a priority and should be done immediately. We heard nothing from the Government on that. Building the Kenaston underpass is a priority. We heard nothing about that from the Doer government. When it comes to rural Manitoba, where did the Rural Development Department go? They did away with it because they do not understand the importance of rural Manitoba.

We would absolutely bring back the Department of Rural Development because they need a voice at the Cabinet table. The entrepreneurs of rural Manitoba deserve to have a voice at the Cabinet table. That is something that we would do and something that the other side does not understand.

When you talk about the economy, one of the things that we did not hear a word about from the Doer government was agriculture. Clearly, Mr. Speaker, we hear all sorts of platitudes, but if this Government was at all serious about agriculture, they would immediately sign on and deal with the agriculture policy framework, the 40 percent. Those dollars should flow today to our rural agriculture producers.

Instead, Mr. Speaker, what do we get? We get rhetoric and nothing. Meanwhile our farmers out there are falling further behind. Is the Minister of Agriculture and the Premier, are they saying—and in fact they are saying because the message is loud and clear, well, you are 40 percent less important than those in Alberta or Ontario. Well, I say shame on every member opposite. That would not be the position of a Progressive Conservative government. It certainly is something that we would enact immediately because those farmers—and we heard the Premier (Mr. Doer) mention last night about world-class farmers. They are, but please, on the other side of the House, I ask the Premier today, show them the dignity that you want to talk about but that you can never deliver on. I say shame on the Premier for that.

Mr. Speaker, we all know that Manitoba has unique challenges for business. We have a small population, distance to market for example, and those things will not change. So we believe on this side of the House, let us concentrate on the things that can change. Let us focus on our opportunity. Our party will take artificial barriers like high taxes and restrictive labour laws out of the picture and work with the entrepreneurs to grow our economy.

I know the Premier mentioned today in Question Period: I never heard the Leader of the Opposition say anything about Hydro. Well, Mr. Speaker, I would like to go on the record and talk about Hydro because our party believes that

we should use our low hydro rates as a draw for high-energy companies, not as a slush fund for government overspending. That is what they have done on that side of the House, and we would not do that.

Mr. Speaker, in the coming months there will be an election, and at that time Manitobans will have a choice to look at a plan that is realistic, that we will have laid out, or a plan that the New Democratic Party has been talking about for the past three years. Questions such as: Are our streets safer? Well, I think the answer to that is no. Have we got better health care under this Government? I think the answer again is no. Have we seen an improvement in our overall economy? The answer is no. Have we seen our agriculture producers being recognized by this particular Government? The answer is no. Has this Government consulted anybody on their desire to sign the Kyoto accord before they signed on?

What we see is a lack of ideas and direction on that side. On this side of the House we see a plan. We see a focus of hope and opportunity for young men and women. We see a direction that will drive our economy, allow the private sector to do what they do, to drive our economy, drive our province forward.

It is all about an attitude change. That will be the difference between the New Democratic Party and the Progressive Conservative Party, which I am proud to be the leader of. When we enter the next election we will be victorious because we understand where Manitobans are at, we understand the importance of where it is at. Those people do not get it. We do. Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

So therefore, Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the honourable Member for River East (Mrs. Mitchelson),

THAT the Motion be amended by adding at the end of the sentence the following words:

But this House regrets

(a) the Government's inability to fulfil the promises outlined in its Throne Speech of November 13, 2001, including the following

failures: not ending hallway medicine; not addressing the province-wide shortage of health care professionals; not reducing waiting lists for health care services; and

(b) the Government's failure to address Manitoba's growing court backlogs through such measures as contracting with private law firms; and

(c) the Government's failure to make a commitment for further provincial income tax reductions; and

(d) the Government's failure to institute mandatory standards testing in grades 6 and Senior 1 despite the fact that our students score lower on national testing than the Canadian average; and

(e) the Government's failure to make a firm commitment to relocating Assiniboine Community College to the former Brandon Mental Health Centre site; and

(f) the Government's failure to ensure a viable future for the family farm in Manitoba through measures such as providing the provincial government's share of the transition funding set out in the Agricultural Policy Framework, thereby not addressing the pressing challenges facing Manitoba producers and treating them as 40 percent less valuable than their counterparts in Alberta and Ontario; and

(g) the Government's failure to adequately promote rural economic diversification; and

(h) the Government's failure to prevent Manitoba parks from being carved up and protected for future generations, in spite of the fact that the Member for Concordia told a Winnipeg radio station that "the designation (of a provincial park) means the public owns the park and it can't be sold or bartered away . . ."; and

(i) the Government's failure to set out a meaningful plan to protect the province's fish stocks from illegal fishing; and

(j) the Government's failure to set out a plan to prevent future spills of sewage into the Red River; and

(k) the Government's failure to provide a cost-benefit analysis of the impact of ratifying the Kyoto Protocol on Manitoba's economy; and

(l) the Government's failure to stem the outflow of Manitobans to other provinces; and

(m) the Government's failure to recognize the important role private-sector involvement has in growing Manitoba's economy.

AND has thereby lost the trust and confidence of the people of Manitoba and this House.

Thank you very, very much.

Mr. Speaker: I have reviewed the amendment, and the amendment is in order. It has been moved by the honourable Leader of the Official Opposition (Mr. Murray), seconded by the honourable Member for River East (Mrs. Mitchelson)

THAT the Motion—dispense?

An Honourable Member: No, let us hear it.

* (16:10)

Mr. Speaker: Okay. There is a will for it to be read.

THAT the Motion be—[interjection] Dispense? Dispense.

Hon. Becky Barrett (Minister of Labour and Immigration): Mr. Speaker, it is with a great deal of honour that I get up to speak in favour of the Speech from the Throne, and technically I can do nothing other, in good conscience, than speak against the amendment to the Speech from the Throne.

The Leader of the Official Opposition, in his comments today, talked about a lack of a plan or a vision. He mentioned the phrase, the rearview mirror. I find this passing strange from a party that, in their blueprint, when they had their alternate speech from the throne a couple of days ago, had 44 pledges that were identified in the media. Of those 44 pledges, I counted 27, or over 60 percent, that required financial resources, either new money or reallocation of

existing resources. However, their blueprint did not account at all for where this money was going to come from. What programs were going to be eliminated? *[interjection]* Find from within. Yes. That is what reallocation of resources means, but find from where within? What programs in health care are going to be cut? What programs in education are going to be cut? What new initiatives will not take place? Sixty percent of this the Opposition party's blueprint requires, at least 60 percent, and I think, if you dug down below, many of the other pledges and comments by the Leader of the Opposition earlier this week, you would find that virtually every one of their proposals, pledges, requires resources, financial resources.

A plan has to have a recognition, particularly from a party that wants to be in government, has to have a recognition and acknowledgement of where the human and financial resources are going to be found to pay for those pledges, to implement those pledges. Nowhere in that blueprint were those issues discussed. I think you need to look at that lack of financial accountability in their plan and put it in the context of their 11 years in government. This lack of financial accountability is nothing new for the Progressive Conservative party, whether in opposition or in government.

In the Filmon years, they fired a thousand nurses. What kind of health care accountability is that? They paid Connie Curran \$4 million U.S., heaven only knows how much that was in the exchange rate, plus expenses, which I understand, were almost another million dollars, to come in and tell the former government that they should fire nurses, they should cut beds, they should do all of these things and the health care system would be saved. This at a time when, in the United States, Connie Curran and her ilk were being disproved by the hospitals that she had gone to in the United States that had bought her plan and then were finding out later that they were reaping the whirlwind. The former government sowed the Connie Curran seeds, and we in Manitoba are still reaping the whirlwind of those bad decisions.

Just a couple of other things that they did when they were in government. Members have talked about drainage. Well, it was the former

government who reduced the amount of resources for drainage in the province of Manitoba, with incalculable negative results. In our three years in government, we have reversed that decision. We have put 50 percent more money into drainage.

Finally, Mr. Speaker, in a contextual framework of which there are thousands of examples, but just one final one, in the last Budget that the former government brought down, they had no money set aside in that Budget for health care capital spending. They made health care capital pledges, left, right and centre, many of them four, five and six times they were announced; no money in the Budget to pay for those capital expenditures and no money in the Budget to pay for the operating expenses that accrue after you build a facility. What kind of a plan is that? It is a classic Conservative plan.

Well, how did they budget during the 1990s when they were in government? In '92-93, they were \$766 million in deficit in one year; in '93-94, \$461 million in deficit; '94-95, \$196 million in deficit. Mr. Speaker, the former government in just those three fiscal years added \$1.423 billion to the debt load of the Province of Manitoba, \$1.423 billion. That is more, I believe, than we spend on health care in a single year here. Imagine what Manitobans could do with that money, just those three years.

