



Second Session - Thirty-Seventh Legislature

of the

Legislative Assembly of Manitoba

**DEBATES
and
PROCEEDINGS**

**Official Report
(Hansard)**

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The Honourable George Hickes
Speaker*



MANITOBA LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
Thirty-Seventh Legislature

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

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Wednesday, December 6, 2000

The House met at 1:30 p.m.

PRAYERS

Speaker's Statement

Resignations

Mr. Speaker: I have a statement for the House.

I must inform the House that Eric Stefanson, the honourable Member for Kirkfield Park, has resigned his seat in the House effective September 7, 2000, and that Gary Filmon, the honourable Member for Tuxedo, has resigned his seat in the House effective September 18, 2000.

I am therefore tabling their resignations and my letters to the Lieutenant-Governor-in-Council advising of the vacancies thus created in the membership of the House.

Introduction of New Members

Mr. Speaker: I am pleased to inform the Assembly that the Clerk of the Legislative Assembly has received from the Chief Electoral Officer a letter indicating the election of Stuart Murray as member for the constituency of Kirkfield Park. I hereby table the Notice of the Return of the member elected.

Mrs. Bonnie Mitchelson (River East): Mr. Speaker, I have the honour to present to you Stuart Murray, member for the constituency of Kirkfield Park, who has taken the oath and signed the roll and now claims the right to take his seat.

Mr. Speaker: On behalf of all honourable members, I wish to welcome you to the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba and to wish you well in your parliamentary career.

I wish to inform the House that I will be recognizing the honourable Member for

Kirkfield Park as the Leader of the Official Opposition.

I am also pleased to inform the Assembly that the Clerk of the Legislative Assembly has received from the Chief Electoral Officer a letter indicating the election of Heather Stefanson as member for the constituency of Tuxedo. I hereby table the Notice of the Return of the member elected.

*(13:35)

Mr. Stuart Murray (Leader of the Official Opposition): Mr. Speaker, I have the honour to present to you Heather Stefanson, member for the constituency of Tuxedo, who has taken the oath and signed the roll and now claims the right to take her seat.

Mr. Speaker: On behalf of all honourable members, I wish to welcome you to the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba and wish you well in your parliamentary career.

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

MINISTERIAL STATEMENTS

National Day of Remembrance Respecting Violence Against Women

Hon. Diane McGifford (Minister responsible for the Status of Women): Mr. Speaker, I have a statement for the House.

I rise today to remind the House that on December 6, 1989 in Montréal at École Polytechnique 14 women were murdered and 13 women seriously injured. This crime committed by a man, a misogynist, has in Canada come to symbolize violence against women, the many faces of violence against women, domestic violence, sexual assault, abuse, the entire gambit.

Each year on this day Canadians remember the victims in Montréal and through them

remember women closer to home who have been murdered or raped or assaulted or beaten, victims of male violence against women. Each year on this day women remember that while in Canada the most dangerous place for a woman to be is in her home, the street is not very safe either, dates can be risky, and the workplace has its hazards.

We have remembered December 6, 1989 for 11 years now, and there seems to be little new to say. We cannot say the violence has stopped, though it appears to have decreased slightly, but it keeps happening. This year 10 Manitoba women were murdered and countless more beaten and hurt, disrespected and treated as if they had no rights to personal boundaries and safety, let alone dignity and happiness.

One night on the radio I heard a program which attempted to encapsulate a single night's violence against women from St. John's to Victoria, a single night in Canada. The crimes were horrific. The roster was numerically immense and included female children and grown women of all ages, but the worst part for me was my growing realization that the perpetrators regarded the women they battered as objects, not as autonomous human beings with personal lives and personal aspirations. This violence was about ownership and control, subjugation and humiliation.

As members of the Legislature responsible for health and well-being, education and justice, we need to understand the politics of violence. We need to understand how violence and the threat of violence dominate and control all women's lives, even the most privileged. Remember that the women at École Polytechnique, as university students, as women engineers, were privileged, and now 14 of them are dead.

As legislators, we need to be aware of our duty to work for change and humbly aware that we cannot do this work alone. Our partners are there in the community at women's service agencies, in our child-care centres, schools and colleges, in our community centres and churches, in libraries, the labour movement and workplaces, in correctional facilities, and these are only examples. Wherever people meet and

work in the interests of humanity, fairness, justice and knowledge, we do have allies. To end violence against women, we need to change the world. As a society, we have the resources to do this, and we all lament that we have not yet completed the work.

* (13:40)

Today we remember the women murdered in Montréal and their families and in remembrance recommit ourselves to work for change. I think each of us can best honour the memories of these 14 dead women and those of murdered Manitoba women like, for example, Helen Betty Osborne. Each of us would most honour the lives of our mothers, daughters, sisters, friends, whether alive or dead, by determining to complete our work and so offering women liberation from the violence that destroys some lives and degrades all lives.

Mrs. Louise Dacquay (Seine River): Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank the Minister responsible for the Status of Women for her statement. I know that all members of this House take the issue of violence very seriously and have helped work toward trying to create a safer environment for all citizens.

Having attended this morning's sunrise breakfast and memorial service with members from both sides of this House, I welcome this opportunity to put a few words on the record about the Montréal massacre and also Canada's Day of Remembrance, an action on violence against women.

The murder of 14 women at the École Polytechnique in Montréal on December 6, 1989 was a tragic incident. It is difficult to believe that 11 years have passed since this sad chapter was added to Canadian history. These young women had built dreams, were ambitious and talented, and, regretfully, through no fault of their own, these young women were not allowed to fulfil their dreams. We must reinforce the message that any type of abuse is unacceptable whether it is physical, mental, emotional, sexual or financial. This type of behaviour cannot and must not be tolerated in a society which purports itself to be caring and gentle.

It is painful to remember the Montréal massacre, but we must learn from it. We hope and pray that it will never be repeated, but sadly violence against women, children and men continues on a daily basis across Canada and around the world. I cannot begin to imagine how difficult it must be for the friends and families of the victims of the Montréal massacre to cope with this senseless violence. If we can take one thing away from this horrible event it is that we must work collectively to stop all forms of violence in society. As we all know too well, abuse and violence affect everyone regardless of age, gender, race, religion or socio-economic group. It takes many forms.

* (13:45)

I was particularly moved by this year's ceremony. I would like to thank the staff and the board of the Manitoba Women's Advisory Council, including Chairperson Kim Clare, council members Mae Louise Campbell and Gisèle Barnabé for organizing and participating in such an event. I would also like to thank Marielle Audet for providing the touching music that accompanied the event.

I would like to encourage all my colleagues in this House to set aside time not only today but also in the days, months and years to come to reflect upon the issue of violence and how it affects our society. Together we can try to find solutions to address this most abhorrent issue and to make our society one that is more tolerant of each other's differences. Together we can build a society that is safer for all.

Mr. Speaker, may I please request that all members of this House stand to observe a one-minute silence.

Mr. Speaker: All members stand please.

A moment of silence was observed.

Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights): I ask leave to say a few words on the minister's statement.

Mr. Speaker: Does the honourable member have leave? [*Agreed*]

Mr. Gerrard: Over a century and a third now we have built in Canada a society which is remarkable for a number of things. One of these is that the incidence of violent crimes in our country is much less than the incidence in the United States just south of our border.

The events of 11 years ago, the Montréal massacre, were a reminder that we still have a ways to go to achieve the kind of society that I think we would all like, where we can reduce further, try even to eliminate violent crimes, and particularly those against women.

So I add my comments, as we remember today, starting with the sunrise ceremony and the breakfast which I also attended, the events of 11 years ago and the dedication of my party as well as the others toward this goal. Thank you.

International Joint Commission 1997 Flooding Report

Hon. Gary Doer (Premier): I have a statement for the House.

The International Joint Commission today released a report to the governments of Canada and the United States that is of great significance to the people of the Red River Valley. It contains the findings of the commission from its investigation into the 1997 flooding of the Red River Valley. The IJC has concluded that the valley is at risk from flood events equal or greater than '97 within our lifetimes. They have concluded that the city of Winnipeg, with its high density of population and property, is particularly vulnerable. In 1997, we were very fortunate that heavy rains and high winds did not occur and we were able to contain the flood waters.

* (13:50)

In the IJC's 1999 draft report and in public meetings following the report in the year 2000, there was recognition that the existing floodway structure was not sufficient to deal with the floods greater than the magnitude of 1997. The commission has clearly identified the needs for increased flood protection for Winnipeg and has identified three main options for doing this. Each of these options would cost hundreds of millions

of dollars, and yet, because they would avert literally billions of dollars of damage they are still cost-effective. Even at a time of significant pressure on government budgets at all levels we cannot shrink from this challenge. We must partner with our federal and local governments to find the means to undertake this massive but essential work. Just as was done at the time of Duff Roblin, when the floodway was built over a 10-year period of time, we must think over a longer-term horizon. We must be innovative and creative in seeking different ways to finance this work, but this work must be done.

The commission concluded that any projects undertaken must have the consensus of all those affected in the valley. They said that actions taken in one part of the valley must not adversely impact another. We fully support that conclusion and look forward to hearing the views of all Red River Valley residents on the recommendations in the IJC report during their meetings in January, 2001. The IJC report also concluded that we must work co-operatively on a binational level to protect our Red River Valley communities.

