



First Session - Thirty-Seventh Legislature

of the

Legislative Assembly of Manitoba

**DEBATES
and
PROCEEDINGS**

**Official Report
(Hansard)**

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



Vol. L No. 8 - 10 a.m., Friday, December 3, 1999

MANITOBA LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
Thirty-Seventh Legislature

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Friday, December 3, 1999

The House met at 10 a.m.

ORAL QUESTION PERIOD

*PRAYERS***Employment Creation
Government Strategy**

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

TABLING OF REPORTS

Hon. Steve Ashton (Minister of Highways and Government Services): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to table the 1998-99 Annual Report of the Department of Highways and Transportation. The 1998-99 annual report was distributed in accordance with intersessional procedures.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

Bill 3—The Retail Businesses Holiday Closing Amendment Act

Hon. Steve Ashton (Deputy Government House Leader): In my capacity as acting Government House Leader, I believe there may be leave to allow the first reading of The Retail Businesses Holiday Closing Amendment Act which deals with a particular problem which the minister will outline. We also, I believe, have leave, following discussions with the member for River Heights (Mr. Gerrard) and the Opposition House Leader (Mr. Laurendeau), to proceed with this at second reading today. It is a fairly urgent matter, and I believe, if you canvass the House, Mr. Speaker, there is leave to proceed on first reading of this.

Mr. Speaker: Is there leave for the honourable Deputy Government House Leader to introduce a bill? [agreed]

Hon. Becky Barrett (Minister of Labour): I move, seconded by the Minister of Agriculture and Food (Ms. Wowchuk), that leave be given to introduce Bill 3, The Retail Businesses Holiday Closing Amendment Act; Loi modifiant la Loi sur les jours fériés dans le commerce de détail, and that the same be now received and read a first time.

Motion agreed to.

Mr. Eric Stefanson (Kirkfield Park): Mr. Speaker, over the last few years, Manitoba's economy has performed amongst the best in Canada. That has been acknowledged by all of the investment community, and it is certainly readily apparent here in the province of Manitoba. The job statistics that were just released today show that Manitoba's unemployment rate for November is at 5.3 percent, again, the second lowest in all of Canada. Our year-to-date employment is up 11,300. We now have a record number of Manitobans employed in our province, and 561,900 Manitobans have jobs today.

Since there was virtually no mention, and I say no mention, of the economy and jobs in the throne speech released by this government, I want to ask the Minister of Finance to outline for us today what steps he and his government will be taking to build on our excellent job performance over these last few years and keep that momentum going here in Manitoba.

Hon. Greg Selinger (Minister of Finance): Mr. Speaker, in response to the question from the member for Kirkfield Park, one of the things we always said, in coming into government, is that the things that the former government did right we would continue. In addition, we would continue to move forward on our election commitments, which we think are very compatible with a healthy economy, in particular, strengthening the education system by doubling the numbers of spots in community colleges. Proper funding of public education in order that young people will have the education and skills they need to enter the labour market is a critical factor for us, and of course the repairs that we need to make to the health care system, so that the population of Manitoba has the wherewithal to enter the labour market and perform in the economy. In other words, we will

follow through on all the promises we made in the election, and we believe those will continue to strengthen the economy.

**Personal Income Taxes
Government Strategy**

Mr. Eric Stefanson (Kirkfield Park): Mr. Speaker, I do not disagree with the minister in terms of the importance of education and the importance of our health care system, but there are certainly other important areas that impact the competitiveness of Manitoba and the strength of our economy. One of them, we all know, is the importance of competitiveness in personal income taxes, and I noted in the throne speech that the only mention of personal income taxes was the 1.5 point reduction taking place on January 1, 2000, introduced by our government in our budget.

* (1005)

I want to ask the Minister of Finance today: does he have any plans to address the issue of competitiveness as it relates to personal income taxes here in the province of Manitoba, compared to Ontario, Alberta and all provinces? Does he have any plans not only in his upcoming budget but over the mandate of this government?

Hon. Greg Selinger (Minister of Finance): Mr. Speaker, in response to the question from the member for Kirkfield Park, it is no question that we have to stay competitive on both sides of the ledger in terms of the programs we offer and the tax regime that we have to go with that. In that regard, I wish to let him know that the provincial and territorial Finance ministers released a paper yesterday to the federal Minister of Finance on our position with respect to competitiveness and living standards in Canada.

We are following up on the Premier's approach of last summer where we wanted to take a balanced approach to how we, in a federation, proceed forward. One of those things is to have competitive tax regimes; another one is to restore the Canadian health and social transfer; another one is to look towards another infrastructure renewal program; and the other one is to make sure that equalization payments go to the provinces that need them.

So our commitment is to work not only here in Manitoba but with the federal government and all the provinces in Canada to come up with an approach whereby we prosper not at the advantage of other regions of the country and not to the disadvantage of any one part of Manitoba, but we prosper together, not only as a province but as a federation, and that is going to be our approach.

Mr. Stefanson: Well, Mr. Speaker, that is fine, and everything the minister outlined are things that were already underway under our government. There is nothing new, with what he just outlined, coming forward. In fact, he himself acknowledged that it was the previous Premier at previous meetings that introduced that very initiative he just outlined.

Because there was no mention yesterday, I believe, by the Premier in his speech to the Chamber of Commerce here in Manitoba, what steps are they planning to take here in the province of Manitoba to keep us competitive, particularly as it relates to personal income taxes? We know what is happening in Alberta; we know what is happening in Ontario. What does this minister and this government intend to do when it comes to the very important issue of personal income taxes?

* (1010)

Mr. Selinger: Once again a response to the member for Kirkfield Park. We made it very clear in the election what our five commitments were with respect to the program we have for Manitobans. It is an overall approach that is required here. If we focus just on one thing, such as personal income taxes exclusively, at the expense of the health care system or the education system, we will put ourselves in a position of having cut off our nose to spite our face. What we have to do here is we have to take a balanced approach. We have to have taxes which are reasonable and competitive. We have to have a good health care system. We have to have a first-class education system, and that is the promise we made. We will do it here in Manitoba; we will do it in conjunction with other provinces on either side of us, but we will not be stamped into an approach which leads us into a situation where we cannot meet all of

those commitments, and one of those commitments was to have balanced budgets as well. Thank you very much.

**Minister of Conservation
Conflict of Interest**

Mr. Gary Filmon (Leader of the Official Opposition): Earlier this week the Minister of Conservation was unable to answer my questions about the conflict of interest that his Premier has put him into in his combined portfolio. Mr. Speaker, when there is a proposal for, say, a cottage lot development on Crown land or for a forestry licence to be reviewed and issued for a forestry company, he is the advocate or proponent at the Clean Environment Commission as minister of Natural Resources. Should there be an appeal to any aspect of it, for instance a decision as to whether or not to hold a public hearing, then the appeal of his director of environment must go to him as minister responsible for the environment. How can he act as both advocate and neutral arbitrator under these circumstances?

Hon. Oscar Lathlin (Minister of Conservation): Mr. Speaker, I want to advise the Leader of the Opposition that when he was Premier of this province, he had a minister and he had a cabinet. The direction where we want to go now is—

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Speaker: Order, please.

Mr. Lathlin: You know, how is it different from when he was Premier? He was the Premier, he had a cabinet, so he was himself the judge and jury. If there was an appeal to be made, it went to the minister; but where did it go after that? It went to cabinet and finally went to the Premier.

Mr. Filmon: Mr. Speaker, I believe that the minister does not understand the circumstances. On the one hand, he takes forward the proposal as the minister of Natural Resources to advocate that cottage lots be developed or that a forest-management licence be issued. On the other hand, there are those who will oppose that position. Those people have a right to be able to

go to somebody who is not already committed to that proposal and get a fair and unbiased hearing. That is the job of the minister of the environment. He is both. How can he be both the advocate and the judge on the appeal that will come forward from those who oppose this position?

Mr. Lathlin: Mr. Speaker, again, I want to advise the Leader of the Opposition. You know, when he was Premier, he had an advisory council called the Manitoba Environmental Council. Many times that council advised the Premier, his cabinet and the Minister of Environment. A lot of good information, a lot of technical advice was received from that group, but did he ever listen to that advice?

An Honourable Member: No.

Mr. Lathlin: In fact, the Leader of the Opposition, when he was Premier, was his own judge and jury.

* (1015)

Mr. Filmon: Mr. Speaker, in legal terms, under laws of natural justice, people have a right to be able to go to appeal to somebody who is not already committed to the project and to the decision. That is the reason why there is a separation between ministries, one who can act as advocate and the other who can then be a neutral—

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Speaker: Order, please.

Mr. Filmon: Mr. Speaker, I would expect members, please, to just listen for a moment. I know that is difficult for them, but I will ask them to.

Mr. Speaker, because the Premier has taken this and combined it so that there is no unbiased avenue of appeal to a different minister, has he sought a legal opinion to assure himself that having the minister be both the advocate and the judge will not result in courts overturning decisions that are made under this process?

Hon. Gary Doer (Premier): Mr. Speaker, we want to do things differently from the former government. We found that the decision to allocate resources before the environmental assessments were part of that process would lead to a plant being built before the decision could be made as to whether the resource could be conserved, sustained, maintained, et cetera. How, after you license a plant like Louisiana-Pacific, can you deal with the fact of how much timber, fibre and other cut areas are available to make that plant sustainable?

There are other examples too, Mr. Speaker. We thought that the Clean Environment Commission process should be part of the decisions of capital investment on large operations like Maple Leaf, which we supported. But the issue of how much water goes into that plant and how much discharge goes out of that plant and how it is going to be dealt with, we would prefer to have those issues dealt with in a much more comprehensive way.

So, as part of reducing our cabinet, we know that there is a Clean Environment Commission. We know that the Department of Natural Resources formerly would make decisions on resource extraction or allocation. We are looking for a better way of having long-term conservation in Manitoba where the decisions to build a manufacturing plant are made together with the resources necessary given by Manitobans to a company before they proceed with the licence. That is the way we would like to do it.

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

Mr. Filmon: Yes, Mr. Speaker. Doing things differently does not mean that you should do things wrongly and set the government up for a situation in which its decisions are automatically going to be overturned by courts because you have violated the principles of administrative law.

Will the Premier set aside his arrogance, just because he has made this decision, review this decision and seek some legal opinion on it so that he does not leave the minister in the

untenable position of being the fox in charge of the chicken coop?