Over our first three years, Mr. Speaker, in our budgets we paid back \$96 million in each year, between debt reduction and for the first time in 35 or 40 years putting money into paying back and making our contributions to the civil service pension fund, to the Superannuation Fund, so that in 35 years, or less than that now, our children and our grandchildren, when they come into the civil service of this province, will have their pension funds paid for and fully sustained, both employer and employee portions; \$96 million, almost \$100 million, small in comparison to the three budget years where they racked up a deficit of \$1.423 billion.

Mr. Speaker, that is the context we need to look at in terms of the Opposition's comments about our Speech from the Throne. The Leader of the Opposition (Mr. Murray) has also said several times that all this Speech from the

Throne did was sit on our laurels. Well, I appreciate that comment because it acknowledged—I am not sure the Leader of the Opposition meant it to—that we have laurels upon which to sit, and we do.

We have many, many accomplishments that we have achieved in the three years we have been in Government. It is important to recognize those laurels and those achievements because those achievements are the base upon which we build our plan for the future, the base upon which we have built our Throne Speech this year, upon which we will build our Budget. It is not a lack of forward vision. There are a lot of instances in this Speech from the Throne that are very clearly visionary, but they are built on our past accomplishments. That is a good thing. Governments do best when they understand what their role is, what their job is. They have a plan from the beginning. They follow through on that plan. They have a long-term strategy goal and vision.

Businesses talk all the time about needing to budget multi-year. Well, a budget is not only a financial projection but a financial projection that is based on a plan, that is based on a vision, if it is a good budget. That is what we have done. Over our first three years in office, that is what the Speech from the Throne does. It sets out not only what we have accomplished, what our base is, but how we are going to build in this next year on that base. So, yes, we have laurels. We are proud of those laurels, and they are not of the rearview mirror, but they are the base upon which we do build and will build our future vision.

Mr. Speaker, what I think we need to look at and what I would like to spend a few minutes talking about is the fact that one of the things this Government has accomplished, one of the reasons it has accomplished so much over the last three years is that we have worked in co-operation and in consultation with all Manitobans, and I would like to talk about that principle of co-operation and communication in consultation in the area of immigration. This is one of the seven planks of our economic vision that the Speech from the Throne identified yesterday, and not one, I might add, of the areas that the Opposition talked about negatively in their response to the Speech from the Throne.

*(16:20)

We recognize the importance of immigration as a government to our future economic and social well-being as a province. We also recognize, if we are going to succeed as a province with an immigration strategy, that it cannot be just government driven, and we recognized that there are many stakeholders in this process through a number of initiatives that we have undertaken in the last while. The Premier's Economic Advisory Council that the Premier established last year has made a report based on a number of subcommittees that they had, excellent, excellent work.

The Premier's Economic Advisory Council was co-chaired by Bob Silver, who is the owner of Western Glove and one of the new owners of the *Winnipeg Free Press*, and Paul Moist, the head of the CUPE Local 500 which works with the City of Winnipeg. Those co-chairs ably shepherded through a process that was by all accounts and by all participants seen as a very positive, progressive, forward-moving process. They came up with a number of recommendations that we have pledged that we will act on.

One of those areas was in immigration. The Premier's Economic Advisory Council recognized that immigration is one of the keys to our continued growth and success. These are members that come from labour. They come from business. They come from in the immigration area. They came from people who provide services to immigrants, people who are intimately involved and committed to the concept of immigration. They recognize that we need to have a number of arrows in our quiver, if you will, and have made wonderful recommendations that we are following up on.

One of their recommendations that came forward, not only from the Premier's Economic Advisory Council, but also from our consultations with groups such as the Business Council of Manitoba and the Chambers of Commerce, was that there needs to be another group, an advisory group outside of Government that looks at our immigration strategy, looks at our immigration needs and makes recommendations to Government and suggestions to Government as to how to implement those needs. This is a

very positive move, and we have recognized that in this Speech from the Throne. The Premier has said that we will be introducing legislation to enact a Manitoba immigration council which will be made up of all of the stakeholders in immigration that will look at our policies and make recommendations. This is a very positive, forward-looking move, and it is a move that acknowledges that these issues are not just single issues, that they have enormous implications, enormous ramifications and need to have input from a number of people.

A third thing that we have done in immigration in the co-operative consultative manner is to begin—well, actually, it has been a long-standing process—to acknowledge and recognize and work towards the elimination of the issue of credentials recognition. Many people come to Manitoba who have credentials, either professional or skilled trades credentials, from off-shore, who have a great deal of difficulty in getting those credentials recognized so that they can work in the areas for which they have been trained. The problem is they do not have their credentials recognized, and also it is very difficult in many cases to get an assessment done of what they do know, of what their skill levels are and what, if any, gaps there are and programs put in place to address those gaps.

So it is a very big challenge. The federal and provincial ministers, when we met in Winnipeg last month talked about this as a major challenge.

We have over the last 10 years brought into Manitoba as immigrants almost a thousand people with post-secondary or skilled-trades backgrounds, just under a thousand people. Those are people who have been trained and have had skills and have been educated in other countries. We have not paid a cent for those people to be trained. They come here with those skills. That number is just slightly less than the number of students who graduate from the University of Winnipeg each year. So we have a huge pot of very skilled people here in the province who want to use their skills, people whose skills we desperately need.

We need to manage to narrow the gap between those people coming with skills and

having those skills recognized and upgraded so that they can perform their professions and their skilled trades that they have been trained to do.

We acknowledge this. We have been working as a government in trying to come up with suggestions for almost as long as we have been in government, and we do have some ideas that came forward from a number of groups.

Earlier this week, we initiated a one-day think tank on this whole issue of credentials recognition. It was attended by over 100 people from all stakeholder groups, again from the business community, from the labour community, from government, from post-secondary education, from settlement services. All came together and by all accounts it was a wonderful day that has come up with a number of suggestions that we will work on to increase the credentials recognition of people in our province.

Mr. Speaker, these are only three examples within the Immigration area alone where we have shown by our willingness to reach outside the box, to think outside the box, to bring in anyone who has an interest in these areas to talk, to consult, to co-operate. By doing that, we have managed to work to progress and to increase the viability of our immigration stream in the province of Manitoba.

Since we were elected, Mr. Speaker, we have increased the number of immigrants to Manitoba by 50 percent. We have a long way to go. We are only at about 50 percent of where we need to be. We would like to have between 9000 and 10 000 immigrants coming into Manitoba each year. This last year we were just under 5000, so we are about halfway there, but we are moving in the right direction, and the work that we are doing on credentials recognition, on the Provincial Nominee Program and all these other initiatives is going to make it possible for us to reach that goal.

I would like to speak for a moment about the Provincial Nominee Program. It began in October of 1998 under the former government, and I have always given credit to the former government for beginning this initiative. When it began, there were 200 families that were allowed

in each year under the program. Because it has been so successful over the last four years, we are now able to issue 1500 certificates in this calendar year. That means if you average three people per certificate, you could have 4500 people coming into Manitoba at some point in the future as a result of the Provincial Nominee Program, half of our target.

It is a wonderful program. It has been very, very successful. It is held up by the federal minister as a model to be followed by other provinces. One of the reasons it is so successful is that we work with all the stakeholders. We work with employers throughout the province of Manitoba. We work with settlement groups. We work with refugee groups. We work with all of the people who have an interest in this area, and that is what has made it successful.

I would like to take exception to one of the quotes that was in the *Brandon Sun*. It was actually in today's *Brandon Sun*. There was an article written with the headline: Province hopes to double immigration. The Leader of the Official Opposition (Mr. Murray) takes exception to the human resources manager of the Maple Leaf plant in Brandon who says that the Provincial Nominee Program has been very helpful and is working very well in allowing people to come to Manitoba to work in the plant and to stay there. The Leader of the Opposition says a lot of immigrants come here, stay for the required time and head to Toronto or Calgary for opportunity.

I would like to suggest to the Leader of the Official Opposition that I would be more than happy to provide him with a briefing on the accurate facts and figures on our Provincial Nominee Program in particular. Right now we have done an analysis. In the four years that the Provincial Nominee Program has been in existence over 90 percent of those nominees and their families are still in Manitoba. That is a very large percentage. This is in a program that has no strings attached. Once you get into the province of Manitoba through the Provincial Nominee Program there is no requirement to stay for any length of time. You are free to go, mobile through the country.

*(16:30)

Because of the supports that the Government and communities and businesses have put into place, 90 percent of those families are still here. That is a remarkable achievement, one that has been recognized by the federal government when they say that we have the best program in the country.