I am pleased that as a first step we have signed a memorandum of understanding with the governors of North Dakota and Minnesota to meet regularly on flood prevention and protection issues. The first meeting will take place here in Winnipeg.

As all our communities work together, we will be making a strong case to our federal government that the Red River Valley is in a unique situation as compared with the rest of Canada. This is a location that is particularly vulnerable to flooding and to the effects of climate change events. We know that a strong partnership with the federal government is absolutely necessary to ensuring future flood protection.

I am pleased to say a number of recommendations of the commission, such as improving our monitoring and forecasting networks, have already been acted upon. We have also done a great deal of work through our federal-provincial agreements to protect individual homes, businesses and entire communities.

We have undertaken design work that will allow us to increase the capacity of the floodway entrance next spring. We have also initiated a more detailed examination of the three options outlined by the IJC for significantly increasing flood protection for Winnipeg. The unprecedented heavy rains this fall that caused flooding in the southeastern region have heightened our preparedness for next spring. That is not to say a flood will occur, but we must be ready. As a result, we are increasing our vigilance, issuing earlier and more frequent forecasts than has usually been the case. Our preparedness systems are being reviewed and will be tested early in the new year in partnership with local governments and the federal government. We will also be involving our American neighbours in this exercise. We will continue to keep the House and the people of Manitoba informed about flood issues over the coming months as we move towards the spring.

Mr. Frank Pitura (Morris): I thank the First Minister for the ministerial statement. I believe that the IJC having put together the task force to review measures in terms of floodproofing the entire Red River Valley basin is timely. It is a commissioned report that when we were in government we proceeded to pursue with the federal government to look at the entire Red River Valley basin for future floodproofing.

The report and its recommendations are certainly interesting. Some of the recommendations that they have brought forward, in particular the option between investing a substantial amount of money in the Red River Floodway or in fact building a dam across the Red River just south of Ste. Agathe, of course many residents in the Red River Valley are very, very concerned about the proposed dam to be going across the Red River at Ste. Agathe as one of the proposals as it would adversely affect them in times of high water.

Of course, one of the comments we made to the IJC when they were going through their preliminary process of the study was to certainly take a look and try to broaden their scope to look at water management in the entire Red River Valley basin rather than floodproofing because we felt strongly that it went hand in hand, and if

in any kind of major flood event we could reduce the peak through water management then we would certainly avert many of the floods that have occurred in the Red River Valley in the past.

* (13:55)

So we welcome the release of the report, and we will certainly be asking the Government from time to time as to what actions will be taken because we know that the action should be immediate. We would like to see the Government take immediate action and persuade the federal government to be a partner in that. So we will be pursuing that very diligently in our questioning, Mr. Speaker. Thank you.

Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights): I ask for leave to say a few words on the Premier's statement.

Mr. Speaker: Does the Member for River Heights have leave? *[Agreed]*

Mr. Gerrard: Mr. Speaker, I rise to commit my party to work to help build a consensus that will be necessary and to work together with the other parties to mount the effort which is important to protect the city of Winnipeg from future flood events.

I am pleased that the Premier (Mr. Doer) has recognized in his statement that the climate change, with the increased global temperatures, is a significant factor potentially in increasing wet weather and increasing the threat, a point that I have made on several occasions in this House during the last year.

I would hope that the Premier in pursuing this area of flooding, would also take up a resolution, which I have put forward, as one of the two which suggests that there be an all-party task force looking at compensation for flood victims wherever they may have occurred, because there were some things that occurred both in '97 and '99 which I think all of us would like to see improved. Thank you.

TABLING OF REPORTS

Mr. Speaker: I am pleased to table the Annual Report of the Office of the Children's Advocate for the period April 1, 1999 to March 31, 2000.

I am also pleased to table the Annual Report of the Chief Electoral Officer for 1999 which also encompasses the report of the conduct of the 37th Provincial General Election, and which also contains the annual reports on The Elections Act and The Elections Finances Act.

House Business

Hon. Gord Mackintosh (Government House Leader): Mr. Speaker, I am seeking the cooperation of the House in order to allow five government bills to be brought forward for first reading today, even though the bills are not yet on the notice paper or the Order Paper.

The bills in question are Bill 2, The Employment Standards Code Amendment Act; Bill 3, The Civil Service Superannuation Amendment Act; Bill 4, The Manitoba Employee Ownership Fund Corporation Amendment Act; Bill 5, The Helen Betty Osborne Memorial Foundation Act; and Bill 6, The Pension Benefits Amendment Act. The reason for expediting these bills is to allow a timely consideration of the legislation during the abbreviated December sitting of the House.

I would therefore ask, Mr. Speaker, if you could canvass the House to determine if there is leave to proceed with the first reading of these bills today.

Mr. Speaker: Is there leave to proceed with the first reading of these bills today? *[Agreed]*

* (14:00)

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

Bill 5—The Helen Betty Osborne Memorial Foundation Act

Hon. Gord Mackintosh (Government House Leader): Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the Minister of Aboriginal and Northern Affairs (Mr. Robinson), that leave be given to introduce Bill 5, The Helen Betty Osborne Memorial Foundation Act; Loi sur la Fondation commémorative Helen Betty Osborne, and that the same be now received and read a first time.

His Honour the Lieutenant-Governor, having been advised of the contents of this bill, recommends it to the House. I will table that message.

Motion presented.

Mr. Mackintosh: On this National Day of Remembrance of women victimized by violence, this bill recognizes an ultimate, indeed most tragic act of sexism and racism, the murder of Helen Betty Osborne, as well as the elements of the justice system that failed Betty, and commemorates her life. It establishes a scholarship fund for chosen Aboriginal students studying to be teachers, something that Helen Betty Osborne had as a dream. This follows our apology to the Osborne family, some of whom join us in the gallery today, and is part of a necessary healing to assist in bringing closure to this tragedy.

Motion agreed to.

Bill 4—The Manitoba Employee Ownership Fund Corporation Amendment Act

Hon. MaryAnn Mihychuk (Minister of Industry, Trade and Mines): I move, seconded by the honourable Minister of Consumer and Corporate Affairs (Mr. Lemieux), that leave be given to introduce Bill 4, The Manitoba Employee Ownership Fund Corporation Amendment Act (Loi modifiant la Loi constituant en corporation le Fonds de participation des travailleurs du Manitoba), and that the same now be received and read a first time

Motion presented.

Ms. Mihychuk: This bill repeals the provision of The Manitoba Employee Ownership Fund Corporation Act that prohibits a person whose shares have been redeemed by the Crocus Investment Fund from acquiring more shares within the next two years.

Motion agreed to.

Bill 3—The Civil Service Superannuation Amendment Act

Hon. Becky Barrett (Minister responsible for the Civil Service): I move, seconded by the Minister of Agriculture and Food (Ms. Wowchuk), that leave be given to introduce Bill 3, The Civil Service Superannuation Amendment Act (Loi modifiant la Loi sur la pension de la fonction publique), and that the same be now received and read a first time.

His Honour the Lieutenant-Governor, having been advised of the contents of this bill, recommends it to the House. I will table his report.

Motion presented.

Ms. Barrett: Mr. Speaker, this bill will allow increased employee contribution rates, change the pension formula to increase pension benefits payable, enable employees to purchase at full actuarial cost periods of service not otherwise pensionable, enable employees to purchase on a cost-shared basis with the employer a service related to maternity leave and enable the Civil Service Superannuation Board to administer pension plans and other benefits for any employer.

Motion agreed to.

Bill 6—The Pension Benefits Amendment Act

Hon. Becky Barrett (Minister responsible for the Civil Service): I move, seconded by the Minister responsible for Intergovernmental Affairs (Ms. Friesen), that leave be given to introduce Bill 6, The Pension Benefits Amendment Act (Loi modifiant la Loi sur les prestations de pension), and that the same be now received and read a first time.

Motion presented.

Ms. Barrett: This bill proposes to amend The Pension Benefits Act to reflect the modern reality of the provision of pension benefits under pension plans while ensuring that member benefits continue to be protected. As in every other province, the act will continue to provide

that a member will never provide more than 50 percent of the value of their benefit.

Motion agreed to.

**Bill 2—The Employment Standards Code
Amendment Act**

Hon. Becky Barrett (Minister of Labour): Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the Minister of Culture, Heritage and Tourism (Ms. McGifford), that leave be given to introduce Bill 2, The Employment Standards Code Amendment Act (Loi modifiant le Code des normes d'emploi), and that the same be now received and read a first time.

His Honour the Lieutenant-Governor, having been advised of the contents of this bill, recommends it to the House. I will table his recommendation.

Motion presented.

Ms. Barrett: This bill will increase an employee's entitlement to unpaid parental leave from 17 to 37 weeks to enable Manitoba workers to take full advantage of recent changes to federal Employment Insurance legislation.

Motion agreed to.

Introduction of Guests

Mr. Speaker: Prior to Oral Questions, I would like to draw the attention of all honourable members to the public gallery where we have from Daniel MacIntyre Collegiate, 19 Grade 11 students under the direction of Ms. Connie Baker. This school is located in the constituency of the honourable Minister of Industry, Trade and Mines (Ms. Mihychuk).

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

Also seated in the public gallery from the University of Winnipeg English as a Second Language Program we have 12 students under the direction of Ms. Shannon MacFarlane. This school is located in the constituency of the honourable Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs (Ms. Friesen).