Mr. Doer: I can recall at the last three cabinet meetings, at least two of those meetings had allocations of Crown land that eventually came for the approval of cabinet. Under his logic, the cabinet, which ultimately deals with these matters, too would be a legal problem for making decisions. Ultimately, whether it is parkland use—[interjection] Well, Mr. Speaker, we want to practise sustainable development. We do not want to just talk about it; we want to practise it.

We know that the Clean Environment Commission has a role to play. We know that they are a quasi-judicial body. We know under The Environment Act that there are provisions in that act, and we believe that ultimately many of these allocations of Crown land decisions, as articulated by the Premier in his first question, ultimately are made by the cabinet as a whole.

* (1020)

Aboriginal Gaming Casinos—Request for Proposals

Mr. Jack Reimer (Southdale): My question is to the minister of northern and native affairs. I would like to ask the minister: he has been on record in the media from time to time over the last while of advocating for five additional casinos to be established here in Manitoba, and I was just wanting to ask the minister if he could tell this House and the people of Manitoba whether a request for proposals has been prepared and who will direct these proposals.

Hon. Eric Robinson (Minister of Aboriginal and Northern Affairs): Currently the discussion between ourselves and the Assembly of Manitoba Chiefs is ongoing. What we have done is establish a committee on behalf of the government of Manitoba and a committee of the AMC. Those discussions are ongoing, and we anticipate an announcement in the very near future.

Mr. Reimer: A supplement to the same minister: can this minister indicate that the requests for proposals have been issued, and

they are to be completed by December 15 with the idea of a two-man commission making a final decision before May 31?

Mr. Robinson: Part of the arrangement in dealing with the Assembly of Manitoba Chiefs is, of course, on a partnership-relationship basis, dealing with them on a government-to-government relationship. One of the arrangements is that we first have to agree on the terms of reference, a time schedule. Once we agree on that, then we will be in a position to address the question posed by the member.

Mr. Reimer: I am not sure whether I got an answer. I asked the member—

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Reimer: I know that the minister's staff are watching this on TV and that they are listening to it on Hansard, so maybe they could prepare the answers for the minister, but I will repeat the question—

Mr. Speaker: Order, please.

Point of Order

Hon. Steve Ashton (Deputy Government House Leader): Mr. Speaker, I think the minister should be aware of our provisions in Beauséjour which are very clear in terms of questions, particularly covering this minister. I do not think this minister asked a question the entire time he was a minister, but he should certainly have no preamble and should ask a direct supplementary question to the minister. He should know that.

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

Mr. Marcel Laurendeau (Opposition House Leader): On the same point of order, Mr. Speaker. If the honourable members would give the member the opportunity rather than heckling and holding their seats, the honourable member might have time to put forward his question.

Mr. Speaker: On the point of order, may I remind all members that a supplementary question should not require a preamble.

* * *

Mr. Speaker: The honourable member for Southdale, please put your question.

Mr. Reimer: Mr. Speaker, I will try to make it clear, perfectly clear. Will the minister tell this House whether a request for proposal for a two-person committee has been established to report back to his government by December 15, which is a couple of weeks from now, with a suggestion that the final proposal be made public by May 31? I think that is the question.

* (1025)

Mr. Robinson: Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Consumer and Corporate Affairs (Mr. Lemieux) and I have been working regularly or daily with the Assembly of Manitoba Chiefs in trying to finalize an agreement, and we are not in a position at this time because we are not quite at that point where we have an agreement where we are going to call for a request for proposals, but given the opportunity in the very near future, we shall make the House and the member aware of the timetable we are looking at in establishing on-reserve casinos in the province of Manitoba.

Aboriginal Gaming Provincial Regulatory Control

Mr. David Faurchou (Portage la Prairie): Mr. Speaker, I would like to ask questions of the minister responsible for gaming in this regard. Having heard the response to the earlier questions, I would like to know if it is the intent of this government to maintain provincial regulatory control over additional gaming in this province.

Hon. Ron Lemieux (Minister charged with the administration of The Gaming Control Act): Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the member for the question. As was mentioned by my colleague, we are certainly in consultation right now with the AMC, Manitoba Chiefs, and we are certainly in all kinds of discussions with the chiefs. There are a number of different issues which have been raised. The member asked, my understanding is, whether or not we are in consultation and talking with people, and I am saying, yes, we are in consultation.

Mr. Faurchou: My question was not as to whether consultations were taking place, but my

question was specifically: is it the intent of the government of Manitoba to maintain, as is the case currently, full regulatory control over gaming, whether it be on-reserve or off?

Mr. Lemieux: I understand the question now, and the answer is yes.

Casinos—Accountability

Mr. David Faurshou (Portage la Prairie): I would also like to continue the line of questioning to the same minister. In that regard, what safeguards are being taken to make certain that accountability is ironclad for the operations of these casinos and that the casinos and the operators thereof are made fully accountable for the operations of that casino?

Hon. Ron Lemieux (Minister charged with the administration of The Gaming Control Act): Mr. Speaker, the Manitoba Gaming and Control Commission now and the Lotteries Commission have been in place for quite a while, and the regulations and so on will not change. Hopefully, the member is not putting the Manitoba Gaming Control Commission and the Manitoba Lotteries Commission and the good reputation they have today—hopefully the member is not questioning what is in place now. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Aboriginal Gaming Viva Gaming and Resorts

Mr. Jack Penner (Emerson): Mr. Speaker. I would like to pose a question to the minister responsible for gaming in the province.

In a news release which was issued on November 23 out of Las Vegas, it was announced that the Viva gaming resort in Las Vegas would be expanding its gaming interest in Canada. Viva said it had entered into an approved memorandum of understanding with Wagon Wheel resorts, casino and entertainment of Rockton, Illinois, to develop and operate a permanent full-service casino on behalf of the Roseau River First Nations. According to the press release, initial plans call for the construction of a temporary gaming facility at Roseau River First Nation.

I would like to ask the minister: what contact has he had with Viva gaming and resorts as to the establishment of gaming and a gaming facility, and what was the outcome of those contacts that he had with Viva resorts?

Hon. Ron Lemieux (Minister charged with the administration of The Gaming Control Act): Mr. Speaker, thank you for the question.

An Honourable Member: Questions.

* (1030)

Mr. Lemieux: Or questions, yes. I just want to respond to that. The question about Viva Las Vegas gaming and whether or not the minister, in my case, has had any conversations with this corporation or company, I have not.

Mr. Penner: The question then is: have you had any discussion with the Roseau River First Nations as to an agreement that they have drawn with Viva and what sort of direction or response have you given to Roseau in this regard?

Mr. Lemieux: Mr. Speaker, just with regard to this issue, the First Nations, they have a right to consult with whomever they want with regard to casinos. I have not been in conversation specifically with Roseau. We have been in discussions with AMC, and if First Nations people wish to consult anyone with regard to their proposals, they are certainly entitled to as any other citizen in Manitoba would be.

Mr. Penner: Well, Mr. Speaker, the question then is: if this memorandum of understanding between Roseau and Viva is in fact in place and you have had no discussion with either of them, does this mean then that you are turning over the responsibility for gaming to a Las Vegas consortium, and are you relinquishing control of gaming through these kinds of memorandums of understanding and/or agreements? Is this the government approach?

Mr. Lemieux: Mr. Speaker, no. I was going to say that the government is not relinquishing any control. The AMC or Roseau, in this particular case, is certainly entitled to consult with whomever they want. We are not turning over responsibility. Neither are we putting up

roadblocks and closing the door to this Legislature to First Nations people. We are open to discussions, and they are open to consult with whomever they want.

Post-Secondary Education Graduate Programs

Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights): My question is to the Minister of Education.

The report, which I tabled today, indicates the absolute disaster left by the previous government in university graduate student education. There is a terrific out-migration of graduate students, a loss of 60 percent of those Manitoba students winning national awards.

Given that there is going to be a large proportion of the university professors retiring in the next 15 years or so, given that the graduate students are at the heart of the research- and the knowledge-based economy, what does the minister propose to do about this terrible situation?

Hon. Drew Caldwell (Minister of Education and Training): Mr. Speaker, I thank the honourable member for his question. My department has been meeting with the presidents of the post-secondary institutions in the province of Manitoba. The honourable member will be happy to know that I have established a working group to look into future trends in research, and I hope to have some progressive results from that ongoing consultation to rectify this issue.

Mr. Gerrard: My supplementary to the Minister of Education, I ask the minister, given the report which describes the situation, which is a real crossroads and raises the question: does the government support the University of Manitoba as a research-intensive university with graduate programs?

Mr. Caldwell: Mr. Speaker, again, in response to the honourable member, it is well recognized across the country that the University of Manitoba is a preeminent research institution. It certainly is an institution that the government feels is very valuable in this province, indeed extraordinarily valuable, and we do support the research capacity of the University of Manitoba.

Mr. Gerrard: My supplementary to the Premier (Mr. Doer): given the importance of graduate students to the knowledge-based economy, why was there no mention of graduate students in programs in research in the goals and the plans of the Premier and the government?

Hon. Gary Doer (Premier): I thank the member for River Heights for his question. We stated in the election, we have stated in the Speech from the Throne, we have stated at every event we attended that we believe that you cannot have an economic strategy without having an education strategy. We are absolutely committed to doing that.

We are further committed. I have met with the Minister of Education (Mr. Caldwell), with the university presidents; I have met individually with one president and will continue to do so. We have met with students, and we have more work to do in terms of meeting with students.

Part of what we are trying to do, also as part of our plan, is to restore the transfer payments from Ottawa to the provinces. We think a national vision of Canada includes health care for our citizens and a strong education and training strategy that is mutually invested in by both the federal and provincial governments so our kids and our youth from whatever part of Canada will have access to education and training, including graduate training, in our great country called Canada. That is our vision and that is our plan.

Floodproofing Programs Government Commitment

Mr. Frank Pitura (Morris): Mr. Speaker, my question is directed to the Minister of Conservation (Mr. Lathlin).

I noticed that the throne speech, Mr. Speaker, talks about how the people of Manitoba united to fight the flood of the century in 1997, and the speech correctly notes the work done by the Progressive Conservative administration of Duff Roblin in building a floodway that ultimately was one of the most effective measures used in fighting the devastating flood of 1997. You suggest that more work needs to be done in the Red River Valley to deal with the

consequences of the flood of 1997, and I know that many communities in my constituency are waiting patiently for the go-ahead to begin their community ring-diking projects.

Given the vague generalities presented in the throne speech about the 1997 flood and its aftermath, do you as minister have a plan to complete the required floodproofing programs in the Red River Valley to ensure that the devastating effects of the 1997 flood are never revisited?