I am going to end by saying that the Leader of the Official Opposition stated at the end his comment that the Government just says let us just get the government involved and let us let government do it. I would like to state categorically that in many, many areas, including the immigration area as just one example, that is not an accurate statement of how we have operated and how we continue to operate and how we will continue to operate in the future after the next election.

We have worked co-operatively with all Manitobans. We have listened. We have consulted. We have thoughtfully dealt with many, many issues. We have said government is one partner, one partner. That has been one of the major keys to the success of this current government, one of the keys to the laurels that we so proudly rest on and one of the keys for the vision that was so clearly articulated in the Speech from the Throne yesterday.

Mr. Speaker, I would just like to end on a personal note. As members know, I will not be seeking re-election in the next provincial election. We do not know when that election is going to be called. The only person who knows, and he may not know either, is the Premier. But there may be an opportunity for me to stand in this House again next fall on another Speech from the Throne, but on the off chance that there is not I would like to say what an honour and what a pleasure it has been to speak on speeches from the Throne both from government and while in opposition. It has been a privilege to be a member of this Legislature and to be able to talk about the issues that are of importance to my constituents and that were important to Manitobans.

I respect every member in this House and thank all of them for the support that they have given me personally over the years and just say again what a wonderful privilege it has been to

be a member of this Legislature. For as long as I will continue to be I will enjoy every day. Thank you very much.

Mr. Ron Schuler (Springfield): I would like to first of all begin my speech by saying a few things about the honourable Member for Inkster. I started my career here being appointed the critic for the honourable member. She and I spent a lot of time together, probably in her eyes too much time. She is a member who knows her portfolio well. Obviously, from having been in opposition she got to know the portfolio well. She executed herself exceptionally well in her portfolio. We agreed on the issues, but insofar as an individual, an outstanding individual, I was pleased that she would be the first minister that I would be a critic for. I should probably be saying some of these things personally to the minister. I mean, there are a few times when I feel that I, in my new and youthful enthusiasm, went over the top, and there are a couple of paragraphs that, if I could go back and not have them in Hansard, I would choose to do so.

The minister, I have to admit, clearly having been here longer than I, took it in stride and must have realized that youthful enthusiasm when one tends to get carried away at times. I always appreciated her comments when she said to me: Just remember, you keep this political, not personal. If I ever did cross the line, I do apologize to her, because, again, we are supposed to be here to take each other on politically and not personally. So, again, we know that the minister has announced that, whenever that next election takes place, she will not be challenging her seat again. I do wish her well. I know she is very, very tied into her family, and what goes on in her family is very important to her.

I have said, on a lot of occasions, I cannot imagine a more wonderful mother than she is. I know she took great concern when her family needed her and took time off and went and visited and helped out. I think that is what family is there for. You know, politically, we did not agree, but, on a very human level, I would like to say I have certainly appreciated a lot of what she had to say. I found her to be very forthright. Even if I did not like the answers, she always tried to present an answer. I suspect that, when she found out that I was no longer her critic, I

am sure there were one or two bottles of champagne that were popped open; okay, maybe one bottle of champagne. I do wish her all the best in whatever it is she is going to do. I am sure she will excel in whatever she is going to do. I do wish her all the best.

Mr. Speaker, I do want to address the Throne Speech and what the Government has put forward. In the preamble, the Throne Speech deals with the visit of Queen Elizabeth II, and it was a very momentous occasion. It was of great interest to myself and I know those of us who were newer on the scene, who have not been involved in a royal occasion before. There was a lovely reception that was held here in the Manitoba Legislature, and we as MLAs were invited. We had the privilege to be there.

My wife and I were standing in line, and it happened to be that the Prince came down our line and was shaking hands. It was wonderful to see the royalty. We got to see the Queen, of course, from a little bit further away. As the Prince walked by, he looked at my wife and me, and he said: So, who is the member here? We all started to chuckle a little bit, and I said, I am, sir. I am the Member for Springfield, the oldest rural municipality in Manitoba. Of course, being accustomed to a lot of these kinds of events, he had already started to move on, stopped and came, sort of stepped back, and he said, oh, now that is interesting, and asked me a lot about Springfield and why it was that people had settled initially in Springfield, you know, what the attraction was. As I said at a dinner the other night, I wanted to claim it was the MLA and the reeve, but I do not think that was the case. Very good agricultural land, it had trees for those that wanted to build homes and buildings and that kind of thing. There was that opportunity. So he found that very interesting and spent some time speaking to us about it, took great interest in it and thanked us and moved on.

I think it is always a great occasion when we have individuals who are so world-travelled who take an interest in a local area like Springfield. It was most gratifying and I appreciated that very much.

I also had the opportunity to go to a medal presentation. As we know, there are the Jubilee

medals that are being presented. Amongst others who were given some medals: Marion Clemens, who used to be the reporter for *The Clipper Weekly*. She now just does "Coffee Break" with Marion Clemens; Mr. Reid; Norv Christopher-son; Jane Burpee [*phonetic*]; Ralph Kennedy, who is supposed to be getting his and has not got his yet; and there were others as well and incredibly well-deserving. I think it is so fitting that on Her Majesty's Jubilee awards would be handed out to those who are very deserving.

I said in my speech to the group that if we gave an award to everybody who was deserving, you would have to bring them in by the truckload. Unfortunately, you have to choose somebody. It does come down to a smaller group of people. Those who did receive them were really touched and were honoured and were pleased. I think it speaks to the Monarch and how she has that touch to connect with us, her subjects, with the people.

* (16:40)

I was very pleased with the whole visit. I know there were some who felt that her going on the boat and having some challenges on the Red River was a little bit of a faux pas; the fact that, big surprise, it was a little cold in Winnipeg. They felt that that was out of the realm of what the Queen should be exposed to, but I think the visit went off quite well. We are very proud that Her Majesty decided to choose Winnipeg and Manitoba to have her visit. I know the turnout was just remarkable here at the Legislature. So it has been a very interesting year in those regards.

There have been things on the horizon, Mr. Speaker, that have, I believe, cast a pall over the province, and the Government so aptly lays some of those issues out. The amalgamation issue, as mentioned in the Throne Speech, achieved to divide communities. It achieved to create a lot of disharmony in our education system. It caused a lot of anxiety. It was very poorly handled on behalf of the Government and caused a lot of problems, the cost of which we have yet to bear as taxpayers. That bill will yet be coming and probably will be borne for years and years to come.

Previously, when the Leader of the Opposition (Mr. Murray) was speaking, the Premier

(Mr. Doer) heckled across: Are you going to reverse it? Mr. Speaker, unfortunately the amalgamation is now so far down into the pipe that there is really no turning back. To turn back would cost even twice as much. It just does not make sense.

I would hope the new Minister of Education (Mr. Lemieux) would look at it and help out the school divisions that are going to be burdened, that are saddled with this amalgamation that was foisted upon them and would ensure that the amalgamation goes as smoothly as possible, because from what I have seen, from what I have heard, it has not been positive, it has not been a good thing that has taken place. Again, I would beg to differ with the Government and the Throne Speech, that, in fact, it was not one of those positive things that happened.

When we look back to when Duff Roblin did the big amalgamation in Manitoba when he was government, No. 1, it was voluntary; it was done by plebiscite. There was a great degree of support for it. There was a lot of enthusiasm that went with it. It was well organized, well coordinated, none of which can be said about the recent round of amalgamations. In fact, it probably had more to do with punishment politics than it had to do with anything else.

We know there are other things that the Government has intended on doing. One of the things the Government has heralded in the Throne Speech is what they term to be education first. I have grave concerns as to where the Government is going with education. We know there have been a lot of very important issues, whether it be bullying, whether it be classroom size and composition. We know that there are a lot of different issues that are out there, and the Government does not seem to be on the forefront of these issues. One moment they seem to be micromanaging an issue, and the next moment it is sort of just allowed to hang out there going neither one way or another. That is very bad for the education system because it allows for insecurity to creep in, for people to have grave concerns and get no answers from it.

I have always felt, and as we have stated in our alternative Throne Speech, that it is important that education be seen as our No. 1

tool for getting us prepared for the generations that come ahead. We find it passing strange that, again, in the Throne Speech there is not the kind of vision that has been laid out.

I will quote from the alternative Throne Speech which says: All Manitoba children deserve to have a solid education. I think from that premise is where we should be going. It is very important for us to have a solid footing, a competitive footing for our young children because that is what you need to further your economy, for you to further your country. As we know, when countries are rated insofar as how well they are doing, how advanced they are, it is based on education. That is one of the key indicators. Clearly, we want to make sure that when almost one-half of all 13-year-olds do not meet acceptable levels in math as defined by national testing, that is an issue that has to be dealt with, Mr. Speaker.