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

I would also like to draw the attention of all honourable members to the loge to my right where we have with us today Mr. Binx Remnant, the former Clerk of the Manitoba Legislative Assembly.

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

I would like to draw members' attention to the Speaker's Gallery where the six individuals who were appointed to the Manitoba Legislative Internship Program for the 2000-2001 year are seated. In accordance with established practice, three interns were assigned to the Government caucus and three to the Official Opposition caucus. Their term of employment is twelve months. They have been performing a variety of research and other tasks for private members. These interns commenced their assignments in September and will complete them in August.

They are, working with the Government caucus, Mr. Vincent Barletta of Brandon University; Ms. Sarah Freund of Brandon University; and Mr. Colin Lemoine of Collège Universitaire de Saint-Boniface.

Working with the caucus of the Official Opposition, Mr. Jürgen Derrer of Brandon University; Ms. Bonnie Hiltz of the University of North Dakota; Ms. Erin Melrose of the University of Western Ontario. Copies of their biographies have been distributed to members.

I would like to take this opportunity on behalf of all members to congratulate them on appointment to the program and to hope that they will have a very interesting and successful year.

* (14:10)

ORAL QUESTION PERIOD

**Health Care System
NDP Election Promises**

Mr. Stuart Murray (Leader of the Official Opposition): Mr. Speaker, I would like to say

how much an honour it is to stand before colleagues on this side and also on that side of the House to have the opportunity to represent the wonderful constituents of Kirkfield Park. It is indeed an honour to be in this House.

I believe I would also like to take a minute to welcome our colleague from Tuxedo. I think she also agrees that this is a tremendous honour to stand before Manitobans and enter into a debate that I believe will shape this province and make it a better place to live.

I am also delighted that members opposite have been sending me letters of congratulation and telephone calls, and I appreciate that very much. It is very generous of them, and I think, in the spirit of co-operation, there are things that we can do. Undoubtedly, as we go through this process, there will be times when we will disagree; I think that makes for good debate, Mr. Speaker.

My first question is for the First Minister. During the election campaign this Premier promised Manitobans that by spending \$15 million he was going to end hallway medicine and fix health care in six months. In the world of health care, that is not a lot of money, but he made it sound simple. He said it was achievable and realistic, and he guaranteed to Manitobans that he had a plan to accomplish it.

While the Premier likes to believe that he has kept his promise, after 14 months it is clear that many waiting lists have grown longer, the nursing shortage has almost doubled, and patients still are lying in hospital hallways. It appears the Premier does not want to talk about health care any more. In fact that was most noticeable when one reviewed his Government's Throne Speech that completely eliminated health care as a priority for his Government.

My question to the Premier is: Will he now admit that his promises made during the last election were irresponsible and unachievable and that is why they have been completely eliminated in his priority for his Government?

Hon. Gary Doer (Premier): I would like to congratulate the Member for Kirkfield Park and the Member for Tuxedo (Mrs. Stefanson) on

their elections and welcome them formally to the Legislative Chamber of Manitoba.

I think there were about 17 questions in the matter posed by the member opposite, and I will try to deal with some of the matters raised from the member opposite. I think no one said it better yesterday than a person who is working with people on the front lines every day. Maureen Hancharyk made the statement on behalf of nurses that she understood the challenges for a new government. She understood the challenges of a new government having to repair all the breakdown and cutbacks and reductions in service in health care that had been regrettably implemented over the last 10 years.

Mr. Speaker, we have systematically worked on the plan that we announced on health care in the election campaign. Every day we receive recognition from independent bodies about the success. Just this last weekend in Toronto it was recognized that Manitoba's palliative care, in announcements made by our Minister of Health (Mr. Chomiak) recently, last spring, to improve palliative care, are the best programs in Canada bar none.

Unlike members opposite who promised in the '93 Speech from the Throne, the '94 Speech from the Throne, the '97 Speech from the Throne, the '98 Speech from the Throne to have a prostate cancer strategy in place and action, when we came into office, they in fact had frozen the investments for a new prostate cancer strategy.

I was pleased last week not only did our Minister of Health announce a further innovation with brachytherapy here in Manitoba for the first time ever, but that builds upon the prostate cancer announcements that we have kept with our investments in our Budget that was tabled by the minister last year.

We have looked from 1988 to—[interjection] Excuse me? From 1988 to 1999—[interjection] Perhaps the new leader can get control of the caucus, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Murray: Mr. Speaker, I appreciate this is a very sensitive issue for the Premier because he was elected on a mandate, frankly, to end

hallway medicine and fix health care, and he has failed to do that. I remind that these were his commitments. Those were his words to end hallway medicine in six months, and that is what he promised the people of Manitoba. Now they are being swept under the rug, and that was so demonstrated in the complete avoidance in discussion or comments of health care in the Throne Speech. If the Premier will not admit his promises were irresponsible, perhaps he may want to talk to the Minister of Finance (Mr. Selinger) who said in September that they were indeed irresponsible, and I quote: "Selinger drops bomb, admits hallway health promise irresponsible."

Will the Premier now admit that he misled Manitobans during the election campaign, and will he now apologize to them for making such irresponsible and unachievable promises?

Mr. Speaker: Prior to recognizing the First Minister, I would just like to remind all honourable members when referring to other members to do so by constituency or ministers by their title.

Mr. Doer: Mr. Speaker, an independent review of all the action of all the governments in Canada in terms of success in reducing the systematic way in which patients are treated day after day in the hallway has identified this Minister of Health and this Government as having the most effective means of reducing the number of patients in hallways in the last year. When we look at the number of patients in the hallways in November of 1998 and look at what happened in November of '99 and then look what has happened in November of 2000, we see a dramatic and systematic drop in the number of patients in hallways. We see a culture in health care now where it is no longer acceptable as a management strategy to have patients staying in hallways day after day after day without a plan in place for families and patients.

Mr. Speaker, I had the opportunity over the weekend, and it is in the Speech from the Throne, to read the Sinclair inquiry. I am sure the member opposite has read the report. I would challenge him to look at that report if he has not read it already, because those of us who had the responsibility to meet with parents and families

of those children—and then I had the opportunity over the weekend to read that report, and the fact that the families did not get notified of what the risks were, the fact that the anesthetists and the cardiac surgeons were not communicating, the fact that nurses were not being listened to partly due to the reorganization and the consultation process put in by Connie Curran by members opposite. But the number of cutbacks and what the results were, we have a long way to go and we will keep travelling that road.

* (14:20)

But I know that this Minister of Health (Mr. Chomiak) and this Government day after day, whether it is retraining more of our young people to become nurses, whether it is reducing the number of patients year over year in the hallways—day after day after day our system is being rebuilt, and Manitobans are getting a better health care system than they did before, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Murray: I am delighted to hear that there was an independent review. That is great news, Mr. Speaker, I gather, but I can tell you that for 35 days I did my own independent review, going door to door in Kirkfield Park where people told me that health care was not being dealt with.

In fact, Mr. Speaker, I believe, if the facts are there, and I believe they are, that the party opposite in the by-election finished third.

Mr. Speaker, I know the Premier may not like hearing this, but the facts are the facts, and that is the nursing shortage has grown from 650 to 1100. Waiting lists have not been slashed as previously promised, and there are still patients in hallways a full 9 months after the Premier promised there would be no more patients in the hallways.

The Premier said during the election that he had a simple plan, an achievable plan to end hallway medicine and fix health care. The Premier raised the hopes of Manitobans only to betray them and fail miserably.

Can the Premier indicate why he led Manitobans into believing he could solve the problems in his health care and why he has now

abandoned the issue completely in the Throne Speech?

Mr. Doer: Mr. Speaker, the only people who were abandoned in the last number of years in this province were the patients of Manitoba, the professionals in the health care system in Manitoba, the nurses who were laid off, over 1000 nurses laid off by the former government, and the hopes of young people to go into nursing.

When they came into office, there were some 1379 young people enrolled in nursing courses in Manitoba. By the time they left office, Mr. Speaker, that number was down to 700, a 50% reduction in the number of young people taking nursing courses in Manitoba.

I want to tell the member opposite—he wants to talk about his electoral success, Mr. Speaker—when you look at the numbers, we are up again to 1250 students enrolled in our colleges, in our universities. That builds on our promise to build hope for our young people. We have the largest enrolment of young people in post-secondary education ever that we had under a Tory government. Members opposite represent a crumbling Conservative vision. We are the can-do democrats that get things done in this province, and that is why we are succeeding.

Emergency Department Patient Death Public Inquiry

Mrs. Myrna Driedger (Charleswood): Health care reached a low point in Manitoba in October when, for the first time since 1983, a Manitoban who went to an emergency room died after waiting five hours in the waiting room. A man died, Mr. Speaker. At this time my colleagues and I would like to express our deepest condolences to his family and friends.

Mr. Speaker, will this First Minister (Mr. Doer) call for a public inquiry into the circumstances surrounding this ER death to ensure that Manitobans will be fully informed about the extent of this tragedy, particularly after the comments he just made about the value of looking at circumstances like this, about the value of a public inquiry?

Will he now commit to calling a public inquiry into the death of this man in an emergency department in Manitoba?

Hon. Dave Chomiak (Minister of Health): I thank the member for that question. I am pleased she framed it in a more positive fashion than initially when the matter occurred. I can say something even more positive, Mr. Speaker.