Hon. Gary Doer (Premier): It is apropos, the question today. I think it is important today to note that the International Joint Commission report is being released. The minister and I have had conversations on this report, and we have struck a committee to deal with the report, dealing with the Emergency Measures minister, Minister of Highways (Mr. Ashton), Minister of Consumer and Corporate Affairs (Mr. Lemieux), the Minister of Conservation (Mr. Lathlin) and the Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs (Ms. Friesen).

That report, Mr. Speaker, documents floodproofing projects that must continue to proceed in the Red River Valley. It also documents that we were within inches literally of a disaster in 1997. It indicates that the present floodway, a great public investment made by Duff Roblin who should be continually congratulated in this Chamber by all of us, is now unable to fulfill its total capacity. There are problems with bridges, for example. Even bridges that have been recently built have not been built at a higher level—Highway 15 for example. There are problems with the intake area on the east side of the floodway. There are problems with the capacity in the city of Winnipeg. There are projections right now that in fact in the next fifty years there is about a 20 percent chance of having 1,826 kinds of conditions which would cost the City of Winnipeg \$5 billion. So we want to continue with the diking process that was proceeded with by the previous government. We want to look at the west dike and its capacity. We want to look at the inadequacy of the bridges over the floodway. We want to look at the intake at the east side.

We want to look at the recommendations we are just receiving today, and we will be working with the federal government and the municipal government to deal with the massive implications of those recommendations, but the challenge this Legislature, I am sure, will have to fulfill, as the Legislature had to do in the '60s, will be to deal with these challenges.

* (1040)

Mr. Pitura: My supplementary is to the Minister of Conservation.

I ask the minister: are you prepared to continue lobbying the federal government to fulfill its commitment to floodproofing, in other words, to get them to commit to the final phase of the funding that is outlined in the 1997 federal-provincial floodproofing agreement?

Hon. Oscar Lathlin (Minister of Conservation): Let me advise the member that, yes, we are already talking about further agreements, cost-sharing programs with the federal government. Let me also say to the member that you know there have been many inquiries since I have been minister regarding the status of floodproofing. People are getting impatient because they say it has been two years since the flood and when are we going to finish the remedial work, and I agree with those queries that are being brought in by the people. So what we have decided to do in order to make people feel more comfortable, more informed about the progress of the floodproofing, is that we are going to inform those community residents on the status of these projects and how they may assist in the process. We are also going to be sending out some sort of a newsletter to each community informing them exactly where it is at and what is being planned down the road.

Mr. Pitura: I would like to ask: if this minister fails to secure this funding commitment from the federal government, which I asked in my previous supplementary, is his government prepared to proceed on a floodproofing program on its own, knowing that the existing floodproofing money has allowed residents, farmers and other business owners in the Red River Valley to rest easier in the knowledge that

major floodproofing projects have been taking place to protect their homes, workplaces and communities?

Point of Order

Hon Steve Ashton (Deputy Government House Leader): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker, Beauchesne Citation 409.3, it is clear that questions should not be based on a hypothesis. The various ministers that have been dealing with the 1997 flood situation have continued some of the lobbying efforts of the previous government. We are basing our lobbying efforts on the fact that we believe the federal government should provide the support to the diking, but to ask what might happen if that is the case is hypothetical. I would suggest that what we need to focus on here is making sure the federal government lives up to its responsibilities and not ask questions that are out of order.

Mr. Marcel Laurendeau (Opposition House Leader): Mr. Speaker, the honourable member for Thompson, the acting House Leader on the government side, does not have a point of order. If he thinks this is a hypothetical situation, I hope he came to visit us in 1997 when we had our dikes up and six inches from the top because it was not a hypothetical situation. But the federal government today is not aiding us, and we are asking this minister: will you stand alone if that federal government will not stand beside you? Answer the question.

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. I would like to ask the honourable member for Morris to please rephrase your question very quickly.

* * *

Mr. Pitura: To rephrase the question, through you, Mr. Speaker, to the minister: will he be prepared to backstop the funding for floodproofing in the Red River Valley if the federal government withdraws its funding?

Mr. Lathlin: The answer to that member's question is that I prefer not to speculate as to what is going to happen in the future in relation to negotiations that are going on between the federal and the provincial governments. I want

to make sure that all avenues have been explored before we do anything else.

Health Care Facilities Bed Openings

Mrs. Bonnie Mitchelson (River East): My question is for the Minister of Health (Mr. Chomiak). On September 7, the member for Kildonan (Mr. Chomiak) stated, and I quote, that 120 beds are already in the system, and you know that those beds are occupied; you are not talking about new acute care beds.

On November 22, the member for Kildonan announced funding for 138 new acute care beds in the system. I would like to ask the Minister of Health, was the member for Kildonan wrong on September 7 or was he wrong on November 22?

Hon. Dave Chomiak (Minister of Health): Mr. Speaker, the member for River East is having real difficulty and confusion understanding the situation with respect to beds. I recall the member standing up in this House and saying we were not opening any beds. Now I have the member indicating the other day that in fact they were going to open beds, when in fact I checked with the department officials and said specifically: did they fund 60 or 70 swing beds? Department officials said no, and the same briefing book that we have says no. Did they have 120 beds planned to be funded? And the department officials said no.

I will have to forward our press release again to indicate that we indicated there will be, in the system, acute care beds that are going to be available for Manitobans so they do not have to lie in the hallways. That is our commitment, and we are going to live up to that.

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

* (1050)

House Business

Hon. Steve Ashton (Deputy Government House Leader): I want to have leave just to announce that the striking committee for committees is meeting right away in Room 255.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

Violence Against Women

Mrs. Louise Dacquay (Seine River): Mr. Speaker, I rise today on a very important matter. This Monday marks the 10th anniversary of the Montreal massacre. On December 6, 1989, 14 women students were gunned down at the Ecole polytechnique in Montreal. I am sure that all members of this House will recall the shock and the horror we all felt as the news of the tragedy became public. Once again, we extend our condolences and our sympathy to the families and friends of the women who lost their lives in that senseless violent attack. We mourn the loss of these young women and of all those women in Canada who have been killed through acts of senseless violence.

This coming Monday, the Manitoba Women's Advisory Council will be hosting a sunrise breakfast to remember all the Manitoba women who have lost their lives to domestic violence. The event is being held on Canada's Day of Remembrance and Action on Violence Against Women and to commemorate the 14 women who were killed in Montreal in 1989.

I would encourage all members of this Assembly to attend this event which takes place on Monday from 7:30 a.m. to 9 a.m. in Room 254 of the Legislative Building. At this breakfast, the Manitoba Women's Advisory Council will also be collecting unwrapped toys for children staying with their mothers in shelters over Christmas.

On Monday, December 6, let us all take time to remember the Montreal women, as well as the Manitoba women who have been victims of violence. We must all work together towards a common goal of a safer and healthier future for all Manitobans. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Farm Income Crisis Resolution

Mr. Tom Nevakshonoff (Interlake): Mr. Speaker, I rise to speak about the all-party resolution on the farm income crisis passed by this Legislature earlier this week. I, like all

members of the Legislature, was proud to see the political parties work together in an effort to address this dire situation. The resolution strongly urges the federal government to take immediate action and grant Manitoba's request for \$300 million in immediate assistance for Manitoba's farm families.

The most significant part of this resolution is not that it has the support of all parties, although this is important. I believe the most important aspect of the all-party resolution is that it also has the support of a broad coalition of agriculture, business and municipal organizations in Manitoba. These groups came together because they recognize that the farm crisis does not just affect one region of Manitoba or one segment of the provincial economy. Rather, it impacts on the whole province. Yes, some communities are impacted more severely, but there is no question that all of Manitoba is affected by the farm income crisis. In fact, support for our efforts goes beyond this Legislature and the members of the delegation. For instance, the mayor of Winnipeg has spoken publicly about his concern over the farm crisis, and I know there are thousands of Manitobans who share his concern.

We hope the Prime Minister and federal Minister of Agriculture take notice of these concerns and move to address this crisis. Thank you.

BioSearch International

Mr. Edward Helwer (Gimli): Mr. Speaker, earlier this week I had the pleasure of attending a tour of BioSearch International Inc., which is a privately owned company within my constituency meeting the needs of the hog industry here in Manitoba. BioSearch International has several shareholders, including Ridley's Inc. which owns Feed-Rite, DGH Engineering Ltd. and three veterinarians who are involved in the research and practice of swine medicine.

BioSearch operates, according to their mission statement, to advance production efficiency of modern swine facilities through independent scientific research. Mr. Speaker, I would like to point out that research of this kind

is extremely important to the people of Manitoba, given the growing hog industry here in our province. Not only is BioSearch International important to Manitobans but to people around the world. Potential clients for the company encompass any organizations or individuals that are interested in conducting research on their products. These could include pharmaceutical, feed ingredients, breeding stock and also equipment suppliers, as well as publicly owned funded institutions.

I was very impressed with their facilities, and I have no doubt that, given the current economic conditions made possible by the previous administration, that this will remain intact. Companies like BioSearch International will continue to grow and create jobs right here in Manitoba to the benefit of all of us. So I certainly hope, for the sake of all Manitobans, that we continue to enjoy the growth and favourable economic conditions in this province that have made it possible for businesses such as BioSearch International and others to prosper.

I just wanted to thank BioSearch International for their hospitality and their tour, and I want to wish them well. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

NDP Government

Mr. Conrad Santos (Wellington): Mr. Speaker, I rise to articulate one modest view of the vision of the Manitoba NDP in today's society. We in the NDP we call Today's NDP envision a provincial government which is more representative, more responsive and more responsible.

To be representative means that the government reflects the mirror image of the population distribution in this province, not only in the personnel of the Legislative Assembly or in the courts, but also in the public service, from the humblest cleaning crew to the highest managerial position in the administrative bureaucracy. To be responsive requires representativeness. Because if the people in government are representative of the population at large, then they can understand the sentiments,

the hopes and the aspirations of their own people.

Once the government becomes more representative and responsive, it will be responsible in the sense of being more accountable and answerable for the choices of policy framework, for the choices of programs and for the choices of deliveries of those programs to the people of this province.

I echo the thoughts of a great Canadian when we say that our hopes are high, our faith is firm, our vision is vindicated and our dream shall never die.

Manitoba Mennonite History

Mr. Jim Penner (Steinbach): Mr. Speaker, it is my pleasure to rise today to mark the end of a special year of tribute and to thank everyone who played a role in its celebration. As many in this House know, July 31, 1999, marked the 125th anniversary of the docking of the steamship International at the junction of the Red and Assiniboine rivers and the arrival of the Mennonites in Manitoba.