That is not something that is good for our province. It is not good for our children. As we see our globe become ever smaller, we become much more entwined. We must be able to take our education skills and move from area to area with very little difficulty. You should not have these kinds of disparities that we are seeing.

We see that a government's goal should be to ensure that not one Manitoba child is left behind. I am a very firm advocate of that. I know that we have now taken a stand to go back to mandatory standards tests in Grade 6 and Grade 9. For myself, I do not find the importance of standardized testing as much of a thing where children and parents find out how they rate as it is for those who have the levers of education in their hands, because if you find that there is a school or there is a grouping of children who seem to be behind in a certain area, that is where you can channel and funnel money and resources into bringing them up to acceptable standards. I think that is very important.

One other thing that the Government's Throne Speech talks about is building through research and innovation. Again, I think it is most admirable that we highlight a lot of the things that are being done, but we have to make sure that a lot of this is privately driven, that it not all become dependent on government initiative,

government money. We know that the NDP has a penchant, has a tendency, to go towards government-driven, whereas I think it is very important that we get back to a system where it should be private industry driven.

The Government talks about raising and retaining investment. I believe it was the Premier (Mr. Doer) who talked about bringing in legislation for more private investment. You can tell that the Premier would not know private investment, would not know business if it bit him in the leg, Mr. Speaker, because you do not have to legislate investment. If there is an opportunity and somebody thinks that there is a good opportunity, they will invest in that opportunity. They do not need government to pass laws to tell them that they should invest it or to meddle in those affairs. Again, it is this socialist tinkering. I think it is best if the Government would just leave hands off. We know that from many examples over the years.

* (16:50)

The Government also in its Throne Speech dealt with affordable government. Affordable government means a lot of things to a lot of people. I get a little queasy and uneasy when I hear a socialist government talking about affordable government, because often we lose sight that to be affordable means that your income actually should be greater than your expenses, and that should include your mortgage payments and all the rest of it. Often the rationale behind affordable government is something completely different from what is actually laid out.

We know there have been some tax reductions that were left over from the previous government that this Government continued with but, really, no courageous move toward making us much more competitive on a tax basis. In fact, going back to the amalgamation issue, if it comes true to pass that we are going to see substantial tax increases, it is going to make us even less competitive. Tinkering around the edges, putting little doilies around the edge is not enough to make it a viable business environment. It must be more than that.

The Government also spoke about growing through immigration, and I commend the

minister. The Minister of Labour and Immigration (Ms. Barrett) has done a good job taking a program that was started from the previous regime and frankly has built upon that program, has been able to move that program ahead. She is to be commended for it.

We have to be careful that we do not lump refugees into that immigration number. That should be done through the immigration program that was set up where businesses can come and say, listen, we need these kinds of workers, we need this kind of labour. It is very keyed or geared towards a certain company or certain sector. I think that the program, the Nominee Program, has really worked well. Again, I commend the minister for that.

We should be careful that we do not ratchet our numbers up artificially, that we make sure the numbers that we bring in are numbers we can sustain, that we have the inputs, that we have the kinds of things that can help support these individuals. I know there is a certain degree of haste on the Government's part that the numbers be raised higher and higher on a continuing basis because of so many people leaving the province. Again, I would caution that the numbers not be driven up artificially or ratcheted up too high to the point where we cannot sustain that kind of immigration level. Let us let it grow on a natural curve, let us make sure we get good people in like we have gotten, who are contributing. I know of a lot of the provincial nominee immigrants, who enjoy being here, who like the jobs they have, did not quite fit in where they lived before. It is a program that certainly we must continue.

The Budget speech goes on to speak about building our communities. Certainly there is a lot of work that must be done. We know that drainage is and will continue to be a big issue. I do not see where the Government has necessarily spent as much attention as they could on these and other issues. Of course, the rural municipalities and their organizations have presented that position to the Government. I think it is important that we grow strong rural economies, that we continue to support our rural areas.

We have to be careful that we do not continue to see the slip in the rural areas and it

basically being large urban centres with rings around them, and that is where the bulk of our population is.

If we continue at this rate, soon it is going to be 99 percent of our population being urban and the rest, the 1 percent, being rural. I do not think that is that healthy for Manitoba. I think we want to really keep an eye on that, that we keep our rural economy strong, that we diversify, and certainly we have heard of different ideas and different programs. I think it is important that we keep supporting our agriculture. I would never advocate that as a province or as a country—and this deals more in federal politics—that we ever give up the ability to produce the means to support our own citizens. So we have got to be in there. Even if the federal government will not support our farmers, we should be in there supporting our farms.

The Government also mentions—and I find this one very strange—that the Capital Region will be the major beneficiary of several new infrastructure projects including the construction of a new downtown Hydro building. I guess I would point out to the Government that the Capital Region probably will not benefit from a big office tower in downtown Winnipeg. I think it is certainly a benefit for downtown Winnipeg, but I think maybe that is a little bit of a typo in this speech. Perhaps what they meant was that the Winnipeg downtown area will be the major beneficiary, maybe not the Capital Region. Maybe members opposite could make the argument for me that the big Hydro tower downtown will benefit West St. Paul or one of these Capital Region areas. I just do not see the logic therein, but we will leave it at that.

The floodway has been mentioned on numerous occasions, and we have seen the Premier (Mr. Doer) in his style that he has. Every year we hear from him that in every Budget they have put \$40 million into the Budget. Yet we have not seen a shovelful. We have not seen a stone moved. We have not seen a drawing made. Nothing has been done on the floodway, but every year when the Budget comes out, there is our Premier, \$40 million for this floodway, and we have got nothing.

Now we understand that the Government's going to create a law that flooding incurred

because of the expanded floodway will now be covered by the Government. In typical fashion, this is the amalgamation debacle all over again. Everything is sort of putting the horse behind the cart.

I mean, I have yet to figure out where the Government is going. You would have thought the first thing they would have done is create a working group, and they would have working drawings and they would have consultations, and then they would be looking at other things, going to the federal government and then start looking at legislation. I do have a concern that this is just another one of those things that is going to be a promise that is held out there, announced over and over and over again, and it becomes meaningless after awhile. It is one of those things that the public will just tune out on. It is an important issue and I think it is important for the Government to lay out for the public and for this Legislature where they plan on going with the floodway. We hope that we will be seeing something in the future.

Item No. 7, Building on our Energy Advantage, Mr. Speaker, I hesitate to take this issue on at this time when we are dealing with a lot of other issues, but one of the statements that is made in the Throne Speech is that ours was the first jurisdiction to comprehensively assess the costs of implementing the Kyoto accord. We have certainly raised it in question period, that very issue, and out of the House, in the hallway, we raised that issue, and I heard the minister's discussion, and dare I say that to be kind was an overembellishment if not to the point of being misleading. I think the Government should have chosen its words a lot more wisely. I think the minister has all but indicated that in fact no comprehensive assessment of the costs has been made.

* (17:00)

When we look at the whole issue of the Kyoto accord, I think right from day one we have been very responsible on this issue in that we have tried to get the Government to set aside the frivolous arguments of the poverty-stricken polar bear and the masses of mosquitoes and all those nonsense kind of loony arguments that just do not add anything into the debate. We know

that the one minister chartered two planes. They flew to Thompson and picked them up and then flew to Churchill and tried to find some poverty struggling polar bears and this is the reason why we needed Kyoto. It just trivializes the debate of what we are trying to do and where we are trying to go with this.

Not to be outdone, of course, the Minister of Energy, Science and Technology (Mr. Sale)—I hope I have the new acronym right—had to get on the bandwagon not to be outdone with the poverty-stricken polar bears and say that, well, if you raise the temperature by 10 degrees in the province what you would end up with is much more of a mosquito problem than you have right now. I think I have pointed out to others in the media and perhaps even to the minister himself that actually if you raised the temperature by 10 degrees you would dry out the low-lying water and you would not have a mosquito problem, but, again, it gets into this trivial debate of the Kyoto accord.

I think it is a very important issue. I think it is something that was timely to have mentioned and here it is unfortunate that the Government overdid it in their wording. I think for us to have a very open and public debate on where we want to go with our economy in regard to the environment we have to know what the costs are. We have to know what the targets are. We should know which sectors we are talking about.

If we are going to start discussing for instance retrofitting homes, will there be subsidies? How much money is the Government going to up by year? I think those are all very valid debates and arguments that we should have. I think everybody agrees the pollution that has taken place over the years that we have to continue to deal with. I think a lot of industries, I know a lot of companies have been dealing with that, and there is a lot more to go.