Since that period in time, a number of initiatives have been put in place by the WRHA with respect to ambulance and ambulance coverage in order to deal with the ambulance situation, partially as a result of this Government for the first time in a decade providing additional ambulances and paraprofessionals for the ambulance service. Additional triage people have been authorized to be put in place. A central bed registry is now going to be put in place, Mr. Speaker, something that was promised by members opposite in 1992, '93, '94, '95 and '96, in order to deal with the bed situation across the city.

I am prepared to indicate to the members opposite, Mr. Speaker, that we have actually taken action to deal with situations to improve the situation across the city.

Mrs. Driedger: The Health Minister did not answer my question. It was directed to the First Minister. It was: Will this Government, will this Premier direct his Minister of Health to call for a public inquiry into the circumstances and extent of the issues surrounding the death of a man in a Manitoba emergency waiting room?

Mr. Chomiak: What has occurred is that the Health Sciences Centre and the Winnipeg Regional Health Authority have reviewed the situation. *[interjection]* If the members want to ask the question, they could have the decency to listen to the response. The Chief Medical Examiner's committee is reviewing whether or not an inquest should be ordered with respect to this matter.

I am pleased, unlike the past, when a situation occurs, we react; we try to put anything

positive in place to deal with the situation, and we have done that.

Point of Order

Mr. Marcel Laurendeau (Opposition House Leader): *Beauchesne's* 417: "Answers to questions should be as brief as possible, deal with the matter raised, and should not provoke debate." Every time this minister opens his mouth he is provoking debate by not putting the truth on the record. He was requested to bring forward—will there be an inquest, Mr. Speaker?

Mr. Speaker: I would kindly ask the honourable Official Opposition House Leader to please retract that comment of the minister not telling the truth.

Mr. Laurendeau: I will take that back, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: I thank the honourable member for that. On the point of order raised by the honourable Official Opposition House Leader, he does have a point of order. *Beauchesne's* is clear. I would like to remind all honourable ministers that, according to *Beauchesne's* Citation 417, answers to questions should not provoke debate.

* * *

Mr. Speaker: I would ask the honourable Minister of Health to conclude his comments.

Mr. Chomiak: Mr. Speaker, as I indicated, both the WRHA and the Health Sciences Centre have reviewed the matter. Certain matters have been improved in order to ensure the situation does improve. The matter is before the Chief Medical Examiner to determine whether or not an inquest in fact should take place. We have taken action immediately upon hearing about this difficulty and ensuring that care is provided and people are protected as much as possible. We act as soon as there is difficulty if in fact there is difficulty.

Mrs. Driedger: Can the First Minister guarantee to nurses who have indicated they are worried and traumatized by this event and they are looking over their shoulders to see when it is going to happen again—will he address the

concerns of these nurses and call for a public inquiry if he is that concerned about nurses not being heard? Will he commit to a public inquiry today?

Mr. Chomiak: That is one of the reasons that we moved very quickly to put in place a diversion for ambulances as well as a system of ambulance direction in order to take the load off the Health Sciences Centre as the main trauma centre and the St. Boniface Hospital. We have put in place triage personnel to assist those nurses. Unlike the member opposite when this matter broke who seemed to blame everybody in the system, including nurses, we are not looking for people to blame, we are looking for a situation to improve.

* (14:30)

First Nation Casinos Headingley Referendum

Mr. Leonard Derkach (Russell): Before I begin my question, I would like to table three letters: the first on October 31 from Chief Roy McKinney of Swan Lake First Nation referring to the Government's gag order on his First Nations people; the second letter is to the Minister responsible for Gaming (Mr. Ashton) in the province from the R.M. of Headingley; the third letter is the letter from the Minister responsible for Gaming to the R.M. of Headingley.

Today my question is to the Premier (Mr. Doer) of this province. Today the people of Headingley are voting in a referendum on the question of a casino in their community. On November 21, the Reeve of the R.M. of Headingley and his council wrote to the Government and asked the Government to comment on the questions on the ballot and whether or not the Government would recognize the results of the second ballot. They asked for the response by November 25. I would like to ask the Premier whether the Premier can tell the House and the people of Headingley and Manitobans why he waited until December 5, the day before the referendum, less than 24 hours before the referendum, to express his concerns about the ballot and about the referendum.

Hon. Steve Ashton (Minister charged with the administration of The Gaming Control Act): I think it is important to note that we have all the way along when it came to Headingley and other communities affected in terms of First Nations casinos looked to community input. When we were asked by the R.M. of Headingley, in fact after they had adopted by council resolution a referendum which 85 percent of the public in that municipality said no, we indicated at the time it was quite clear that it was our view, given the process, that we gave significant weight to plebiscites, and we have recognized that.

I note, by the way, and I am surprised that the member opposite did not also indicate that that apparently is the view of the Leader of the Opposition (Mr. Murray) who, in an interview yesterday, said that they did have a vote. I think that is something people should respect. That has remained our position.

I say to the member opposite that the letter that was sent from Headingley demanded a response within two days. The last I heard this is not negative-option billing with cable companies. We take these matters very seriously, and we responded. We have, as I understand it, the same position the new Leader of the Opposition has, which is a respect of an initial vote.

Mr. Derkach: I would like to ask the Premier (Mr. Doer) again whether or not or why the Premier's second Minister responsible for Gaming refused to respond to the municipality's letter until December 5, less than 24 hours before voters in that municipality had to go to cast their ballot on this question.

Mr. Ashton: I wish the member would talk to his leader because we had communicated previously to the municipality when they asked us to ignore the initial vote. We indicated that we gave significant weight to community input; we gave significant weight to referenda and that we recognized the vote that had taken place. That is the position of the Leader of the Opposition; that is the position of this Government. I am curious as to what this member's position is.

Mr. Derkach: What a tangled web they weave. I want to ask the Premier once again whether he can tell Manitobans, in fact all Manitobans and the people of Headingley whether this is his example of the notion of inclusion in terms of his leadership for the province of Manitoba.

Mr. Ashton: I suspect that the member opposite's concern about inclusion is apparently that he was not included in the discussions in that caucus about their position on Headingley. Our position is the same position that was indicated by the Leader of the Opposition yesterday. We respect the initial vote, and I can say to the member opposite that position remains.

First Nation Casinos Headingley Referendum

Mr. Darren Praznik (Lac du Bonnet): The minister responsible is dodging the issue here. The issue is the people of Headingley, through their municipality, asked him and this Government whether or not the ballot question would meet their criteria in considering this issue, and they would not respond until the day before the vote. So I ask this First Minister, given that his Government has said that this is a misleading choice being put to the people of Headingley, I ask the Premier (Mr. Doer) today who is responsible, will he accept the results of this vote or does he find them so misleading that he rejects this whole process?

Hon. Steve Ashton (Minister charged with the administration of The Gaming Control Act): I think it is important to recognize again—and this member is also being very selective because we were contacted by the municipality. We indicated very clearly, in writing, we accepted the result that was in the plebiscite. It is not the only factor. It is one of many factors. It is clearly identified in the process of being the prerogative of the provincial government to assess community support, and I say to the member opposite again that our position has remained unchanged. It is the same position taken by the Leader of the Opposition where we respect the initial vote, and it was indicated very clearly in writing well before this correspondence and was reaffirmed again in the response that was sent to Headingley yesterday.

Mr. Praznik: The question today is the lack of action by the minister. I want to ask him why, when that municipality gave him and the Premier an opportunity to give advice as to what the right ballot question would be, he ignored their request until the very last moment by not writing to them until the 5th of December, the day before the vote, to advise that he found the question to be misleading and not reflective of the true matter at hand. Why did the minister not exercise his responsibility and reply in a timely fashion to ensure that today's referendum is not a waste of time?

Mr. Ashton: I am surprised once again. I realize it may be traditional for oppositions to try and have it both ways, but I thought that when the Leader of the Opposition on December 5 said "I think that they did have a vote; I think that that is something people should respect"—that we indicated well before this correspondence. I reaffirmed that in the correspondence yesterday. I found it strange to be getting up and actually agreeing with the new Leader of the Opposition (Mr. Murray) on an item here, but perhaps there should be some greater discussion in that caucus. They seem to have two sets of views on this particular issue.

Mr. Praznik: I would remind the member, the minister and the Premier (Mr. Doer) that the person they appointed said there can be another referendum, said they can vote again. I ask the Premier, who keeps dodging this issue, given that his minister said that the question being voted on by the people of Headingley today was misleading, will he give any credence to this vote being taken today by the people of Headingley when his own minister said that it was a misleading question? I ask the Premier this question, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Ashton: Once again I find it strange that the members opposite apparently have copies of a letter I sent. I stated that the position of our Government that was stated in my previous letter to Reeve Taillieu has not changed. We recognize the results of the first vote taken by Headingley residents on the casino issue. That is the position we have taken. It is the position of the Leader of the Opposition. We indicated very clearly that the first vote was very clear, Mr. Speaker. That position remains.

* (14:40)

Education System Diagnostic Assessment Costs

Mrs. Joy Smith (Fort Garry): When the current government eliminated standards testing for Grade 3 students and replaced it with the so-called diagnostic assessment, they transferred the cost of preparing and administering the test to the school divisions of Manitoba.

I ask the Premier (Mr. Doer): Will he pay the bill sent to him by Rosser School for the cost they incurred implementing his so-called diagnostic program?

I would like to table a copy of the letter that has the bill inside of it to remind the Premier of his obligations.