The 65 families who made the six-week trip from the Ukraine in the summer of 1874 could not possibly have known the impact they would have had on their new home, the fledgling province of Manitoba. The settlements that were established on the east side and west side of the Red River, often referred to by residents in their local language as dit Sied and yant Sied, this side and that side, have become thriving communities: Steinbach, Kleefeld, Blumenort, New Bothwell, Niverville, Grunthal, on the east side, and Rosenort, Winkler and Altona on the west.

More than skilled farmers, settlers quickly embraced the area of commerce. Klaas R. Reimer operated a thriving general store; Abram S. Friesen constructed a Dutch-style windmill; cheese factories flourished; and Jacob R. Friesen became the first Ford dealer in western Canada in a village in that would eventually be known as the automobile city.

This year, Mr. Speaker, several events and memorabilia marked the 125th anniversary,

culminating with the re-enactment of the original landing and the settlement trail ride. The events have helped raise awareness of this proud history and have helped to educate our young people on their rich heritage.

On behalf of my colleagues, I would like to extend my thanks to the East Reserve 125th Anniversary Committee and to the Mennonite Historical Society for all their effort in making this a special year. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

House Business

Hon. Steve Ashton (Deputy Government House Leader): Mr. Speaker, if I could update the House on this morning's business, based on leave, we would be proposing to proceed with the throne speech debate, the member for River Heights (Mr. Gerrard) having the floor. We would then propose to adjourn that debate and proceed to second reading on Bill 3, the bill that was brought in earlier.

* (1100)

Mr. Gary Filmon (Leader of the Official Opposition): I wonder if I could ask the indulgence of the members opposite. I was the only one intending to speak from our side on that. I have a commitment a little later in the morning, and I wondered if we could deal with that now and then go on to the speech of the Leader of the Liberal Party.

Mr. Ashton: That being the case, I believe the member for River Heights (Mr. Gerrard) indicated there would be no problem with that. I would ask then, by leave, if we could proceed to Second Readings, specifically the introduction of Bill 3.

Mr. Speaker: Is there leave to proceed with second reading of Bill 3? [agreed]

SECOND READINGS

Bill 3—The Retail Businesses Holiday Closing Amendment Act

Hon. Becky Barrett (Minister of Labour): Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the Minister

of Consumer and Corporate Affairs (Mr. Lemieux), that Bill 3, The Retail Businesses Holiday Closing Amendment Act; Loi modifiant la Loi sur les jours fériés dans le commerce de détail, be now read a second time and be referred to a committee of this House.

Motion presented.

Ms. Barrett: Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to introduce Bill 3, which proposes to amend The Retail Businesses Holiday Closing Act, and am very grateful to the members of the Legislature for allowing this bill to go through expeditiously.

This year Boxing Day falls on a Sunday. Uncertainty exists as to the permitted hours of operation for retail businesses on Boxing Day, December 26, 1999. The proposed amendment to the act will provide clarification that will ensure continued respect for the act's spirit and intent. A provision of the act currently allows a retail business to open without any restrictions on a Sunday if that business closed all day on the previous Saturday. The original intent of the legislation was to accommodate retailers who consistently remained closed on Saturday. It was not intended to provide ad hoc or irregular opportunities to open without restriction on Sunday.

Bill 3 would amend The Retail Businesses Holiday Closing Act to make it clear that the opportunity to open without restriction on Sunday is available only to those businesses that are always closed on Saturdays. Given that December 25, a statutory holiday, falls on a Saturday this year, virtually all retail stores will be closed on this day. Without this amendment retail stores throughout the province could potentially open with unrestricted hours of operation on Sunday, December 26, contrary to existing municipal by-laws passed pursuant to the act. This would be contrary to the overall intent of the legislation, which respects the concept of a weekly day of rest and the right of municipalities to determine whether more liberalized Sunday shopping should exist in their communities.

Currently under the act municipalities have the opportunity to pass a by-law permitting

stores in their communities to remain open without restrictions on Sundays between 12 noon and 6 p.m. Retail establishments in municipalities that have adopted such shopping by-laws will continue to be allowed to open without restrictions between 12 noon and 6 p.m. on Sunday, December 26, 1999, pursuant to those by-laws. For retail businesses in municipalities that have chosen not to adopt a liberalized Sunday shopping by-law, the more restrictive provisions of the act will continue to apply. In these municipalities, specifically designated retail outlets and stores that operate with four or less staff at any one time will continue to be allowed to open on December 26.

This amendment simply ensures that the established hours of Sunday shopping, hours that are familiar to consumers and retailers in the various municipalities in the province, are maintained. I commend this bill to the Assembly for approval.

Mr. Gary Filmon (Leader of the Official Opposition): On behalf of my colleagues in the official opposition, I thank the minister for providing us with some briefing and some understanding of the urgency of this matter and the intent of the government to deal with what is apparently an anomaly. Having had some discussions with the Opposition House Leader (Mr. Laurendeau), and consultations that he has had, both with the minister and with the legal representative that she has assigned to us, we have looked at the bill. It appears to be straightforward, three clauses only.

I know the origins of the circumstance that we find ourselves in, Mr. Speaker, in that I was in the House during the period of time that this legislation was enacted, and the provision that causes this anomaly is one that came about as a result of wanting the act to show no religious bias in setting the day of rest or the day of closure for the week, acknowledging that there could be religions other than Christianity for whom the Sabbath is Saturday. So the provision allowed for the circumstance in which a retailer who wanted to remain closed all day Saturday, for whom that was his or her Sabbath, could then open all day Sunday in a normal course of business.

That, of course, provides us with the unintended anomaly in this particular year in which all businesses must remain closed on Saturday because of Christmas Day being a day of closure, and then allowing for businesses to remain open all day Sunday in a normal course of business. We do not want that to occur because that was not the intention, obviously, in the drafting of the act many, many years ago.

So, in principle, we support this, but, out of an abundance of caution, caution that we learned from members opposite, when they were on our side of the House, we are asking that the final approval of this not take place until next week by virtue of standing here today and saying that we support in principle what the government is doing. Hopefully, no businesses will take initiative to put out ads or go to any cost towards their efforts to have shopping on the 26th of December this year, but we will allow for the weekend for any responses that may come from Chambers of Commerce or other people who have an interest in this, and, hopefully, we can set early Monday an opportunity for committee so that anybody may appear if they have some serious reservations or if they can point to some legality that may be in conflict because of this proposal. Then we can proceed to deal with it at committee and third reading expeditiously, hopefully, on Monday, if that is possible, with the co-operation of members in the House.

That is our position on it, and we thank the minister for providing us with an opportunity to ensure that there is the extra exercise of caution in going through this. This will then allow for the intention of Sunday shopping that was passed again through municipal option in this House with limitation of hours of 12 to six on Sunday the 26th, as I understand it. Should this ever occur again in future where there are two consecutive holiday days that result in the Sunday shopping, again we have provided for it by the way in which this bill is worded.

So I am prepared to have this go forward to committee stage on behalf of the members of the official opposition, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: Is the House ready for the question?

Some Honourable Members: Question.

Mr. Speaker: The question before the House is second reading of Bill 3, The Retail Businesses Holiday Closing Amendment Act. Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the motion?

Some Honourable Members: Agreed.

Mr. Speaker: Agreed and so ordered.

* (1110)

THRONE SPEECH DEBATE (Fourth Day of Debate)

Mr. Speaker: To resume debate on the proposed motion of the honourable member for St. Vital (Ms. Allan) and amendment thereto moved by the honourable Leader of the Official Opposition (Mr. Filmon), standing in the name of the honourable member for River Heights who has 40 minutes.

Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights): Mr. Speaker, I rise to provide a perspective on the recent throne speech. To begin with, I would like to thank, first of all, the people in River Heights for showing their confidence in me in electing me to represent them in this Chamber and in showing confidence in electing a Liberal and in realizing the importance of having Liberal representation in this Chamber to provide a point of view from the centre.

I want to recognize that River Heights is a riding which has been a Liberal riding very often in the past, that it has a strong tradition with the election of Sharon Carstairs who was the Liberal Leader in 1986 and that it is home to that tradition, a tradition on which during my time in this Chamber I hope to build and revitalize the Liberal Party.

Last Thursday, the day of the throne speech, I suggest was a sad day for Manitoba. Here we are on the threshold of a new millennium. We are about to enter in just over a month the year 2000, a historic year, a year when we should be thinking about building for the future. We are about to enter the 21st Century, a new century. There will be new industries, new opportunities, but rather than grasping the moment, rather than taking this opportunity to chart a vision for the

future, the government has shown that it is primarily interested in going sideways.

Mr. Conrad Santos, Deputy Speaker, in the Chair

Like a crab, the Premier (Mr. Doer) has scuttled leftwards across the Chamber. Rather than projecting a future-thinking vision, we have a series of commitments, most of which are designed primarily to reverse the decisions made under the Tory government and take us back to the 1980s. It is true that health care, education, child poverty and the inner city suffered greatly under the previous Conservative administration, but it is not sufficient for a new government to have as its primary focus taking us backwards to where we were in the late 1980s. The throne speech was a historic opportunity to set the stage for the future as we enter the new century and the new millennium, a historic opportunity which, sadly, was missed.

The preponderant sentiment from the throne speech is a perception that the NDP would just like to take us back to what they perceive as the halcyon days of a socialist government in the 1980s. But Manitobans remember the problems of those times, as well as the fact that there were fewer patients in hallways. Manitobans remember that those times were some time ago and that there are many Manitobans who are looking forward to a changed society, an improved society, changes in the way we do things, new ways of operating. We need, clearly, a balanced approach of compassion and economic growth.

The throne speech clearly exposed the truth that the NDP do not have an economic agenda. They do not have a real vision of where the future is. They do not understand what wealth creation is about. They do not really know how to chart the direction for the province as we enter this new century. There is a section at the beginning of the speech that seemed to provide a glimpse of an illusion that the NDP might understand the importance of critical investments to our current position in Manitoba. Let me quote from this section because it is instructive. They refer to "our collective investment in public health care and education, in modern infrastructure, in electrification, in

transport and scientific research" which "has helped to create a wealthier and more secure province." But, sadly, as the throne speech continued with a plan, each of these items was sadly and poorly attended to in the provision of a real vision.