What concerns me about the Kyoto accord, of course, is the fact that some of the worst abusers are not included in this. This should have been everybody in or everybody out. This should have been for everybody. I would point to nations like Russia and China where the environmental abuses are just horrible. They are just terrible.

The only reason why in Russia that the greenhouse gas production has dropped in half is because they absolutely botched their economy. The economy tanked so poorly that in fact they are not producing. They are not manufacturing the way they were before. I guess that is a blessing in disguise because they have cut down the greenhouse gases, but the potential is still there.

I have not been to China and I have not been to other countries like that where there is just an absolute and total disregard for the environment. I think we have to look at those issues as well because that is very important to this entire debate.

Again we will be calling on the Government to live by its statement in the throne speech. We believe a comprehensive assessment of the costs must be forthcoming. We must have something in hand so that we know where the Government's targets are going to be. If they are planning on building hydro dams whereby they are going to try to offset any greenhouse gases with green credits, we would like to see how they plan on proceeding with that. But I think it is fair for us to be asking where the strategy is, where they plan on making these changes and to refer to everything but a government. The Manitoba government study is not acceptable.

We need a sector-by-sector breakdown of what the implications would be of Kyoto and what kind of enabling legislation we have to look at, what the federal government is going to be looking at. There should be a more comprehensive debate on this issue. As we know, it is taking place right now in the House of Commons, and we want to know where our Government is going to stand on that. In fact, I was asked by the media: What would you do in this case? I made it very clear. We would ask the deputy ministers to come in and do a scenario. What would the cost be of Kyoto? What would the implications be on a sector-by-sector basis? What does it mean to warehousing; what does it mean to trucking; what does it mean to homes? We know that the homes that have to be retrofitted tend to be in the downtown core area. What does it mean to retrofit a home? How much greenhouse gas are we actually creating in each sector, et cetera? It should be done on a

sector-by-sector basis. Then we start looking at areas we are going to focus on and then targeting reductions. I think it is not asking anything unreasonable, and we hope that in the days to come the Government will be producing something.

We know the Government is talking about all kinds of hydro development and ethanol development. Again, in these we would like to see more than just rhetoric, or if I could use the pun, hot air, because just like I referenced the floodway issue, we have heard that promise three years running and I am sure in this fourth Budget we are going to hear it again, about the \$40 million that are being put into the floodway and we have seen nothing.

We want to see where the Government is going with ethanol. How much subsidization will have to take place to initially get it off the ground? How much production are they looking at? What are they planning? Are they looking at a mandated system, so on and so forth?

Insofar as Hydro goes, certainly we have read in today's newspaper on Ontario's looking at again signing a new contract, or renewing the contract that they had with the previous government. Certainly, we will want to see what kind of a deal has been crafted and on and on. We certainly look forward to the Government being somewhat more forthcoming than they have been so far on the issue of the Kyoto accord and the entire environment issue.

The Government went on, it talks about government for the people. A little bit more of the fluff kind of items that we have seen from members opposite, more referendums, even though they oppose referendums. They support referendums when they feel it—I have yet to figure out why they are bringing out a referendum for MPI because I do not see any hue and cry to privatize MPI, but members opposite like to raise bogeymen and then they try to shoot them down.

The Government then went on and talked about other issues. I feel that the Throne Speech was weak at best. For a government that had been in power for three years, one would have thought that they would have laid out very

concrete programs with start dates and where they were going to go and how they were going to proceed. I mean, it still looks like they are lost. They have not quite figured out where they plan on going with the Government.

Mr. Harry Schellenberg, Acting Speaker, in the Chair

It is a basic retread of what we have heard for years and years and years. It basically shows a government that is already out of steam. They have lost the impetus to govern. Basically, they are just keeping their seats warm, perhaps waiting for an election, for a change in government, and then change can take place again. You know, certainly the speech is thin; it is weak. We would have liked to have seen a much more dynamic vision.

Mr. Acting Speaker, I think I have laid out the concerns on behalf of myself and my constituents. We look forward to the rest of the debate in the following week. I thank you very much for this opportunity.

Mr. Stan Struthers (Dauphin-Roblin): Mr. Acting Speaker, It is certainly good to be back into the Legislature after several weeks of all of us becoming reconnected with our constituencies, with our constituents. I think this a good thing, but I always look forward to coming back into the Legislature, and then once I get to the Legislature, I always look forward to getting out of the Legislature. I think that is a good thing, because it is always good to have something to look forward to, such as support from the members opposite on this very fine Throne Speech. We will get into that in a minute.

I want to say welcome back to everyone, Mr. Acting Speaker. I want to say welcome back to all the staff, who, as my very able colleague the MLA for Selkirk pointed out, were really put to the test here back in August. I think the staff in this Legislative Assembly and the whole building, staff that work with the caucuses, with the ministers, with the Opposition, with the Government.

That was quite an ordeal that we put ourselves through back in the summer. I want to say

to everybody involved that it was a job well done. Everybody dug deep and we survived.

Mr. Acting Speaker, through you to everyone associated with that wrap-up of the Legislature, congratulations.

I also want to welcome the pages, who were introduced earlier. Welcome to the Legislature. I hope you find your time in the building here very interesting. I hope you learn a lot, maybe not from some of us who might lead you astray a little bit in some of the antics you see in this Chamber every now and then. But sort through what you see here, because there are some very good things that go on in this Legislative Building, in this Chamber. I am sure that you will find it a very fruitful experience. Also, the six interns, the three that were assigned to the government side of the House and three to the Official Opposition, I want to welcome them as well. I am hoping that their experience is a good one as well.

Mr. Acting Speaker, I want to say through you to the members across the way that the human mind is a lot like a parachute insofar as it works best when it is open. What I am asking members across the floor is to see their mind as a parachute and open it up. Open it up to the possibilities that we find in this Throne Speech. Open your minds to the positive nature of this Throne Speech. Open your minds like a well-working parachute. Open your minds to the value of this Throne Speech, specifically in the rural parts of our province.

I want to start by saying to the MLA for Inkster, the Minister of Immigration (Ms. Barrett), that when I came to this Legislature in 1995 she was one of the MLAs that I looked for for advice and respected the advice that I got. It was always good, solid advice. I always very much appreciated the contributions that the Member for Inkster has made to this body and also to our caucus. I want to say that the Member for Inkster very much has earned and deserves a happy retirement from this Chamber. I wish her all the best.

Also, the Member for Minnedosa (Mr. Gilleshammer) has indicated his plans not to seek re-election. I want to say that he is almost a

neighbour of mine, being Minnedosa and Dauphin are only separated by the beautiful Riding Mountain National Park. I also want to pay tribute to the years since 1986 that the Member for Minnedosa has spent in government, in opposition and representing his constituents, along with that the Member for Morris (Mr. Pitura), who, I can say, is a fellow 1995 class member. A number of us got elected on that day, some very fine MLAs elected on that day, I must say to the Member for Flin Flon (Mr. Jennissen) and to the Member for Pembina (Mr. Dyck) and others that were privileged to be part of that '95 class. I want to say to the Member for Morris, congratulations on your decision not to seek re-election. I wish him all the best in his life after politics as well.

* (17:10)

I want to say that I fully expect that over the next number of days our friends across the floor will come to their senses, their minds will open like a well-functioning parachute, and they will see the value of this Speech from the Throne. They will see what a positive nature, what a positive impact it will have for our constituents. That is what we are here for, the well-being, the betterment of our constituents, of our communities. Whether the communities be big or small or in between, whether they be located in the North or in rural Manitoba or in Brandon or in Winnipeg, that is why we are here.

I want to first of all point to the work that has been done by our Minister of Immigration (Ms. Barrett) in terms of our successes on the immigration side. Now, we know what we are up against. We know that large communities in Canada are magnets. They draw people. They draw people who are new Canadians, who come to this country. We also know that if we as Manitobans and if we as a province are going to be successful, if we are going to grow, if we are going to strive forward that we need to be able to attract our share of new Canadians to this province. So I want to congratulate the minister for her work. I want to say that our Speech from the Throne has identified this as a major thrust, as something we need to do. It does not matter if you are from Dauphin or if you are from Snowflake or if you are from Snow Lake or if you are from Winnipeg or Cranberry Portage or

Churchill, yeah, I know, or St. Vital or Morris, the list goes on, it is an important issue for us. It is something that we need to keep on working at.

In rural Manitoba, there are many important issues that we need to deal with. I am proud to say that this Government for three solid years now has been working on what is important for rural Manitobans. I want to start with infrastructure. There is nothing more important to us in rural Manitoba than being able to have an infrastructure that can take our product from our farms, from our communities and get that product to market and then bring back the things that we need to survive in rural Manitoba.