Hon. Drew Caldwell (Minister of Education and Training): Of course the Grade 3 assessment that has just concluded in the early months of the school year is a protocol that is designed to assist students and parents understand deficits that students may or may not have early in the school year so that the school year can be used to rectify any problems that individual students have.

This is the first year of this particular program. We were very clear in implementing this program that we would be working closely with parents, with teachers and with administrators in refining the process as it progresses into future years. That is indeed what we intend to do. The word from the field is very, very positive on this matter.

There are a few challenges, obviously, to overcome, Mr. Speaker, but the priority is children, and the priority is getting maximum benefit in the classroom for children. That is the policy of this Government in Grade 3, in Grade 4, in Grade 5, Grade 6, through the system.

Mrs. Smith: Mr. Speaker, I would like to direct my question to the Premier (Mr. Doer) and ask that it not be evaded. I would like to ask how the Premier can ignore the cost to Rosser School when he did pay the cost of the diagnostic

assessment for the French program across Manitoba.

Mr. Caldwell: Mr. Speaker, I would note the cost of 11 years of neglect by the previous administration, a quarter of a billion dollars worth of capital deficits in our post-secondary system, a quarter of a billion dollars of capital deficits in our public school system, year after year after year of cutbacks in the public school system that this Government is striving very assiduously to rectify.

Mrs. Smith: Mr. Speaker, I ask the Premier or the minister if either one of them knows the total cost of the diagnostic assessment to the school divisions across Manitoba.

Mr. Caldwell: We look at education as an investment on this side of the House, Mr. Speaker, not as a cost. We look at education as an investment in the future of this province, an investment in healthy communities, an investment in economic development, but first and foremost an investment in youth in hopes for the future of youth in Manitoba.

We will continue to invest in education in this province at historic levels, in stark contrast to the record of the members opposite.

Sustainable Development Procurement Policy

Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights): The Sustainable Development Act provided a legal deadline for the Government to deliver its procurement policy, including sustainable development concepts, by July 1 of this year. The policy, which of course regulates purchases from business, is a critical component of government action.

I ask the Premier to admit that his procurement policy is late, it is a shambles, and the Government is in fact operating illegally because it does not have that in place by the legal deadline.

Hon. Oscar Lathlin (Minister of Conservation): Mr. Speaker, I thank the member for the question. I would like to advise him this afternoon that the procurement guidelines are being reviewed by the Manitoba Round Table. As soon as the review is finished

by the round table, I expect to make an announcement within a week to 10 days.

Mr. Gerrard: I ask the Premier to also admit that the award of a contract to build the Knapp Dam and Pump Station in The Pas to a firm which is not licensed to provide quality ready-mixed concrete in Manitoba does not meet the contract specifications, is another indication that his procurement policy is in a shambles.

Mr. Lathlin: I am quite aware of the contract that he refers to, the one doing the construction of the pumps in The Pas. My information tells me that the contractor indeed is qualified. It was a tendered contract. The contract was awarded to the lowest bidder and the most competent company that could do the job.

Mr. Gerrard: I ask the Premier or the minister to confirm that the new Knapp Dam in fact may have been built so poorly that the water is leaking underneath, and this is further evidence that the procurement policy and the standards that have been followed do not meet the normal specifications.

Mr. Lathlin: No, Mr. Speaker, I have not been advised of anything of that sort, but I will take it as notice. I will inquire into it and report back to the Assembly in due course.

First Nation Casinos Headingley Referendum

Mr. Leonard Derkach (Russell): Mr. Speaker, I have a question with regard to the Headingley vote today. I want to refer to the *Winnipeg Free Press* of October 9 where Mr. Luke, who has been hired by this Government and reports to the Minister responsible for Gaming, said, and I quote: "They have to overturn the negative plebiscite." In other words, they have to have another vote. Today the minister tells us that they have to abide by the first vote.

So I want to ask the minister: If in fact that is this Government's position, would he notify the Headingley municipality that they should not go through the cost of counting the votes today

because they will be meaningless as far as this Government is concerned?

Hon. Steve Ashton (Minister charged with the administration of The Gaming Control Act): Mr. Speaker, I think it is important to put on the record here that the municipality can hold a vote on whatever it chooses to hold a vote on. We have always recognized that. I am somewhat surprised that there is this divergence of opinion within the Conservative caucus and I note that I reference the Leader of the Opposition's (Mr. Murray) most recently stated opinion, but I note in a press release before there was some suggestion that the vote today should be recognized—

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Point of Order

Mr. Marcel Laurendeau (Opposition House Leader): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. *Beauchesne's* 417: "Answers to questions should be as brief as possible, deal with the matter raised and should not provoke debate." The question was very clear to this minister. Will he or will he not accept tonight's referendum, or why is he wasting the people of Headingley's time?

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Speaker: Order. May I remind all honourable members that a point of order is a very serious matter. On the point of order raised by the honourable Official Opposition House Leader, he does have a point of order. I would like to remind all honourable members that, according to *Beauchesne's* Citation 417, answers to questions should not provoke debate.

* * *

Mr. Speaker: The Honourable Minister of Highways and Government Services, to conclude his remarks.

* (14:50)

Mr. Ashton: Thank you. I can think of no better way to state this than the quote: "I think that they did have a vote. I think that is something people

should respect." That is the Leader of the Opposition's words. That, by the way, is our position as a government, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Derkach: So who is in control, Mr. Speaker?

I want to ask this minister or this Premier why, when they received the letter on November 21, did they not respond to this letter until December 5 when it was too late for the municipality to change the question on the ballot and it was too late for them to cancel the vote? Why did they wait till December 5, the day of the Throne Speech, to respond to this letter?

Mr. Ashton: Mr. Speaker, the Municipality of Headingley decided to have this vote. The letter, by the way, was not received in my office on the 21st; it was received on the 23rd. In fact, I think it was somewhat unrealistic to expect a response within two days. I mentioned that it had the tone in it of the old cable negative-option billing that if you did not respond within two days you got the service whether you wanted it or not.

Mr. Speaker, I did take this seriously. I think the member opposite should realize that the wording of the vote today had reference not only to a casino but to a trailer park. I mean I am not the minister responsible for trailer parks in this province.

I did make the initiative of contacting relevant authorities. I did provide advice to Headingley in the letter today. I say to members opposite that was the responsible thing to do, but our position remains the same as the Leader of the Opposition's position. We respect the initial vote, which by the way was a clear question and a clear result from the people of Headingley.

First Nation Casinos Headingley Referendum

Mr. Darren Praznik (Lac du Bonnet): Here in Question Period today the minister said he is not the minister responsible for trailer parks, but on the day he wrote the letter, yesterday, he said he was. He cast judgment on whether or not that could even be zoned.

Mr. Speaker, the minister and this Government have totally failed to acknowledge the point here that a municipality under their policy is holding a second referendum as their policy outlines. They ask the Government to cast judgment on their ballot question.

I ask the Premier (Mr. Doer) again: Given that his minister has said that this is a misleading question, can the people of Headingley therefore assume that whatever they do in that referendum today will be in no way considered by the Government of Manitoba?

Hon. Steve Ashton (Minister charged with the administration of The Gaming Control Act): Mr. Speaker, once again, the initiative to hold another plebiscite, another referendum, was not a decision that was brought about by this Government. That was entirely a decision of the Municipality of Headingley.

Not only that. When we were asked in writing in September to ignore the results of the first referendum, we indicated we would not do that. So our position was very clear.

If the Municipality of Headingley wants to have a vote on trailer courts or any other issues, they are quite able to do that. But for the member opposite now to take a totally inconsistent position with his own Leader's position, which in this case is to argue that we should somehow ignore the results of the first plebiscite, I think was never the intent of this process. I say to the members opposite we do not want to end up with a Québec-type situation where you keep having referendum after referendum until you get the result that you want.

Our concern was to take a reading of the views of the people of Headingley. When we were asked to do so, we did so. We did so in writing, and that position remains today.

Mr. Speaker: Time for Oral Questions has expired.

House Business

Mr. Speaker: At a meeting of House leaders and the Member for River Heights (Mr. Gerrard) on November 27, 2000, it was agreed in

principle that the printing of the text of the private members' resolutions would not appear on the notice paper until Monday, December 11, in order to allow extra time for the translating and proofing of the text of the resolutions. In order for this to happen, unanimous consent of the House is required to waive Rule 60.(2) which indicates that notices of items are to be printed on the notice paper two days after filing.

I am now asking the House: Is there unanimous consent for the text of the private members' resolutions to appear on the notice paper on Monday, December 11? Is there unanimous consent?

Some Honourable Members: Agreed.

Mr. Speaker: There is unanimous consent.

Speaker's Ruling

Mr. Speaker: I also have a ruling for the House.

An Honourable Member: We just got back.

Mr. Speaker: Yes, it did not take long.

During consideration of Orders of the Day on August 16, the year 2000, the honourable Member for Lac du Bonnet (Mr. Praznik) rose on an alleged matter of privilege concerning the issuing of a press release on committee hearings and proposed amendments for Bill 44 by the honourable Minister of Labour (Ms. Barrett).

The honourable member disputed the accuracy of information in the press release concerning the number of presenters before the Standing Committee on Industrial Relations and suggested that the honourable minister had deliberately not verified facts. Additionally, the honourable Member for Lac du Bonnet contended that the minister had placed information on the record through the issuing of a press release by the government news service.