Let me begin in reverse order with the scientific research first. Today's NDP recognized its importance in the past but then totally failed to mention any plan for science and research as being important to the future or where their government will go. Manitobans are left to wonder whether the NDP desire a province, our province, to become a backwater where science is dead, where we export people who care about science technology and progress, and become a land where we continue to foster the low-wage, low-technology economy which became such a hallmark of the previous Conservative administration.

There is a lot of analysis which we do not need to go into today which suggests that science and research and technology contributed enormously to where we are now, and it is important for governments to understand this and build this. Perhaps 50 percent of the economic growth in North America in the last century has resulted from technological improvements, and yet this government fails to pay any attention to such a critical element, to an item which is so important.

It is twice as sad that the NDP throne speech follows on many years during which the Conservatives paid little more than lip service to science and research. Our universities and research institutes were starved for operating funds under the Filmon government. As a writer to the Free Press expressed it yesterday, the Tory government's years were those of relentless attacks on universities. We have had a net exodus of graduate students.

In a troubling comparison in a report which I tabled today, last year while the University of Alberta attracted 263 students with national awards, the University of Manitoba lost 60 percent of graduate students who had won the prestigious national Natural Science and Engineering Research Council awards.

Manitoba sadly ranks last in wages per hour paid to graduate students. The decreased numbers of graduate students in Manitoba illustrated in this report highlight the lack of effective investment in the university made by the previous Tory government. I met recently with Dr. Dennis Anderson from Brandon University, and he spoke eloquently of the changes that are occurring in the universities with the faculties which are aging and with the large proportion who will be retiring from all three of our universities over the next 10 or 15 years.

If we do not build up the graduate students and train the students here, we may have great difficulty replacing those and replacing our teachers and professors with the very best that we could have. The problem is this: that this process is happening not only here but elsewhere, that professors are retiring, and that in fact we will be on the open market trying to recruit from elsewhere at very high cost if we do not, as it were, build the farm team here. If we do not have the effort to have the graduate students, the research base here, that will be important not only for replacing professors but building and providing a vital element of the new economy of the knowledge-based society that, in fact, is so critical for us to build.

There is example after example of problems created by the previous government. The poor funding for the Manitoba Health Research Council over many years is but one example. How can you expect to do well at our universities and nationally if the provincial support for research is only one-fifth on a per capita basis, after the Tory legacy, compared to Quebec, another have-not province? Quebec has at least understood that it is important in a provincial framework to show leadership, just as Quebec has shown leadership in areas like child care.

* (1120)

But it is clearly important for the Manitoba government, the new government, to make sure that it shows also leadership. It was a sad day to have a throne speech which lacked that sort of leadership. So I say, instead of moving forward with leadership, the new government seems to

be moving crablike, skittling and scuttling and shifting, trying to position itself politically but failing to position Manitoba advantageously.

Let me move from research onto the next item for there are a whole series: research, transportation, electrification, infrastructure were important building blocks of the past.

Transportation: There is mention of northern roads, but where is the mention of a mid-Canada trade corridor? It has gone underground, it would seem, with the hermit crab that is the new government. The NDP have forgotten where they are positioned, where Manitoba should be positioned as a major player in North America, and have retreated from a larger vision of Manitoba and what its place should be to a shrunken vision.

Electrification: an important infrastructure. It was 50 years ago under a Liberal administration in Manitoba and the leadership of Douglas Campbell that Manitoba saw widespread rural electrification. But the throne speech of the NDP gives no clue as to their view of the energy future for Manitoba in the 21st Century, and yet we are entering a very critical phase. We have a Kyoto agreement which we are part of here and will need to find new ways of operating so that we produce fewer greenhouse gases. It will be a tremendous challenge for Manitoba, and there is no vision for how we will meet that challenge. There is not even any vision of a recognition that it exists that we must in fact transform aspects of our economy over the next century, looking at how we produce energy, perhaps with a hydrogen economy and hydrogen fuel cells and other things which will change and how we will adapt here in Manitoba. Where is that vision? There is only a look backwards.

We move on from research, transport, electrification, and now infrastructure. The throne speech mentions northern roads but fails in every other respect to connect to the emerging needs for infrastructure in Manitoba in the 21st Century. After 40 years of NDP and Conservative governments, we are left in a poor situation in this province, only 20 percent of Manitoba connected in rural areas to natural gas

compared to more than 90 percent in Saskatchewan and Alberta.

Manitoba is also far behind Alberta and Saskatchewan in irrigation infrastructure, and, except for the North, the basic needs for road, rail, bridge and other infrastructure are not even mentioned in the new ways in the 21st Century that we must address our infrastructure needs. And what of the infrastructure for the digital economy? There is more to the digital economy than ensuring that every school child has an e-mail address. You know, it is curious that in 1995 in the election campaign, the NDP were at least prescient enough at that time to indicate that if they formed a government in 1995, they would have a minister responsible for the information highway and the digital economy. But now that it is 1999, where are we? Back to the old ways, back to 1980; gone, gone is a vision for the future. Oh, so bad that we have come to this.

Education: Mr. Deputy Speaker, I have a report here, one that I tabled earlier in Question Period. It documents in detail the disaster that was the last administration in their policy for higher education in Manitoba. A net exodus of huge numbers of graduate students, more than a 50 percent decrease in graduate students coming to the University of Manitoba from elsewhere, and all the while Manitoba, the largest exporter of graduate students of any province.

Here are the numbers: declining graduate students and research, more than 38 lost net in 1996-97 and then 98 and 40; 132 graduate students leaving here because the opportunities were not here, because there was not a focus on the new economy and understanding how we build a knowledge-based economy under the previous Conservative administration. That same focus seems to be lacking, sadly, under the new government. We rank last in Canada in wages paid per hour to graduate students here. Is it any wonder that students, that young people that are our best and our brightest are leaving? They see that the opportunities are not here, they are elsewhere. It is a sad day. It is a sad day.

I take from the report here what is even more troubling is that while the University of

Alberta attracted 263 students with national awards last year alone, we in Manitoba lost 59 percent of students with the national NSERC awards, and we lost at least another 360 who did not enroll due to the lack of funding and the lack of commitment of the government of Manitoba. We produced the largest exports of graduate students in the country, a sad state of affairs. We need a government which looks not back, but a government which starts to look forward. We can only hope that as the days progress that the government will start to see that the old ways are not sufficient for where Manitoba needs to go.

The problem in a context is this, and I will return to it later, that the NDP are focused on socialist economies elsewhere. Their model of economic development is reminiscent of that of the former Soviet Union's. Provide good education, but they forget. They forget, without a free market, without a culture of entrepreneurship, without a climate that encourages business growth and in particular growth of the new economy, we will continue to have a large export of many of our most skilled people. It is time for a change. It is time for a new vision not the old one.

On health care: There are some promising things in the throne speech on health care, but the jury is still out on how the NDP will do on health care. The new Minister of Health has begun to make changes which we had recommended in bringing together the Winnipeg Hospital Authority and the Long Term Care Authority, a sensible move which models what is happening elsewhere in the country. We will wait to see whether the situation will really improve.

I must say I was not encouraged yesterday to have a call from a Manitoban who had been diagnosed tentatively with cancer in early July and was then informed yesterday that he would continue to have to wait indefinitely in order to get the test, which was the next step and should have been available in early July, when he was first diagnosed. It was heartening, however, to learn later in the day that the minister, after I had got ready to ask an aggressive question in Question Period, managed to get his staff working on the issue and has this individual an

appointment today. But the time should not be there where you need such political interference. The time should be there when this is a normal practice, that this is the way that health care works, that appointments and diagnostic tests can be arrived at speedily.

* (1130)

The problem with the throne speech was that much of the direction in health care is just back to the way things were done in the 1980s, rather than a real vision of what can be done better, how we can adapt, change and advance into the new century. That is where we need to go.

I want to move on now and talk about one of the most important areas for a caring and nurturing society, one of the most important areas if we really are going to move forward as a province. I speak here of child poverty. It is a disgrace that for year after year we have had one of the highest rates of child poverty in Canada. We have had by far and away the highest proportion of children in care.

It is sad and sorry that yesterday's Tories let 10 years slip by since Manitoba earned the dubious honour of being the child poverty capital of Canada. Committees and studies will not fill empty stomachs. It is time for action. How many meals were missed in those 10 years by hungry children, too young and innocent to understand why there was no food in the fridge?

One can argue about the measurement of child poverty, but one of the clearest indications is what has happened at Winnipeg Harvest. When the Tories came to power, there were less than 3,000 families being helped at Winnipeg Harvest. Day after day, month after month and year after year, it grew and grew until it was more than 15,000 families. What an incredible, sorry state of affairs.

It is time for action. It is time to face the reality that there are real needs out there. It is time to face the situation that investment in children in the early years in solving child poverty is an investment which will save money down the road, because we will have fewer problems as those children grow older. Because they will be able to cope, they will be able to be

productive, and they will be strong participants and contributors to our society. We need a better plan than what we have on the table in the throne speech. We need to erase this blemish on the face of our province, the title, child poverty capital of Canada, one of the worst records in the country. The Conservatives had three terms to stop the problem and they failed.

The present government is back-peddalling as fast as it can on their promise to end the clawback on the child tax credit. Where was this in the throne speech? Where was this when the announcement on the child poverty report was made the other day and the minister responsible was trying to wiggle and waggle out of it? Evidence clearly shows that a dollar invested in the early years of childhood can save \$7 later on in societal costs, and this occurs because children who are supported early have less juvenile delinquency. Children who are supported early do better in school. Children who are supported early are more likely to be well adapted socially into whole productive employment. The failure of the Conservative government is that they were always ready to spend the \$7 after the fact and they were never ready to spend the \$1 before. There is a lot of money there. There is a lot of money in those \$7 expenditures that can be saved and moved, and that is the chance that the new government has got and that is what the new government must build on if they are really going to provide some leadership.

I want to talk briefly about the situation in farms in Manitoba, because there is an old way and a new way, and we need to move on and solve this, as I suggested in the debate earlier on, not in the old way but following successful models like Netherlands who have leapfrogged many other countries in their production of agricultural products.

We need not to sit idly by when companies like Nortel leave. We must be aggressive in making sure that when there are opportunities, opportunities like the changing situation at the New Holland tractor plant, that the new government is ready to work and to take advantage. It was a sad moment in Question Period the other day when the Premier (Mr. Doer) said, well, there is really not much I can

do, but I am going to go to the federal government. It was sort of as if there was an impotence and inability to really act to make sure that there was a strong future for that tractor plant, for the enterprise and the opportunities here in Manitoba. We need to build. We need to build.