Having established that, I do not think there is anybody in this whole Chamber that could disagree with that. I do not think there is anybody in this Chamber who does not understand that the federal government continues again and again to suck out of this province its share of taxes, of gasoline taxes. To its credit, I do not do this a lot, but to its credit, the preceding government to us was active in trying to get the federal government to right that wrong. That is a cause that we have undertaken. It is a cause that we supported the previous government in. It is something that all Manitobans should get behind.

We have got to keep pressuring the federal government to do its part in terms of infrastructure, in terms of highway construction, in terms of maintaining the network of roads that we do have in this province. For the first time in quite a while our previous Minister of Transportation and Government Services was able to bring the federal government in a little bit through the Prairie Grain Roads Program. Unfortunately, the amount of money the federal government put into that could have been spent all in Dauphin-Roblin, which would have been my preference, but we had to look at the needs of the whole province. We as a provincial government contributed more than our fair share into that program to make it effective at all, but it was at least a little bit of a recognition by the federal government that they just cannot continue to suck that money out of our province and not ever send it back to us. I congratulate the former Minister of Transportation and Government Services on that, and the present minister,

who continues the good fight, who continues to persuade Ottawa to help out back here in Manitoba with our infrastructure.

* (17:20)

Mr. Speaker in the Chair

We have done what the previous government never would do, and that is commit to a long-term project in highways, a long-term program, five years, a 15% increase.

If the Member for Lac du Bonnet (Mr. Hawranik) wants that road, 304, I believe it is—304 is the provincial road that the Member for Lac du Bonnet has been quite rightly lobbying for. If his previous government was still in place, he would have 15 percent less of a chance of getting that highway any attention at all, which never did get any attention in the good old Tory days, back in the 1990s. Now he would have 15 percent less of a chance. We have actually improved his chances of getting the work done on his highways that the Filmon government never would do, never would have done, they did not do. They had their chance for 11 years and they did not come through for the good people out in the Lac du Bonnet constituency with Provincial Road 304.

So I would suspect, if all logic is followed here, that the Member for Lac du Bonnet would be standing in his seat and would be saying: This is an excellent Speech from the Throne and I am going to support this Speech from the Throne. We will see if that happens. That is very much of a positive commitment by our Government.

Another key infrastructure component is water management and decisions we make in terms of the water we are blessed with in this province. In this province of Manitoba you cannot talk about water management without talking a little bit about the success of our conservation districts, the success of our Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs (Ms. Friesen) in increasing the family of conservation districts and in funding those conservation districts to an adequate level so that they can do the job out there in rural Manitoba that we need to have done. We have grown the family of conservation districts. We have watched conservation districts

consulting with local farmers, with local communities, partnering with a number of different organizations to bring in more funding, to bring in more ideas, to work collaboratively, cooperatively in solving many of the water management problems that we have all over rural Manitoba.

Connected with that I know everyone has heard my colleague the Member for Interlake (Mr. Nevakshonoff) talk about this: drainage. Drainage, drainage, drainage. It is a huge issue all over rural Manitoba and it is key to our success economically. It is key for rural development. It is key for economic development. It is absolutely a key issue for my constituents. I do not for one minute take a back seat to our performance on drainage when compared to the previous government's performance on drainage. The previous government thought it was okay to cut back and cut back, show no support for my rural neighbours in terms of drainage. They thought it was okay to let bulrushes and poplar trees grow in the middle of the drains. They thought it was okay for those drains to become plugged and useless. They thought it was okay to continue to cut that.

An Honourable Member: I think Chrétien's aide was talking about him.

Mr. Struthers: It would be nice if the new critic for health care, if the member opposite would take this problem seriously instead of coming up with cheap shots from his seat. You know, Mr. Speaker, I have constituents whose livelihood depends on whether we make decisions in an intelligent way on their behalf, including drainage issues. His government, to its everlasting shame, did not take that seriously. The Member for Emerson (Mr. Jack Penner) said so back in the nineties, and now this member across the way has the nerve to sit in his seat and make wisecracks about me. But that is okay, because I am developing a thick skin and I can rise above that kind of cheap shot, nonsense, that comes across from the member, the critic for Health, every now and then, and I can concentrate on the issue at hand. I wish that he could.

So drainage is a huge issue, and one of the things we really talked seriously about in that Speech from the Throne was the farm economy.

The farm economy, our biggest industry in this province. In what direction do we need to move with the farm economy? It is clear, it has been clear for a long time, Mr. Speaker, that we need to diversify, that we need to add value to what we do in rural Manitoba in the farm economy. We heard a lot of talk, talk, talk over the years from the previous government. Not much action. It is my belief, and I believe our Premier (Mr. Doer) on this side has said it best, that we believe in judging by actions.

The ethanol initiative is a good one for our province. We can talk about ethanol. We can talk about adding value to what we do in rural Manitoba. We are doing it. We are moving forward with a very progressive initiative in ethanol. We have consulted with people right across the province. We have talked to people about what they would like to see in an ethanol initiative, where they would like to see us going with it. We have taken their advice and we are moving forward. We are moving forward on an issue that adds value to what we already do in rural Manitoba. It makes sense. It makes eminent common sense.

We grow a lot of wheat; we grow some oilseeds; we are becoming much more adept at growing, producing beans, peas, corn. We have always been diversified into cattle, hogs, sheep. We have got a diversified economy, and we have farmers who have the ability to diversify more. That is where ethanol comes in. It not only diversifies for farmers, it adds value to the product already. Farmers a long time ago came to the conclusion that they just cannot produce and export wheat anymore. That is still part of our economy, part of our rural economy, but we have to develop ways in which we can use either the wheat grain or the straw to add value, to add jobs, to add production, to diversify. So we have, across the province, municipalities which, I think, are taking a very mature, very co-operative approach to ethanol and to other initiatives in rural Manitoba.

Years ago, you would have a couple of little communities in rural Manitoba that would compete against each other, undercut each other, try to get an opportunity to get ahead of another community. That was a long time ago, Mr. Speaker. All over rural Manitoba we have

communities that are coming together. I want to talk about one in our area called the PARC Group. This group is a group of about 11 municipalities from Shell River and Roblin on the west side right along No. 5 highway through to the city and R.M. of Dauphin, including the R.M. and Village of Ethelbert. All of those R.M.s have come together and they have said: You know, we cannot compete against each other anymore; we have got to work together so that we can bring an industry to our area. They have worked together and they are well positioned to attract an ethanol plant or any other initiatives that they can come up with, and I think they are going to be successful. I have got to give credit to the people involved in that: Mayor Lorne Boguski from the town of Roblin, former mayor Fred Embryk from Grandview, all of the municipal councillors that have come together to talk about revenue sharing, cost sharing. They are going to be successful. They are going to be successful because they have worked not only together with themselves but in conjunction with us as a provincial government.

Another group in our area that I think is going to be successful is the Parkland Industrial Hemp Growers, another co-op that has brought producers together in the form of a new-generation co-op with the idea of setting up a hemp facility in and around the Parkland area, in and around the Dauphin area. I believe they will be successful too, Mr. Speaker. They have good support. They have worked with us. They have contacted the officials at the federal level and they are doing again what we have always talked, in this province, of doing, and that is diversifying and adding value to what we do. Now they are very bravely going into the hemp industry. Industrial hemp. The industrial hemp industry which, in and of itself, right off the bat, adds another quiver in the arrow.

An Honourable Member: Another arrow in the quiver.

Mr. Struthers: Another arrow in the quiver. The Member for Inkster (Ms. Barrett) got it right, I think, and I did it backwards, but I think everybody knows what I mean. They have got another thing they can point to, to say we have diversified. We are into hemp. It gives us another option in our crop rotation. It gives us

another option. It also adds value because hemp is an absolutely amazing product. Industrial hemp is an amazing product. It does not mean that there will be a lot of people up to Dauphin for the stubble burning season. It means that there are a lot of uses for industrial hemp and we can build upon that once this original plant is actually up and running.

I think the other thing that I would like to talk about in terms of this kind of movement is this Government's commitment to the Kyoto accord. I really wish that members opposite would shed their dinosaur skins and step forward into the 21st century and embrace this Kyoto accord for the positive value that it is, the positive impact it is going to have on our country, instead of remaining puppets of Mr. Ralph Klein. I think they should start to think for themselves and say, this is a good arrangement for Manitobans. It is good for the environment and it is good for the economy.