He concluded his remarks by moving that this House finds the Minister of Labour (Ms. Barrett) in contempt of this House for purposely providing untrue and improper information about the proceedings in the Standing Committee on Industrial Relations in its

consideration of Bill 44, thereby affecting the collective privileges of all members.

The honourable Member for River Heights (Mr. Gerrard), the honourable Government House Leader (Mr. Mackintosh), and the honourable Member for Russell (Mr. Derkach) also offered advice on the alleged matter of privilege.

I took the matter under advisement in order to consult the procedural authorities. I thank all members for their advice to the Chair on this matter.

There are two conditions that must be satisfied in order for the matter raised to be considered a *prima facie* case of privilege. First, was the matter raised at the earliest opportunity? Second, has sufficient evidence been provided to demonstrate that the privilege of the House has been breached in order to warrant putting the matter to the House?

Regarding the first condition, I do find that the matter was raised at the earliest opportunity.

Concerning the second condition, there are a number of points to consider. First, the honourable Member for Lac du Bonnet contended that the honourable Minister of Labour had put the press release on the record because the press release had been released by the government news service.

In order for the privilege of the House to have been breached, the activity must involve a proceeding of Parliament. The press release in question was issued by the Government outside of the Chamber. The minister did not table the press release in the House, nor did she make a statement in the House about the press release.

Although members in the House may have access to the distribution of press releases, the press release was not distributed in the Chamber in conjunction with any parliamentary proceedings and therefore cannot be considered a proceeding of Parliament. As noted by Joseph Maingot on page 99 of the second edition of *Parliamentary Privilege in Canada*, "it would be

dangerous to suggest that any connection with a matter in Parliament will be considered a proceeding in Parliament."

Also, *Beauchesne's* Citation 31(3) advises that statements made outside of the House by a member may not be used as the basis for a question of privilege.

Similarly, *Beauchesne's* Citation 31(1) states that a dispute arising between two members as to allegations of facts does not fulfill the conditions of parliamentary privilege.

Joseph Maingot advises on page 224 of *Parliamentary Privilege in Canada* that "parliamentary privilege is concerned with the special rights of members, not in their capacity as ministers or as party leaders, whips or parliamentary secretaries, but strictly in their capacity as members in their parliamentary work. Therefore, allegations of misjudgment or mismanagement or maladministration on the part of the minister in the performance of his ministerial duties did not come within the purview of parliamentary privilege."

Maingot also states on page 223 that "an allegation of misleading the House is not out of order or unparliamentary nor does it amount to a question of privilege. However, an admission by a member that he or she misled the House would constitute a breach of privilege."

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

* (15:00)

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. In this instance, although the Member for Lac du Bonnet (Mr. Praznik) has demonstrated that there could arguably be a difference in factual interpretation, he has not proven that there was a deliberate intent, nor did the minister admit intent to purposely mislead. Previous rulings by Speakers Walding, June 13, 1985; Phillips, March 23, 1987; Rocan, January 17, 1990, and also March 14, 1990, May 21, 1991, June 19, 1991, March 16, 1993, July 16, 1993, and also Dacquay, April 29, 1996, May 30, 1996, September 18, 1996, November 4, 1996, July 23, 1997, March 13,

1998, May 6, 1998, June 9, 1998, and April 20, 1999, support the concept that proof of intent must be provided.

For the reasons stated, I am ruling that it has not been demonstrated that a *prima facie* case of privilege exists, and so I must therefore rule the motion out of order as a matter of privilege.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

New Member's Remarks

Mrs. Heather Stefanson (Tuxedo): I would like to first off just thank the members from both sides of the Chamber for their welcome today. Certainly what I would really like to do today is thank the constituents of Tuxedo for giving me the privilege of representing them in the Legislative Assembly.

I would also like to thank the former member of Tuxedo, Gary Filmon, for his outstanding service to our community and to our province.

Mr. Speaker, on behalf of my constituents, I will ensure that, along with my colleagues, I will work hard to encourage this Government to form a true vision for Manitoba and a real plan to keep Manitoba competitive and prosperous. Thank you.

Assiniboine Credit Union

Mr. Doug Martindale (Burrows): Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize the work of Assiniboine Credit Union. The last decade saw the Assiniboine reach record growth in loans and deposits and assets reaching the half-billion-dollar mark for the first time. Assiniboine's assets have almost doubled from \$283 million in 1990 to \$509 million in 1999.

While offering competitive services, products and profitability to both individuals and businesses, Assiniboine works to establish policies that are fair and just and provides initiatives that help build strong, self-reliant communities.

Through the Business Loans Centre, Assiniboine provides commercial lending services and support to the Winnipeg business community. In 1999, the centre granted over \$9 million in loans to small private enterprises and community groups.

Assiniboine also contributes to the training and education of individuals on employment insurance who are interested in becoming self-employed. Through SEED Winnipeg and Urban Entrepreneurs with Disabilities Program, Assiniboine has contributed over \$500,000 in support loans to low-income people who are pursuing self-employment.

Additionally, Assiniboine contributes to community development and neighbourhood revitalization through the support of non-profit housing groups that provide quality, affordable housing and renovation skills training for low-income residents.

Through the Christmas LITE Program, Assiniboine continues to convert Christmas giving into inner city jobs and promotes public understanding of community economic development. In 1999, over \$80,000 was raised by Christmas LITE.

Mr. Speaker, I wish to congratulate Assiniboine Credit Union for their recent success. I also want to commend them for doing a market survey in the north end to see if there is new interest in a new branch to fill the void left by the closure of chartered banks. It is encouraging to see a financial institution give back to the community in such a tangible and substantive way.

Violence Against Women

Mrs. Joy Smith (Fort Garry): This morning I had the opportunity to attend a sunrise breakfast, an event marking the terrible murder of 14 women during the Montréal massacre in 1989 and also marking Canada's day of remembrance and action on violence against women.

Today's event is a solemn reminder that violence against women continues to be pervasive in our society. Sadly, one only need look to today's newspapers to read the appalling

story of a young Winnipeg girl who was raped at the hands of street gang members. Were it not for the courageous actions of the girl's mother, who defied six men to rescue her daughter, I shudder to think what might have transpired beyond the assault.

I would like to offer our support to this family, and I hope that resources will be made available to help them cope with this most unfortunate situation. I hope that the police and the justice system are able to swiftly hold the perpetrators accountable. To say that this incident is hideous and despicable does not even begin to address the severity of the crime. That women of any age are subjected to such barbaric acts is simply unacceptable, yet each and every day somewhere in Canada these crimes are committed.

Mr. Speaker, even though this is a private member's statement, today is a special day. In view of the headline story about this young girl, I would hope that each and every member in this Assembly would listen very carefully. That these acts continue regardless of a woman's age, ethnic background or social standing says that we are not yet doing enough to create the type of society where these acts will no longer be tolerated.

Volunteering Initiative

Mr. Jim Rondeau (Assiniboia): I rise today to bring all members' attention to an exciting initiative that is beginning this year in the St. James School Division. The division has instituted a minimum 40-hour volunteer commitment in order to graduate from Senior 4. This requirement breaks down to 10 hours per year minimum for all students from Senior 1 to 4.

I believe that this is an excellent initiative because it gets youth involved in the community, it teaches community responsibility, gives students valuable work and life experience, teaches skills that can be transferred to the workplace, builds confidence, reaches out and helps those in need and helps support the community. This project centres on the belief that individuals should contribute and volunteer to the greater society. This in turn will build the

community spirit and strengthen our communities in the future.

I had the pleasure of participating in a volunteer affair for Senior 1 students at John Taylor last week. Forty community groups that utilize volunteers participated. Mary McCormick from John Taylor ran this event. Schools from Silver Heights, St. James Collegiate, Sturgeon Creek, Westwood all attended this activity. The students went from display to display getting information on volunteer opportunities as diverse as the Humane Society, Age and Opportunity, and Literacy Partners of Manitoba, among many others.

It was an excellent activity. The students were well focused and serious. I believe they will become excellent citizens in the future. I would encourage all school divisions to look at this. It is a wonderful opportunity of combining and partnering schools and the community, and I think it was wonderful. So thank you very much and have a good day.

Mr. Ralph Fauschou

Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights): I want to, in my member's statement, pay a tribute to the father of the honourable member from Portage la Prairie, Ralph Fauschou, who passed away recently. Ralph Fauschou was born in 1922 at Langruth, grew up on the farm and made a major contribution to Portage la Prairie and to farm life in Manitoba. He has passed away recently, in part the result of a series of strokes. I think that it is important that the Legislature recognize the contributions of Ralph Fauschou, and so I do that today.

I also want briefly to comment about what I see and am concerned about, what appears to be almost a two-tier standard that the Government is practising for the care of stroke patients in this province: one level for those who come into the emergency room at the Health Sciences Centre and St. Boniface and a second quality of standard for the rest of the province.

* (15:10)

This is an issue that arose recently in Kirkfield Park. As many in the health profession know, if you treat stroke within three hours, there is an option for busting up the clot and having a remarkable improvement. This clearly needs to be available at major centres throughout the province, not just at the Health Sciences Centre and St. Boniface.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

THRONE SPEECH DEBATE (First Day of Debate)

Mr. Speaker: First day of debate of the consideration of the speech of His Honour the Lieutenant-Governor.