I was reminded, as I bring to a close, of a story by the honourable member for Lac du Bonnet (Mr. Praznik), a story about a Premier who had just arrived in office—

An Honourable Member: And he has got three envelopes.

Mr. Gerrard: He had three envelopes.

An Honourable Member: That is Sid Green, 1970.

Mr. Gerrard: Yes, but you are trying to take it back to the 1980s. And the first time the Premier got into trouble, he opened the first envelope, and the first envelope was blame the former government, and he managed to get through that problem. Then there was another disaster and he opened the second envelope, and the second envelope said blame the federal government. He managed to get through that disaster. Then the third envelope, the third disaster, you better prepare three envelopes.

Well, the sad circumstance of the new government is that the new Premier has already opened the first two envelopes. He has blamed the former government, he has blamed the federal government. You better be careful because that third envelope is sitting there.

Let us have a better vision for the future. Let us see what you can really do to tackle child poverty. Let us see what you can really do to bring us into the new economy. Let us see what you can really do to bring us into the 21st Century. To date you have moved us, the new Premier has moved us sideways like a crab. The question is: will the new government and the Premier be a lucky horseshoe crab or a snow crab, the crab of the North, or a hermit crab or a mole crab or a spider crab? We are waiting to see.

To date, like a crab, the throne speech is more an effort of digging into the sand, perhaps the old survival strategy of the NDP. The NDP may survive, but will Manitoba prosper? That is the question. The throne speech clearly is not the answer, but perhaps we can hope for some better days as I stand here and move and push and prod and see what the new government can do. Thank you.

Mr. Speaker in the Chair

* (1140)

House Business

Hon. Steve Ashton (Deputy Government House Leader): Mr. Speaker, if I might have leave for a number of items of House Business?

Mr. Speaker: Is there leave? [agreed]

Mr. Ashton: I first of all would like to ask leave to revert to Presenting Reports from Standing and Special Committees.

Mr. Speaker: Is there leave to revert to Presenting Reports from Standing and Special Committees? [agreed]

PRESENTING REPORTS BY STANDING AND SPECIAL COMMITTEES

Committee on Establishing the Composition of the Standing Committees

First Report

Hon. Steve Ashton (Deputy Government House Leader): Mr. Speaker, I beg to present the First Report of the committee on establishing the composition of the standing committees.

An Honourable Member: Dispense.

Your Committee met on December 3, 1999, to prepare a First Report on the list of members to compose the various Standing Committees, specifically respecting the Standing Committee on Industrial Relations, as follows:

Industrial Relations (11)

Hon. Mr. Ashton, Hon. Ms. Barrett, Mr. Dewar, Ms. Korzeniowski, Messrs. Laurendeau, Loewen, Nevakshonoff, Pitura, Reid, Schuler, Smith (Brandon West).

Mr. Ashton: Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the honourable Minister of Education and Training (Mr. Caldwell), that the report of the committee be received.

Motion agreed to.

Mr. Ashton: That being the case, I would like to announce that Bill 3 will be referred to the Standing Committee on Industrial Relations Monday at ten o'clock in Room 255.

Mr. Speaker: The Standing Committee on Industrial Relations will meet in Room 255 on Monday at 10 a.m. to consider Bill 3. [agreed]

THRONE SPEECH DEBATE (Fourth Day of Debate)

Mr. Speaker: To resume debate on the proposed motion of the honourable member for St. Vital (Ms. Allan) and amendments hereto moved by the honourable Leader of the Official Opposition (Mr. Filmon).

Mr. Harry Schellenberg (Rossmere): Mr. Speaker, it is with great honour that I rise to speak to the throne speech. Few Manitobans get the opportunity to represent and serve fellow Manitobans in this Chamber. I am privileged to serve the people of Rossmere and will continue to work with them and for them.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to join with others to congratulate you on your election to the highest office in this Assembly. As a former colleague of yours, I know you are a leader and that you are very fair. I feel that you will make an excellent leader in this House because you have the respect from both sides of this House. You are the first elected Speaker and the first Inuit to have this position, and I know Manitobans will be proud of you.

I would also like to draw attention to the pages of the House. I congratulate them for their

appointments, and I hope this will be a learning experience for them.

I would also like to thank Mr. Binx Remnant, the Clerk, for the good work over the many years. Young MLAs have liked the style that you work with, and we wish you best in your retirement.

I would also like to acknowledge the Sergeant-at-Arms and Hansard staff for their good work in this Chamber. I should not forget the Clerk's staff, who have been of great support and are very patient and co-operate with all the MLAs, especially the new MLAs.

I must acknowledge the support of my family. I thank my wife, son and daughter for all their support. I must point out that they told me to run on principle and be mindful of the issues that are important to the people of Rossmere. My son and daughter have told me to serve the people of Rossmere and not to forget why I was elected. I have taken my family's advice seriously and will try to fulfill that request.

I would also like to congratulate all members in the House for being elected to the Chamber. I think I have met most of them personally. I look forward to working with you. I was elected member to the House from '93 to '95, and I therefore know many of you from my previous term in office. This House, especially our caucus, is a reflection of the cultural make-up of Manitoba. Also, our caucus includes MLAs from northern, rural, urban regions, and therefore reflects the cultural and geographic make-up of Manitoba.

As the recently elected MLA for Rossmere, I must note some of my predecessors of Rossmere. The Honourable Ed Schreyer, Vic Schroeder, Harold Neufeld and Vic Toews all served the people of Rossmere with their dedication and hard work. My immediate predecessor, Vic Toews, worked hard to serve the people of Rossmere as Labour minister and Justice minister. I must point out that Vic Toews and his campaign team carried out a clean election campaign, which was appreciated by the people of Rossmere. Vic Toews was very well respected by the people of Rossmere, and I must

say that he conducted himself in an honourable way throughout the election campaign.

Mr. Speaker, we all have our own style as we do our work as an MLA, and I would like to say something about the way I will serve my constituents. First, I am not going to try and communicate to the people of Rossmere just through the media. I will not be chasing photo opportunities or headlines in the daily newspapers. I will be accessible to my constituents, and I will deal with them on a person-to-person basis. During the election several constituents at the doorstep asked me if they could reach me and speak to me personally if I got elected, and I assured them that they could deal with me on a person-to-person basis. That is how I will deal with my constituents.

Rossmere constituents have reached me in several ways. Some have called me at home. Some have dropped in at the Legislative Building, while several have met me and passed on their concerns to me, you know, at the local coffee shop, at the local grocery store or at the public events. The Rossmere constituents appreciate the close ties with their MLA on an informal basis. The people of Rossmere want an MLA that is visible in the community and someone who listens, consults, co-operates and, of course, represents their interests. Image politics is not what the people want. They want a down-to-earth person who will represent them at the constituent level as well as the provincial level.

Mr. Speaker, I am quite pleased with the throne speech. Most of the issues addressed are issues that the people of Rossmere, I might say and Manitoba, spoke to me about at the doorstep in the last election. The throne speech is very specific on what the government has as its priorities and how it plans to carry out its agenda. But often a throne speech is very general and sort of fuzzy, and the real agenda is not clear and is full of rhetoric but short on clarity and ideas and agenda. The throne speech certainly addresses our commitments on health care, education, public safety, just to name a few. I could go on here and name all of them, but I will just name you a few.

* (1150)

Health care was our first priority because that was the first priority at the doorstep. I do not have to explain what is lacking in our health care system. I also do not have to explain how we are going to fix the health care system, because we are all well informed on how we will deal with the health care. We are all familiar with the hallway medicine and the long waiting lists for diagnostic tests.

Manitobans have faith and confidence in our movement when it comes to health care. Since the days of Tommy Douglas, we have been the leaders in building the health care system of Canada. Today, Manitobans have turned to our movement again to repair the health care system. We have always believed in a strong public health care system that should be there for all of us when we need it.

As I went door to door, I did not have to say too much about health care, because our party was believable. Our ideas were believable, because we are the ones that really have changed Canada in health care system.

Another priority is to build a good education system that will prepare youths for their new economy. As we all know, education is most important to a strong economy. Employers or businessmen have personally told me that a skilled workforce is what they need, and that is what is lacking. Our government is committed to double college space in Manitoba over the next five years and make post-secondary education more affordable. As I said before, our plan is well laid out in the throne speech.

Also, our government still will provide stable and predictable investment in our public schools. However, one of the most progressive ideas on education is the commitment to establish new child-parent centres in targeted schools. As we know, many families today are facing great economic stress, and the child-parent centres will prepare children for the school system. Mr. Speaker, many families need support, because often they have given up hope and life has been most difficult for them. These parent-child centres could be the answer, or part of the answer, in getting our youths going in the right direction.

I must say that I have taught at Stony Mountain penitentiary the last few years, and I see young people there, 17-18 years old. Had they been given some support earlier in their preschool or primary school, very likely we could have turned them around. I personally believe we should invest in children at a very young age, because so often we spend so much money on—excuse me, I hate to say this—sending them to jail. We spend \$50,000 a year on a 17-year-old youth in jail. Why not spend that \$50,000 earlier? I have had great experiences in the prison system. Many can be helped, can be healed, but why not spend that money up front? Mr. Speaker, I just do not see why society does not do more of that.

I will go on with another topic, Mr. Speaker, and that is poverty. Poverty in Manitoba and across Canada is growing. The gap between rich and poor is increasing. Canada is one of the richest countries in the world, and poverty is on the increase. We have an abundant supply of natural resources such as petroleum. We have trees, we have water, we have minerals, we have rich land, just to name a few, but somehow the natural wealth did not reach many families. Many people have given up hope and have accepted their poor economic situation. Now I am not trying to blame any one group for this, but as a society we must work on this. Poverty is a real challenge to all of us.

The reasons for poverty are quite complex, and there is no simple answer to eliminate poverty. But I must say, we as a society have often only dealt with the symptom of poverty and not with the root cause of the poverty. For instance, workfare sounds good, but, if you look into it with some depth, it does not deal with the causes of poverty.

There has been much talk about globalization, free trade, deregulations, privatization, making government and business more efficient. But at the same time families are feeling tremendous economic stress. Yet the question is: are these things working? That is a question that we must answer. We say we bring about change, but as far as poverty it grows. I would not necessarily want to blame any one

group for this, but this is something that we must work at.

Often both parents have to work to make a living. The cost of living is increasing. Wages often remain static. Although wages have basically remained static for working people, profits for banks have increased. I just read in the paper chief executive officers of large corporations get huge wage increases. There is some discrepancy here in our society. I realize the world is not perfect, but when poverty grows I think we have a real challenge before us. I am not saying for one minute that I personally have all the answers. That is something that we all must work at.