Mr. Speaker, I just listened to the Member for Springfield (Mr. Schuler), and his quote was, "Everybody in or everybody out." If we took that approach on every issue, we would not get anywhere. We would get nowhere. If our Fathers of Confederation took that approach in 1862, 1864, 1866, 1867, where would we be? Everybody in or everybody out? We would not have a country.

Where was the member opposite, the Member for Springfield, when he stands and puts his heart over his chest and thumps his chest on behalf of George Bush and the Americans in this latest world catastrophe? Everybody in or everybody out? Not many people are in that one and we are still going ahead.

Everybody in or everybody out? It makes no sense. Where was that argument when this country was signing trade deals with the Americans? Where was that attitude when we signed NAFTA that hurt our farmers, that hurt our workers? Everybody in or everybody out? Why does this come out of the blue now and have to apply to the Kyoto accord? Who is out anyway? Alberta is out. Manitoba should be in. It is called leadership. If everybody in, everybody out, we would still have slavery today in the United States. It makes no sense. It makes no

sense. Manitoba needs to show leadership on this. We do not get that from members opposite. Are members opposite worried about alternative energy? It reflects their attitude towards Crown corporations and Manitoba Hydro. It reflects them accurately. This is a win-win situation for the province of Manitoba, and the Opposition chooses to be puppets of Ralph Klein.

* (17:30)

Members opposite have to step forward on this. There are too many opportunities associated with Kyoto for us not to show leadership and step forward. The Member for Pembina throws his hands up and says: What does it cost? What was the Member for Pembina or the Member for Fort Whyte, what did they tell us NAFTA would cost before they jumped in head first? What did they tell us free trade was going to cost? They had no answers. They had no clue, but blindly they went. Mr. Mulroney says: I have to do this. Blindly they jump over the American border. Let us sign the deal. Where were they?

This is a net gain in jobs for Manitobans. Are you against jobs? [*interjection*] They are against me. The Member for Fort Whyte comes clean on that one. I know they are against me. I know they want to play politics with this. I know they are more concerned with political issues and petty, partisan politics rather than doing the right thing for Manitobans. This is your opportunity. This is the opportunity for members opposite to step forward and say we are going to grab that opportunity. We are going to seize the moment, as President Johnson used to say.

This province of Manitoba is well positioned to seize that opportunity. We have and are continuing to improve our Power Smart initiative in Manitoba. The Speech from the Throne talked about building a virtual dam, doing such a good job of conserving energy.

The Member from Fort Whyte thinks that is funny, but we can save 200 megawatts of power so that we do not have to build another dam after that. That is smart.

The other thing that I was very pleased to hear in the Speech from the Throne was talk about an energy grid, an energy grid where we

can help out the shortsighted cousins of the members opposite in Ontario, where we can come along and say to the people of Ontario, here is some cheap, clean, environmentally friendly power supplied to you by the New Democrats in Manitoba.

We can go west, young men, if we want to. If Alberta cannot manage their energy source, we can do it. We can supply them with that kind of clean energy. It does not have to be all north-south. We have signed deals with Xcel and others in the United States. We will continue that. We will continue to produce power in this province of Manitoba and use it to benefit all Manitobans, which is the opposite view of members opposite, who not only cancelled Conawapa, they made fun of Limestone, which is now bringing money into Manitoba, providing jobs in the North. They made fun of it back in the 1980s. I remember that. They made fun of Limestone. They cancelled Conawapa and they cancelled—and this is the most amazing part. Not only did they cancel Conawapa, but they cancelled a sale connected to it.

* (17:40)

Where is the common sense there, Mr. Speaker? Got a sale? Build a dam. Supply the energy. Bring the money home. Sounds pretty good to me. Where are my friends from across the way on that one? Have they learned by their mistakes? No, of course not. They have not learned. What is their approach these days to Crown corporations like Hydro? Well, they will do the same as what they did with the Manitoba Telephone System.

They do not believe in having a Crown corporation there and available for all of the people of Manitoba. Their approach is to simply sell it. Deregulate and sell, just like their cousins in Alberta, just like their cousins in Ontario. They want to sell. Deregulate. Privatize. It does not work. The approach that we are using is much more mature and much more fruitful.

I think that what we need to do is recognize that the Speech from the Throne has acknowledged a number of different alternative energy sources. One that I am particularly fond of is our heat pumps, geothermal energy. It is something that we need to be into. The Member for

Lakeside (Mr. Enns) is far-thinking enough to realize that that is an excellent way for us to begin to meet Kyoto targets.

I have been told by people who know more about geothermal heating and cooling than I, that a good Canadian incentive package to get more people into geothermal heating, whether it be residential or business or arenas and bigger facilities, could allow us to meet and exceed all of our Kyoto targets on its own.

An Honourable Member: Is that arena going to be geothermal?

Mr. Struthers: The arena in the town of Winnipegosis is on geothermal, and they are very happy with that. So the members opposite, I think, should learn from some of the successes that we do have out in rural Manitoba and apply that knowledge right across the province.

Mr. Speaker, of course, I think a very positive part of the Speech from the Throne was the section of the Throne Speech that was dedicated to tourism, in particular, eco-tourism. I am a very lucky member of the Legislature because I represent, I think, the most beautiful part of the province. I may be a little biased on that, and there will be some others who will have a difference of opinion, and that is okay.

An Honourable Member: What about Fort Whyte?

Mr. Struthers: Fort Whyte is pretty okay, too, for when I have driven through there—

An Honourable Member: What is wrong with Flin Flon, Stanley?

Mr. Struthers: —and Flin Flon is a great place.

I am kind of biased towards my own little neck of the woods. My constituency is surrounded on the north by a park, on the south by a park, on the east by a park and on the west by a park. So, unlike the Tories who just suggested to me that we should sell them off, we are moving ahead to expand. In the Speech from the Throne, just before we reminded people that we were working to extend the summer until after Labour Day, we decided—

An Honourable Member: What summer?

Mr. Struthers: Maybe the Member for Emerson (Mr. Jack Penner) thinks we can do something about the weather. If he has any suggestions, we are open to that, but I know we are doing a good job. I know we are doing some great legislation, but influencing the weather may not be an option, but we could work on it. If anybody can do it, it would be the Minister of Immigration, I am sure.

So we talked about increasing the number of cottages. We talked about increasing the number of campsites. The one thing that I learned over the course of the winter in talking to people who sell tent trailers and who sell mobile homes, sales were up. People are not doing the travelling all over the world as they did at one time. People are looking at Manitoba and looking to stay home for their holidays. They need good recreational infrastructure to do that. We have the best parks in the country. I have the best parks in the province; they are all around my riding.

This Government, I think wisely, has decided that we have to take advantage of that. Take advantage of those advantages and encourage people to check out our different areas, encourage eco-tourism, work with the partners at the local level to do that. Work with the people we have within the provincial government partnering up with municipalities, partnering up with tourism organizations and working to encourage our tourist opportunities.

In conjunction with that is our approach to festivals that was talked about in the Throne Speech. In our area, we have festivals, the Countryfest; we have the Ukrainian Festival. We have a number of different festivals in the Parkland area that I think have earned some support from the provincial government. I mean, I was very glad to help in that process by assisting the Ukrainian Festival with some money courtesy of the Department of Culture, Heritage, Tourism and Sport. It is something I think we need to do to help build that tourism infrastructure in rural Manitoba.

The Leader of the Opposition, today in Question Period, I guess did not surprise anybody by bringing up, yet again, the same old

issue of taxes. I was kind of expecting maybe something new and creative from the Leader of the Opposition. I thought that maybe since August 9 to the 28th of November he might come up with something other than the same old rhetoric on taxes.

An Honourable Member: There was the alternate throne speech.

Mr. Struthers: There was the alternate throne speech, I am reminded. That was quite the pie-in-the-sky, let us put down anything we can think of that will cost us a whole bunch of money and not tell people where we are going to get the money from, which is reminiscent of the losing election campaign back in 1999, but there was nothing new in the approach of the Leader of the Official Opposition today, nothing new at all. What really makes it funny, what makes his approach strange, is that the very things that he is bringing up again and again are things that he really does not have ground to stand on.

We have moved in the area of taxation. We have relieved the tax burden that the previous government would never do. So, for a lot of different reasons, I would encourage members across to again treat their minds like parachutes. They work best when they are open. Keep your minds open to the eminent common sense that this Throne Speech makes. Keep in mind the good positive impact that this Throne Speech will have for your constituents. I look forward to your support when it comes time to stand and be counted in this House. Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. John Loewen (Fort Whyte): Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the opportunity to put a few words on the record regarding the Throne Speech. Always a pleasure to follow my colleague from Dauphin-Roblin and certainly try to raise the tenor of the debate in my remarks.