Mr. Stan Struthers (Dauphin-Roblin): I am very pleased today to move, seconded by the Member for St. James (Ms. Korzeniowski), that the following address be presented to His Honour the Lieutenant-Governor.

We, the members of the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba, thank Your Honour for the gracious speech addressed to us at this Second Session of the Thirty-seventh Legislature of Manitoba.

Motion presented.

Mr. Struthers: It is with a great deal of pleasure, a great deal of pride that I move today that we begin the debate on a Speech from the Throne that I think is a broad, far-reaching, forward-thinking, inclusive vision for our province.

I say this as a Manitoban, as a Manitoban who represents Manitobans, and I say this also as a rural Manitoban, for it is my belief that this Throne Speech delivered in this House yesterday really does include the concerns, the aspirations, the dreams, the visions of the people that I represent in my part of rural Manitoba.

Before I go any further, however, I want to thank in advance and welcome the pages who will be working with us in this session. I want to also acknowledge the hard work and welcome back the folks sitting around the Clerk's desk, and I also want to thank the interns that will be

working with both the Government side of the House and the Opposition over the course of this session.

I also want to join in with the rest of the welcomes and the congratulations to the Member for Tuxedo (Mrs. Stefanson) and welcome her to the Chamber and hope that she enjoys representing the people of her constituency. I also want to join in welcoming the new Leader of the Official Opposition, the Member for Kirkfield Park (Mr. Murray). I hope that he enjoys his time representing Manitobans.

I do want to note, before I go any further, Mr. Speaker, I remember the day that we voted on you becoming the Speaker, and I remember you being escorted by the Premier and the then-official Opposition Leader. Part of the tradition was that the Speaker puts up a struggle as he is headed up towards the throne. It is a tradition. In the old days, nasty things could befall the Speaker of the House. Of course, now you do not have anything to worry there. I thought today as the new Leader of the Opposition was being escorted to be presented to the Speaker, that I think maybe if I was in that new Opposition Leader's shoes I would put up a little bit of a struggle before I took on leading a merry band of MLAs like he is going to be putting up with for the next certain period of time.

Mr. Conrad Santos, Deputy Speaker, in the Chair

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I want to really try to impart to the House today some of the thinking that we exhibit in rural Manitoba when it comes to making decisions that affect our everyday lives. I want to leave the impression with the House a little bit of a flavour of what we believe is important in rural Manitoba, not just rural Manitoba, because many of the dreams and many of the visions that we hold dear in rural Manitoba are shared with our fellow Manitobans in larger centres like Brandon and Winnipeg.

I can say unequivocally that this Throne Speech and the direction and the vision that it provides for all of us in this House is a good thing for rural Manitoba and indeed a good thing for all Manitobans. This is the second Speech from the Throne that we have presented as a

government. It provides us with an opportunity not only to look forward and plan and set the parameters and set the general tone for the Government in the next year to come, but I think it also provides us with an excellent point at which to review what has happened so far, an excellent point to look back at the last Speech from the Throne and take a good, reflective look at what has happened since the last Speech from the Throne.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I am very proud to point in the Speech from the Throne that we had last some measures that we undertook and then followed through on, some commitments that we made and then kept. I want to start with health care. To begin with I will start with rural health care and the commitment that this Government has made in some of the ridings of people sitting opposite of me right now.

Let us take a look first at all at Pharmacare. We made some very specific commitments, not just in the election that was held just a bit over a year ago but also in our Speech from the Throne last year at this time. What we did in Pharmacare was we said that things must be better for Manitobans, that we must use Pharmacare in a way that it provides the best possible service for our constituents, for the people who live in this province. We said that, and we came through for Manitobans. We expanded the Pharmacare program. We expanded the benefit for coverage under the palliative care. We expanded palliative care drugs to help Manitobans. That is one example.

We also took very seriously the severe shortage of nurses that was a legacy of the previous government. We took seriously that problem, and we have been working on it every day of our mandate. We have addressed it again in the Throne Speech that was introduced here in the House yesterday. We came up with a five-point plan for nursing in this province, and we are following through with that plan.

The five points that I speak of include: increasing the supply of nurses; improve access to staff development in the rural and the regional health authorities; improve the use of available nursing resources; improve working conditions; and establish a nursing advisory council. Each of

those five points makes eminently good sense. They are points which not only this Government can support but I believe members opposite could support.

* (15:20)

I want to also speak of something in health care that is very dear to those of us who live in rural parts of this province, and that is our Government's commitment to bring rural health services closer to rural areas, closer to those communities that lie a distance from the larger centres of Winnipeg and Brandon.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, something that has bothered rural Manitobans for many years is the fact that many of us have to travel great distances to take advantage of health services that are offered in our province. Now, this is something that has affected rural areas and northern areas. It is something that this Government is intent on addressing, and we have shown that in last year's Speech from the Throne and this year's Speech from the Throne.

I want to give one simple, quick example of a program that we have undertaken and that we have followed through on that is providing rural health services closer to home for rural Manitobans. The program of which I speak was the opening of new chemotherapy units in the Marquette Regional Health Authority, a main chemotherapy unit at the Neepawa Health Centre, with satellite units opening in Russell and Hamiota.

The other reason I bring this up, Mr. Deputy Speaker, is it indicates an area in which we can co-operate with each other in this House. It is an issue in which we can all rise above the usual din of this Chamber and co-operate on. Indeed, the Member for Russell (Mr. Derkach) who attended the ribbon cuttings when we opened these units, we showed that two people, two rural representatives can work together to provide better rural health services for all of our constituents.

In particular, the way we co-operated was evident at the Hamiota Health Centre when we showed we could open doors on this. We had the ribbon-cutting ceremony in the lobby at the front

part of the Hamiota Health Centre. I walked to the front to say my words, and I accidentally got a little too close to the automatic doors and they all opened. Everybody had a laugh about it. I was a little bit embarrassed, but I finished saying what I had to say.

The next person to speak was the Member for Russell, who also accidentally got a little too close to the doors, opened them up, and everybody had a laugh. I think what the Member for Russell and I were trying to show everyone is that when we work together we can open all kinds of doors in health care, that there is room for a lot more co-operation than what we have experienced in the past. It really encapsulates the spirit in rural Manitoba of working together towards a shared goal and working together to accomplish that shared goal. So I think there are many possibilities for that and that this Throne Speech provides for those opportunities.

Another area that I want to point to as a real success on the part of our Government in coming through with promises that we made in the Throne Speech having to do with northern health is the opening of dialysis treatment units in the community of Norway House. There are many examples of where this Government has moved forward and co-operated with local decision makers, local people, identifying needs and then moving to act on those needs.

The last example that I am going to use just for the time being in rural health, something that we have taken on, is the emergency medical services that we really do value as rural Manitobans. We as a Government provided \$5 million for emergency medical services, a majority of which was designated for rural areas, for little communities with rural ambulances.

We know that agriculture is the number one industry in rural Manitoba. We also know that agriculture is the most dangerous industry in Canada. That means that any government must take seriously the needs of rural Manitobans in the area of ambulances and emergency medical services. That we have done. We are taking that seriously.

We also know that within health in Manitoba, throughout our province, we have to

understand that all of these aspects of rural health are interrelated and that the improvement in one area means an improvement in another and that a good decision made in recruiting and retaining doctors means that we see in other areas improvements in the health care system. The recruitment and retention of doctors is something that is an important issue across this province, rural and north. The recruitment and retention of doctors is an issue that this Government has been taking very seriously as an issue that will be addressed, is being addressed and will continue to be addressed by this Government.

I want to also point out that what I think is important that is happening since our last Speech from the Throne is a renewed confidence in our profession as provincial politicians. I think it is because we have taken seriously the commitments that we made in the election of 1999.

For too many years people who live in our province were subjected to politicians who would say one thing before an election and then turn around and do exactly the opposite after the election. We have to look no further than the former government's health capital announcements before and during and after an election.

What I sense is happening and what I encourage to continue is the process by which you make a commitment and then have the courage to follow through on that commitment. If we all undertook that here in this House on both sides of the Chamber, it is my belief that we can regain some of that confidence in our electorate, and that, I submit, is exactly what this Government has been doing.

The Throne Speech introduced yesterday in the House is another step along that direction. It is an honest approach to dealing with the decisions that we make in this House. When we said we were going to restore public health care in all regions of our province, I think I have already outlined some examples of us doing that. When we committed to provide new hope for young people through opportunities and education, we have come through with that, Mr. Deputy Speaker, a 10% tuition cut. That is something worth talking about. That is some-

thing that is of real benefit to my constituents in Dauphin-Roblin and I would say to the benefit of all of the members here in this House. We said we were going to increase spaces in the community college system, and we are doing that, and this Speech from the Throne backs that up.

Other examples: We said that we would provide new hope. We have record funding for public schools coming from this provincial government to support our public schools, to support the children and their futures for this province. That is commitment. We committed to making our communities safer. We committed to reduce property taxes through increased tax credits, and, Mr. Deputy Speaker, we have come through on that. We committed to maintain and improve the balanced budget law, and, again, it is something that we have indeed, in fact, come through with.

* (15:30)

So that, I think, is just a small look back over the last year since we last introduced the Throne Speech, and I think we can come to the conclusion that when we put something in our Throne Speech, something we have consulted Manitobans on, something that we have spoken with Manitobans and listened to them, you get the feeling that we mean what we say. You have the understanding that when we set a direction in our Throne Speech, that that is the direction we will follow.