The point I want to make is that we must do more research on the causes of poverty. Our economic strategy must change so that we all benefit from the economy, not just a few people. We cannot just continue as we have in the last 20 years without asking some serious questions about our economic strategy. In the throne speech, child and family poverty is addressed. Our government is committed to an annual review of the minimum wage, improving housing and community safety, creating parent-child centres, increasing recreation, working with the national strategy of the federal government to reduce child poverty. Our government has an ambitious agenda to address poverty in Manitoba. We realize poverty in such a rich country as Canada is unacceptable, and we are committed to meeting the challenge.

Winnipeg Harvest and soup kitchens have grown, and we must work hard to reduce poverty. We see our economy is good. Just this morning people were saying our economy is good, the unemployment is low. I appreciate that, and I support that in many ways, but many of our children and our families remain in poverty.

Concern for the environment is also addressed in the throne speech. The security of environment is of paramount concern. The opposition to the North Dakota water project that threatens our environment is an example that we want to preserve our lakes and rivers. Premier Gary Doer has worked hard to stop the North Dakota water project that could contaminate our

rivers and lakes. There is also concern to Manitoba that our water might be exported in bulk. New legislation will be introduced to protect our water quality and to ban the bulk removal of our water. This is evidence to suggest that we take the preservation of our environment seriously.

* (1200)

Farmers in rural Manitoba are also under tremendous economic stress. They have not only faced crop failures, but the cost of planting a crop has increased while commodity prices have dropped. Also, our farmers are competing on the world market against farmers from Europe and U.S.A. who are getting cash subsidies. As a result, the family farm is threatened. However, I am pleased to note that all parties in this House are trying to get a better deal for Manitoba farmers. A strong farming community is important to all Manitobans.

I appreciate the efforts of our Premier for going to Ottawa and standing up for the farmers of this province. We must continue to seek solutions to ensure a viable future for the family farm in Manitoba, but we must enlist the help of the federal government to strengthen national programs, to bring about economic stability on the farms across the Prairies.

I would like to direct some attention to YNN. We have heard a fair bit about YNN in our Legislature. As you know, our government has sent out directives that YNN not be allowed in classrooms across Manitoba. Some members opposite are strong proponents of YNN. I would like to point out that many school divisions are not that strongly in favour of YNN. Many of the trustees are becoming lukewarm towards YNN. They feel that too much class time will be taken up and students already watch lots of TV, and this will not necessarily motivate students in their academic studies.

Class time should be used to promote literacy and numeracy. Yes, there are other forms of advertising in our schools, but not at the cost of class time. Many parents that I speak to are reluctant to go ahead with YNN. They ask this question: what is the aim of this commercial

venture? That is what many of the stakeholders are asking.

Also, this debate has drawn school administrators into the YNN debate. We must be very careful not to do this. School administrators should be running their schools and not be drawn into a political debate. They are first school administrators.

It bothers me when I see a school administrator on the front page of the local paper working for YNN. The people of Manitoba made a choice in the last election, and many people say, okay, they are ready to accept the leadership of this government. Actually, many people in my school division would like to see YNN go away quietly or die a quiet death. This political debate will not enhance education, so many trustees, administrators, teachers and parents want to get on with education, want to co-operate with the government and do not want to get dragged into the political arena. So I caution members from the opposite side to consult with the grassroots before they become too vocal on this issue.

I believe that the Speech from the Throne does address the concerns of Manitobans today. The throne speech also mentions the commitments our party made in the election. The throne speech points to a better future as we enter a new century. We must take practical steps to health care, education for our youth, protecting the family farm and other issues that concern Manitobans. We must focus on what is best for all Manitobans as we enter the new century.

Mr. Marcel Laurendeau (St. Norbert): Mr. Speaker, thank you for the opportunity to rise today and speak to the throne speech, the first throne speech by Today's NDP. Before I start, let me say congratulations to you on becoming our first elected Speaker here in the province of Manitoba. I know that you will represent us well, and I am looking forward to working with you in the future.

During the election of 1999, I had a great campaign team. I would like to thank my campaign manager, my wife Winni for the work

that she did. She was there every day from morning until night keeping me in line and that was not always easy. But this election I had two other special workers, my two daughters, Laney and Amanda. Amanda has always been there during each election starting when she was five years old, actually four years old in the first election, driving down the street in her little Jeep and a sign in the back, Vote for my Daddy, and Laney has always been there working for me, but this year she was driving her big Jeep and Vote for my Daddy. It is interesting when you have your family behind you in this endeavour to serve the people of Manitoba. So to my wife and my children, thank you for the support you have shown me since 1990. I know they have had to put up with a lot with my having been here. The sacrifices they have made I appreciate, and the sacrifices they made, they know they made on behalf of Manitobans.

You know, Mr. Speaker, we were all elected to serve the people of Manitoba. The people of Manitoba decided that we should be the official opposition, and I will do my best to fulfill that role. I would like to thank my Leader and my caucus for giving me the opportunity to serve as the Opposition House Leader. I am sure my colleagues will find me making errors every once in a while, referring to government thinking it is us, and opposition thinking it is them, but, believe me, it will only be in jest. It is an error I am sure I have heard from the other side a few times already.

I have had the opportunity since 1990 of serving with a number of the members on the other side of the House and this side of the House, and some of the new members I served with on City Council, such as the Minister of Finance (Mr. Selinger) of today. So let me say that I have enjoyed the work we have done in the past. You had a job to do when you were in opposition. We had a job to do when we were in government. I am proud of our record as government, as you will be standing up and speaking strongly in favour of the issues that you bring forward.

Mr. Speaker, let us not always have that partisan approach when we are here in the House. There are times we have to be able to set that aside and remember that we have to do what

is best for the people of Manitoba. The flood of 1997 showed us that. We worked together as a team to beat Mother Nature at her best. The river flowed but we set aside our politics and we fought it. We fought it and we won, but the battle is not over yet.

We know that there will be further waters coming in the future, and I think it is an opportunity for us to set aside our differences and challenge the federal Liberals, the federal Liberals in Ottawa, to put their money where their mouth is, because that is all they have done since they have been put into power, is talk, talk, talk, but they cannot walk. I am getting tired of that government dumping on us in the West because they can win their election up to the Ontario border, and I am sick and tired of seeing those federal Liberals hammering us in the West. It is about time they realized that we are here in the agricultural area and in the industrial area, and I think it is important that we take those federal Liberal counterparts apart at the knees, because they have taken our provinces in the West and made us second-class citizens.

What do they do for Quebec when there is a national crisis? They go in and they pay 90 percent and never a question. Never a question. Shawinigan, they showed it over and over again. We in Manitoba stood behind the people in Shawinigan and said, yes, they need our support, and the federal government did that. But when we were in danger and when we were being flooded here in Manitoba, what did the federal government do? Oh, yes, we will be there, but they never showed up. They never showed up. If you have a party and nobody shows up at the dance, it makes it very difficult.

So, Mr. Speaker, I think it is important that we take this role and work together in challenging those federal Liberals in Ottawa to take the needs of Manitobans and the rest of the western provinces seriously. Just because they only have, I think it is—I do not even know the numbers they have. It is such a small number of members that are west of the Ontario border. When they have a Manitoba caucus, I understand they usually book one of the rooms over here at the hotel, and it is a very small room. I think it only holds eight people. So it is almost as bad as the Liberal caucus here. They

hold theirs in a phone booth now. But I think it is time that we challenge them.

* (1210)

For the member for River Heights (Mr. Gerrard), I think it is important that you start representing Manitobans in a version where you are not always attacking the people who are here in the province. It is about time that you challenge your counterparts in that federal Liberal government to stand up for what they have said in the past. They have not come through.

Captain Lloyd and his crew have forgotten who we are. Captain Lloyd, when the fires in the city were burning in the north end, said nothing, but they lit a fire on Corydon Avenue, and what did Captain Lloyd say? Captain Lloyd went off the deep end. Captain Lloyd said now we have got to do something. Why is it that Captain Lloyd never seems to come to the party unless it is something that affects him and him personally? You know, he has been elected too long when he starts representing himself and not the people of this province. It is time Captain Lloyd be brought to the table to say deal with the issues of Manitoba and the rest of western Canada and leave your counterparts in Ottawa to defend their position. But no, he is too interested in going into the foreign areas and to China and to Israel and visiting his friends and telling nice stories, but fight for Manitoba, Captain Lloyd. It is about time you stand up for Manitoba.

It is about time the Leader of the Liberal Party (Mr. Gerrard) realizes that this side of the House is opposition. That side of the House is government. That side. Today's NDP is government. So, when he is putting forward his questions and his statements, he should not be challenging this side. He should be challenging the other side of the House, the government side, because that is who will make the difference. So, as you are critiquing them and bringing forward your resolutions, bring them forward to make sure that they are working for the betterment of our province. I am doing that.

An Honourable Member: Mr. Speaker, Marcel.

Mr. Laurendeau: He is not listening anyway.

So, through you, Mr. Speaker, as the honourable member for Dauphin (Mr. Struthers) has brought to my attention, I have had the opportunity of being here since 1990. I have seen some good times; I have seen some bad times. But one thing I have seen in my time is four balanced budgets that our government brought forward when we were in government. So I am proud of our record in government. I am proud of what we accomplished.

But I am not proud when I hear the government of today bringing forward a review and calling it an audit. I think it is blasphemy for anybody to be challenging a firm who clearly stated that it was a review and not an audit and calling it an audit. That is misleading the people of Manitoba, Mr. Speaker, and I think that is an injustice. I think that is an injustice that should be corrected by our First Minister (Mr. Doer). He should stand up and apologize to Manitobans for misleading them into believing that his financial review, his Christmas wish list was exactly that, a wish list put forward by bureaucrats.

Mr. Speaker, I would be interested in having some questions answered on what exactly was in that review. What were those expenditures? I know that when we committed as a government to take care of the farmers in the west, that was money that we had allocated out of the rainy-day fund. Because that was a one-time expense that was unforeseen.

But what has this government chosen to do? I believe, from what I am hearing, they have chosen to put that into the budget of this year. Now, the numbers that I am hearing are not the numbers that I had from when we were in government that are in this review. I would like to see the real numbers in this report. I would like to see the actual numbers that they are using in their Christmas wish list. I think it is important that Manitobans know.