I would like to start off by welcoming the pages. We have eight new pages with us. You perform a valuable service for the members of this House, and we are looking forward to working with you.

I would also like to take just a brief moment to thank, because this may be the last Throne

Speech that some members in this Chamber are here for. I think it is important that we recognize that some members have decided that it is time to move on and others probably will make a similar decision in the coming months, but I think it is important that we thank the members, particularly the member from Carman and the Member for Minnedosa (Mr. Gilleshammer) and the Minister of—

An Honourable Member: Morris. Morris, not Carman.

Mr. Loewen: Sorry, Morris, the Member for Morris (Mr. Pitura). Sorry. Oh, I am going to be in big trouble now. I assure you that we are going to try to attend the Member for Carman's (Mr. Rocan) nominating meeting next week, Mr. Speaker, so the Minister of Labour (Ms. Barrett). They have, over the years, provided valuable contributions to the province and they should be thanked for that.

With regard to the Speech from the Throne, Mr. Speaker, I do feel it is a very hollow document. I did start out my response to the last Speech from the Throne by saying that it was—*[interjection]*—yes, a modest document from a modest government, and I think that has proven itself to be true over the course of the last year. I think this Speech from the Throne can be classified as a humble document from a government that is going to be humbled very shortly at the polls. So that will set the tenor.

They have tried to come out with a Speech from the Throne that will keep on their past pattern of not doing much and just letting the world unfold around them with no plan, with no vision. They are hopeful that they can continue to coast in that vein through to the next election, but I do feel that the people of Manitoba, the public in Manitoba, are smarter than this Government gives them credit for, and they will see through this Throne Speech. They will see clearly that there is no vision; they will see clearly that there is no plan; and they will see clearly that this Government needs to be humbled.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to start out by just pointing out a number of contradictions in this Speech from the Throne. That is really what this

Government is about. It is a government of contradictions. It is a government that said one thing in opposition, and it is a government that took a different path when it got into government. That is, I think, disappointing to the people of Manitoba on a number of fronts, and it is a policy which has not served the people well, even though it has kept the Government in the shadows.

This is a government that, in its days before the Throne Speech, was madly trying to leak information to the press about how this was going to be a wonderful document outlining an economic plan going forward into the future. What is the very first thing we see in this speech? We see them admitting they are in the middle of a global economic slowdown and that that is going to provide tough times. How does that balance with a government that says they have an economic agenda when the first thing they are doing in the Throne Speech is setting out an excuse as to their failures?

Now, throne speeches are supposed to be about vision. This is not looking forward. We told the Minister of Finance (Mr. Selinger) in March 2000 that we were heading into an economic slowdown. You can go back and check Hansard. His response was, oh, no, no, no, everything is wonderful, the economy is just chugging along. We were trying to warn him at the time that his spending was unsustainable and that he had to pull back his reins, reduce the amount of spending or else he was going to be in serious financial trouble, and in fact he was going to end up increasing the overall debt to the province of Manitoba. In fact, that is what he has done.

So, at the same time that this Government in this Throne Speech talks about the slowdown in the global economy, they try to turn that by saying that the strength of the Manitoba economy lies in its diversity. That is true. We have a very diverse economy not reliant on one section, some more than others, but that is something that has served Manitoba well over the course of the century. We have a diverse economy based on manufacturing, based on farm income, based on financial services. Unfortunately, what is really hurting Manitoba at this time is the fact that this economy has not grown

to fulfil its potential. The result is that even in bad times we are not hurt as badly, maybe, as some other economies; the problem is that in good times we are not growing, we are not growing as rapidly as we could be. That was an issue that was tackled head-on by the previous Conservative government, by the Filmon government. Finally, inroads were being made. For a number of years in the late nineties, Manitoba led the country in terms of economic growth, year after year. Things were moving in the right direction. This Government quickly put a halt to that. They put a halt to that in their very first year of governing with the introduction in the heat of summer, in the dark of the night, of Bill 44. They slammed the brakes on the economy. Manitobans are still feeling the consequences and they will continue to feel the consequences for years to come until that legislation is reversed and repealed and until balance is brought back into the labour laws in this province.

* (17:50)

We do not need it to be one-sided as it is now. We do not need it to be one-sided for business or for labour. We need it to be fair. That is the challenge this Government has not met. That is the challenge this Government has let the people of Manitoba down on. They need to look seriously at what they can do to go back to those labour laws and bring some fairness back into the system, because until they do, we will not see the growth that we saw in the late 1990s. That, I think, is a very, very unfortunate circumstance.

The Government then goes on to talk about some of the wonderful things that they see happening. They try to pat themselves on the back for things that were going to happen, whether they did anything or not. Post-secondary enrolment is a prime example. In case they forgot, it is the children of the baby boomers who are coming through the system. We have the echo. Universities all across Canada are feeling the enrolment pinch. Enrolments are up all over the place, but this Government does not say anything about it. They want to try to mislead the people and say: Oh, well, we froze tuitions. We rolled back 10 percent. Therefore, we caused this great increase in enrolment. That

is not the case. That is clearly wrong. The increase in enrolment was coming anyway.

All they have managed to do is starve the universities. They have starved the University of Winnipeg. All they have to do is look at the dire circumstances facing that university. If the minister responsible for post-secondary education would get out of the building and go talk to the board members at the University of Winnipeg, she might wake up and realize what dire straits that university is in as a result of the lack of funding of this NDP government.

I would urge her to do something about that and I would urge her to do something soon, because that university, as I am sure the board has pointed out to her, is in dire financial straits. There is only so much they can do.

Her solution of forcing professors to retire so they can cut the salaries and hire younger professors is not the answer. That is just another example of how this Government has turned in the course of the last five years. When in opposition, they would hear none of that. They did not want mandatory retirement. They did not want to lose that experience. In fact, they even, I think, were promoting double-dipping in terms of pension. That is something they are going to have to answer to.

Yes, we do have enrolment increases. Yes, they were coming anyway. I would urge this Government to look at how they are starving these universities and to fund them properly to meet the needs of those young people who are going to, in turn, enter our workforce in the near future.

This is a government that talks about reducing costs of running school divisions. We know that is not true. They did a middle of the night, behind closed doors, hack-and-slash approach to school divisions. The result will be constituents in my area who are living through the amalgamation of the Seine, Assiniboine South and Fort Garry, who are faced with increasing costs. The school divisions themselves have admitted that their costs are going to go up. Teachers' salaries are going to go up. That is really, I think, what this was all about. This was a sop to the Manitoba Teachers' Society, not

to teachers, not to the education system, not to improve the quality of education, but it was something, a favour returned to the executive of the Manitoba Teachers' Society in hope that the Society would continue to try and prop up this Government.

They have talked about merging, saving money in the health field. Well, in fact, we can see plainly from the numbers that administrative costs of the WRHA are on the rise, significantly. So have they managed to reduce the bureaucracy? No. They have managed to increase the bureaucracy at a cost to Manitobans who are having significant difficulty trying to access the health care system. So, instead of providing money to people like Mrs. Silva that we heard about today and others to have the type of surgery that is going to help to make their last days with us better days and improve their quality of life, this Government is busy pumping money into administration. Fifty-two cents of every dollar gets to the patient. That is something the Health Minister (Mr. Chomiak) and that is something that this Government needs to be embarrassed about, and they need to fix.

They talk about how wonderful it was to create one utility for the province of Manitoba. Well, I would remind them that they did not have the courage to take that to the Public Utilities Board, and as a result, who knows if it is a good deal or not? The truth will come out over time, but this Government is trying to sit on it, trying to hide it. Again, they did it behind closed doors, in the dark of the night. I do not know why this Government would expect

Manitobans to believe that this is a good deal for anybody. I mean, look who drove the deal. A former Finance Minister who is head of the Government's Economic Council and former Finance Minister who was defeated on a budget and another former Finance Minister whom they appointed as the head of Hydro who is the only Finance Minister in the history of the government whom the Auditor would not even sign the books for. And they are expecting the people of Manitoba on blind faith to believe that these two individuals and Gary Doer can concoct a merger that would be actually good for the people of Manitoba.

I would urge this Government to take it back to the PUB. Let them have their say on it. Let us get the facts on the table. Get it out in the open where it can have the proper scrutiny, where people can look and delve into the numbers, and then we will know whether in fact this might be a good deal.

I mean, what is most hypocritical about this Speech from the Throne is the Government's attempt to try and give the impression they are actually doing something in the field of agriculture. They have done nothing to promote agricultural diversification.

Mr. Speaker: Order. When this matter is again before the House, the honourable Member for Fort Whyte will have 27 minutes remaining.

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