It is important that this government realize that they have to get on and govern. They are no longer in opposition. They have to see that the needs of Manitobans are met, and one of those needs is going to be to see that we have a

balanced budget. They are our government now. As in any business, if you are seeing yourself running into a deficit position because of overspending in one area, you might have to make some corrections. Mr. Speaker, that is something we did as a government. When we saw that we had overexposed ourselves in some areas, we looked for savings. Those savings were found. They were found so that we could balance our budgets each and every year, four years in a row.

So, Mr. Speaker, I want to see vision. I want to see vision from the government of today. Right now, the vision that I have seen from them is thinner than the hair on my head, and that is thin. So I only hope that they have some vision, because within the throne speech, I did not see that vision. I was hoping to see a vision and drive. I mean, 12 years in opposition, I thought they would have brought forward some vision after 12 years of being in opposition. They spoke of it for 12 years, but they seem to fall off the track when they finally got their hand in the golden ring.

I am looking forward to seeing the government bring forward some of their positive initiatives that they spoke of when they were in opposition. I want to see that they remember that it is a balanced budget legislation. When I hear them talking about making amendments to balanced budget legislation, I find that is tricky. Are they looking at balanced budget legislations like some of the other NDP provinces have today? Not real balanced budget legislation?

We have today one of the best balanced budget legislations in probably North America. People all over are looking at our example. So, Mr. Speaker—[interjection] You know, the honourable member for Dauphin (Mr. Struthers) says it is too bad you did not follow it.

An Honourable Member: Dauphin-Roblin.

Mr. Laurendeau: Dauphin-Roblin. I will get used to it. You know it is interesting, because I believe we did follow it. If we were elected today, we would have a balanced budget by the end of this term because we would have seen to it. Now, will this member say that his ministers will take a reduction in salary if they do not have

a balanced budget? Because we would have had to. We would have had to. If we had not balanced this budget, we would have had to take it. We would have had no choice.

I only hope that you have the strength to recommend to your ministers if they cannot bring in a balanced budget that they take a reduction of 20 percent in their salaries, as we would have had to. But we would not have taken it, because we would have balanced the budget. That is the difference. The budget would have been balanced, because we could do the management of this so-called crisis that you are bringing forward, your Christmas wish list.

You know, the numbers are not real. The people of Manitoba will not buy them, and it is not a very—[interjection] Oh, I cannot use that word. It is not very accurate of you to be putting words into the mouths of a very well-respected accounting firm in this province. For you to be going forward and saying this is an audit, for them, Mr. Speaker, for that government to be putting words into the mouth of a credible firm in this province is shameful. It was not an audit. It was a review, a review of a Christmas wish list put together by a new government, put together by a transition team of old NDP.

Who were they on this transition team? [interjection] Carmen Neufeld. Oh, let us talk about Carmen. I read a story about Carmen that she was paid off \$4,000 for running your campaign; \$4,000 she got. I mean, could you not have at least waited till you were sworn in before you started putting your patronage appointments together?

An Honourable Member: That was just a one-evening show.

Mr. Laurendeau: A one-evening show, \$4,000. I would like to know, did they tender it out? Did they actually tell Carmen maybe earlier, why do you not start planning for it just in case we win? Do you think they might have done that? You know, maybe three months ahead said, Carmen, I think we are going to win. Let us get this ready. Let us have a good party, and do not forget to invite all our supporters, because we are going to be government. We are going to bring all our supporters in for that little

hot wine and cheese, and we are going to have some good times.

You know, it is interesting. I understand the patronage side of it. I understand us bringing forward the patronage side and appointing, but at least you should wait till you are sworn in. [interjection] I think Carmen was probably at the dinner. So it is interesting when we come down the line. Today's NDP is the old NDP. They are still taking advice from the transition team. It has not changed.

I only hope that they will take advice from the honourable member for Wolseley (Ms. Friesen). I know that her advice is usually good advice to follow. I have always respected the member for Wolseley for her views on the historic values she places in the city of Winnipeg, and this is one member that when she speaks I listen because I trust in what she says.

* (1220)

So I have had an opportunity now since 1990 to serve here in the Legislature with a number of you. We have got some of our colleagues who are no longer here from both sides of the House, and they will be missed both for their tenacity and their vigour in debate. But we have still got some of our senior people here in the House, and I am looking forward to working with one of the people who advises me a lot, and that is the dean of the Legislature, the member for Lakeside (Mr. Enns) who has been here since '66.

Let me say that any advice he gives is usually very wise advice. He does not usually lead me astray—I mean, not usually. I am looking forward to working with the new members, the new member for Fort Garry (Mrs. Smith), the new member for Fort Whyte (Mr. Loewen), Arthur-Virden (Mr. Maguire), and we have one more, Assiniboia (Mr. Rondeau). He is here. Assiniboia is here. We lost that one-landslide. And the member for Springfield (Mr. Schuler).

You know, it is interesting because the honourable member during his speech called himself "landslide," I do believe. I know the feeling. I did not win by only three votes the first time, but my first election was 21 votes. So

I still remember it well. But just to let you know, it went from 21 votes to 120 votes to 151 to 500-and-something to 700. So you do gain each time, so you have just got to keep on trying, they say.

An Honourable Member: Sherwood Forest.

Mr. Laurendeau: Sherwood Forest did a good chunk then. The honourable Minister of Finance (Mr. Selinger) reminds me of one of our projects we worked on when we were on City Council together. It was an interesting one. It was a land development at the end of St. Pierre Street. The developer wanted to put in a number of homes. We came up with a compromise, and as a city we bought the property up.

It did not cost us anything because we sold the four front lots off to regain the value of what we put into the park. I would like to thank the Minister of Finance for the help he gave me on that when we were on council. It goes back a long time ago, 10 years, but we worked in co-operation to make sure it happened. I think that is where we have to make sure we do not make those mistakes.

Let us work together for the people of Manitoba, and let us bring forward legislation that works for the best and the betterment of the province, and let us take on an enemy of the West, an enemy who has not supported us, an enemy who has sunk our agricultural diversification programs down because they do not seem to stand behind us, who have not stood behind us when we were in trouble and in need, who had come down for the photo op with a picture with a sandbag, and that is the federal Liberal government, the enemy of this province, the federal Liberal government who cannot seem to stand up and believe that we are somebody here in the West.

I want to see us stand up together and challenge them. So thank you very much for this opportunity, Mr. Speaker, and I am looking forward to many other interesting debates here in the House.

Mr. Stan Struthers (Dauphin-Roblin): I want to take a few minutes to welcome everybody back to the Legislature. Starting with you, Mr.

Speaker, I want to congratulate you on your achievement of making a little bit of history in our province by becoming the first Speaker to be elected to this House. I know that both sides of the House have a great deal of respect for your abilities including your ability to mediate and get us all to get along in a much better way than perhaps sometimes in the past.

Mr. Speaker, I also want to include the Deputy Speaker, the MLA for Wellington (Mr. Santos), in my congratulations. I know that the representative for Wellington has been in this House a number of years. He is well apprised of the traditions, the customs and also the rules and will hold our feet to the fire when it comes to some of the debates that we get into from time to time here in the Legislature.

I also want to pay particular respect to Mr. Binx Remnant, the Clerk of our House, who will be leaving us. I think everybody on both sides of the House understands the importance that the Clerk has been to the proceedings here, not just in the Legislature, but in the committee work that we do, the way in which the Clerk has very graciously and diplomatically kept us on the straight and narrow, has given us much valuable advice in the operation of the House here. I want to say that I will miss the Clerk and wish him all the best as he moves on.

Mr. Speaker, I also want to recognize the important role and welcome back the legislative staff that sits at the tables and keeps their eyes on us as well and helps us out every time we need advice on moving legislation forward. I must say that we would be a lot slower moving body of representatives if we did not have the capable people sitting at the tables in the middle of this legislative Chamber and in the committees that we deal with legislation in.

Also included are the Sergeant-at-Arms and his assistant for their work in the providing of legislation and decorum and helping us in our ability to serve our representatives.

Also, Mr. Speaker, I want to pay some tribute as well and welcome back the folks who work in Hansard and provide us with accurate copy of what we say in this House and have it appear on our desks the next day. More often

than not they really come in handy when we try to prove what each other has said in this House. I am very grateful for the job that they do as well.

Also, Mr. Speaker, I want to welcome the pages to the House and point out the value of their services in assisting in forming legislation that is important to the people of Manitoba. I am hoping that the pages have a good experience while they work here at the Legislature, and I am hoping that the experience they draw is a valuable one. I know that their services to us are valuable. I think all members of the House recognize and understand that. I want to say welcome to the class of 1999.

It was four years ago when, as part of the class of 1995, I sat in the House and I think put the same brave face on while I saw everything

going on around me. I hope I did as good a job four years ago as some of the class of 1999 are doing as projecting an image of confidence. Sometimes I look around at some of the class of 1999 and I think they have been here awhile. They have been performing so well in asking and answering questions and seeming to deal with the hullabaloo that sometimes occurs in the Legislative Building. It seems to me they are doing it with a great amount of ease.

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. When this debate is again before the House, the honourable member for Dauphin-Roblin (Mr. Struthers) will have 36 minutes remaining.

The hour being 12:30 p.m., this House is adjourned and stands adjourned until 1:30 p.m. Monday.

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Friday, December 3, 1999

CONTENTS

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS	Members' Statements
Tabling of Reports	Violence Against Women Dacquay 248
Annual Report, 1998-99, Department of Highways and Transportation Ashton 239	Farm Income Crisis Resolution Nevakshonoff 248
Introduction of Bills	BioSearch International Helwer 248
Bill 3—The Retail Businesses Holiday Closing Amendment Act 239	NDP Government Santos 249
Oral Questions	Manitoba Mennonite History Jim Penner 249
Employment Creation Stefanson; Selinger 239	ORDERS OF THE DAY
Personal Income Taxes Stefanson; Selinger 240	Second Readings
Minister of Conservation Filmon; Lathlin 241 Filmon; Doer 242	Bill 3—The Retail Businesses Holiday Closing Amendment Act Barrett 250 Filmon 251
Aboriginal Gaming Reimer; Robinson 242 Fauschou; Lemieux 243 Jack Penner; Lemieux 244	Throne Speech Debate (Fourth Day of Debate)
Post-Secondary Education Gerrard; Caldwell; Doer 245	Gerrard 252 Schellenberg 257 Laurendeau 261 Struthers 265
Flood-Proofing Programs Pitura; Doer 245 Pitura; Lathlin 246	Presenting Reports by Standing and Special Committees
Health Care Facilities Mitchelson; Chomiak 247	(First Report)
	Committee on Establishing the Composition of the Standing Committees Ashton 257