Every government has to pay its dues. I think that is happening with this provincial government here today. That should give people a lot of confidence, that what we say in this Throne Speech is, in fact, the direction that this Government will take, and I would encourage all members in this House to get on board, to take a good look at the Throne Speech and really analyze the effect that this Throne Speech will have on your constituents and understand how good this is whether you are a rural riding, whether you are in the North or whether you are in the city, because this is a good Throne Speech for all. This is a Throne Speech that looks forward. It is a Throne Speech that takes into consideration learning, sustainability and

inclusiveness, a Throne Speech that includes the rural parts of our province.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I was very interested that the Speech from the Throne yesterday talked about a child who was born today and where that child would be in the year 2020. Are we, as legislators, prepared not to look that far into the future? Are we prepared to say to that child we are going to govern for today but not for tomorrow? The Throne Speech delivered yesterday addresses that. The Throne Speech yesterday puts forward a plan that will help the child born today to be a contributing member of Manitoba society in the year 2020.

For many years, politicians—and I saw it here in this House—are very good at reaming off one statistic after another, unemployment rates, poverty rates, all kinds of statistics. I remember, as a matter of fact, the former Finance Minister, the former Member for Kirkfield Park, Mr. Eric Stefanson, who would stand in this House and in rapid-fire motion—it was quite amazing. He had a talent for this; he could have been an auctioneer. Maybe he will go into that now that he is out of politics, but one fact after another, bang, bang, bang, bang, all the way down the list, but, Mr. Deputy Speaker, it is not enough for us in this Legislature simply to ream off a whole lot of statistics. We have to have a purpose.

It is not enough for us just to work towards prosperity. Why are we doing that? We have to work for prosperity and have a purpose for that prosperity. We cannot just raise a whole lot of expectations. We cannot just work towards statistics. We have to have a reason for doing that. I want to indicate to all members that my belief is that we should be building a society that is based on co-operation, that we should have a society that includes everyone in our prosperity.

I want to say, to that end, one of the main factors, one of the main issues in that Speech from the Throne yesterday was the announcement of the equalization of Hydro rates in this province. What says inclusiveness more than that? What says equalization more than that? I ask members of the House what says co-operation more than that, and sharing?

We have in this province an amazing asset with Manitoba Hydro. We have a limitless opportunity with Manitoba Hydro in our province. We have an asset in Manitoba built by Manitobans, built by Manitobans' hard work, built by Manitobans through the taxation system, built by Manitobans through rates. We have an amazing asset in this province. I want to use the approach to that asset to make sure we understand a very clear demarcation in this House. I want to make sure that everybody understands there is a line drawn between the Government's side of this House and Opposition members in the approach that we take to Manitoba Hydro.

Now, I want on the one hand to talk about the tremendous opportunities that this Manitoba Hydro asset, this Manitoba advantage gives to Manitobans. We have a progressive, successful Crown corporation that is providing the cheapest electricity, the cheapest power in all of North America. We have an asset, an advantage in Manitoba called Manitoba Hydro that belongs to the people of Manitoba, an advantage I say to the members opposite. Our approach from this Government which is clear in the Speech from the Throne yesterday is that we ought to use that asset, we ought to use that advantage for all of the people of this province, a sharing that we have not seen in this province in the past.

We have an opportunity with Manitoba Hydro and we are using that. We are putting that forward in the Speech from the Throne. We are providing for the rural parts of this province and the northern parts of this province an equalization. We are providing an equal opportunity in this province. We are including rural Manitobans in the prosperity of our province. This is what members opposite will be voting against unless they decide, unless their common sense gets a hold of them, unless they stand up for their constituents and say Manitoba Hydro is an asset, Manitoba Hydro is an advantage and we need to support that as an ongoing factor in this province.

On the other side of this tale of two approaches we have an opposition whose approach to Manitoba Hydro is to sell, whose approach to Manitoba Hydro is not to share with Manitobans but to take a Manitoba advantage

and sell it to the shareholders, not the people of Manitoba who are the shareholders of this, but just as they did with the Manitoba Telephone System, just as their whole approach to Crown corporations dictates, an opposition who would squander the advantage that Manitoba has, an opposition who would take an asset of this province and simply turn it over to a very few who would then benefit from Manitoba Hydro.

This is a tale of two visions in this province when it comes to Manitoba Hydro. It is a tale of two visions that I believe the people of Manitoba have chosen between.

* (15:40)

Point of Order

An Honourable Member: Point of order.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Point of order being raised. State your point of order, please.

Mr. John Loewen (Fort Whyte): Mr. Deputy Speaker, the Member for Dauphin (Mr. Struthers) is overstepping his bounds here. There has never been any statement from this side of the House or from any member of the House that Manitoba Hydro was up for sale. He knows that. There is no reason for him to ramble on about what he would like to purport the intentions are of this side of the House. He knows nothing of what he speaks.

I would ask him simply to stick to the facts and not try and put words in the mouths of members on this side of the House. Thank you.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Differences of opinion are not points of order.

* * *

Mr. Struthers: I do note, though, that the sensitivity on this issue is duly noted on the part of the Member for Fort Whyte.

Just to continue on with the absolute 18th century approach by the members opposite towards Crown corporations, I found it absolutely hard to believe that the members opposite would balk when this Government took

a brave step forward and signed agreements with First Nations in the sharing of revenue with Manitoba Hydro. It was absolutely amazing that members opposite would balk at that kind of a forward-looking approach.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, the Speech from the Throne yesterday also I think took some bold steps forward in the area of alternative energy. The Speech from the Throne yesterday spoke of research and development in the area of alternative energy. This is good news for rural Manitoba. This is good news for all the people of Manitoba when we look at the opportunities that face our province in the area of ethanol alone, just in that one area. We think that what we produce in Manitoba is only good to be eaten. We have a lot of opportunities ahead of us in rural parts of this province, in agricultural areas, in areas of our province that depend on agriculture. We have a huge opportunity outside of producing food simply for people to eat.

Why have we not moved forward on this in the past? Why have we not taken these steps? Is it the undue pressure that oil companies have on provincial politicians? Is that the reason? Is it that we have not included rural Manitoba and its needs and its desires, its wishes, because this is good news for rural Manitoba.

This is an approach that we should have taken as a provincial government years ago. Finally, finally, Mr. Deputy Speaker, we have a government with the bravery, with the courage to step forward and say we are going to put some money into this. We are going to get into some research and development. We are not going to be bound by what large corporations tell us to do. We are moving forward on this. We are taking the bull by the horns, and we are moving forward with something that is important to rural Manitoba.

I also point to a simple little sentence in the Speech from the Throne yesterday that mentioned the words "geothermal energy." Again, you know members opposite are stuck in the past. If it is not coal, it is nuclear. There is more out in the world than simply dealing with the nonrenewable resources like gas and oil. It is a big world out there, Mr. Deputy Speaker. The members opposite should take a look.

Geothermal energy is something that we need to take seriously in this province. Our curling rinks, our skating rinks, residential areas, maybe the Member for Lakeside (Mr. Enns) can expound on all the advantages of geothermal energy. Maybe he can explain it to members opposite, and he can explain to them how important it is to support a Speech from the Throne that supports a progressive move such as converting to geothermal energy.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, by taking on conservation methods, conservation issues, making a commitment and enacting decisions in which we conserve energy in this province will allow us to step out into the market, to step out into the world and bring in revenues for our province. We built Limestone, for example, and then paid for Limestone by the sales of power. It did not cost Manitoba taxpayers. We made it up. We had export sales. We had export sales that paid for Limestone. Where were members opposite? Members opposite were back then the same place they are now. They are being a drag on the move towards newer and progressive, not just progressive but sharing co-operative ideas.

I want to speak a little bit about agriculture and how important it is for all of us in this Legislature to consider the importance of agriculture in the decisions that we make in this Chamber. I want to say to you unequivocally that our Speech from the Throne yesterday was good for agriculture in Manitoba. It set out some very tangible, very doable, very common sense, very much supported by producers in this province.

I want to just as one example talk a little bit about Project 2000.

An Honourable Member: Name them.

Mr. Struthers: Members opposite say name them, name them. Okay. Project 2000. Are you with us or against us with the progressive measures of Project 2000? Are members opposite with us or against us when it comes to mentoring young farmers and putting those young farmers with farmers who have some experience and funding programs that help young farmers? Is that what the members opposite are opposed to? Are the members

opposite opposed to trying to set conditions in which young farmers or beginning farmers can easily move into farming while farmers who have farmed for years can easily move out of farming and still live with some type of dignity, that can move from farming to retirement without having to go broke?

I wonder, Mr. Deputy Speaker, if members opposite are going to vote against a Throne Speech in which crop insurance premiums will be lowered. I wonder if that is what the Member for Emerson (Mr. Penner) is going to vote against. I maybe should not just assume he is going to vote against this. Maybe he understands how good that will be for farmers in his riding, how good it will be for farmers all across Manitoba, how good the lowering of crop insurance premiums will be. That part of that Speech from the Throne is a commitment to rural Manitoba. That is something that members opposite should be voting in favour of.

I want to also speak of this Government's commitment in this Speech from the Throne to the whole concept of planning. This is essential in economic development. Planning is essential for growth in this province. It is something that we ought to take seriously as decision makers in Manitoba. The Speech from the Throne outlines that. The Speech from the Throne highlights the importance of planning.

* (15:50)

I want to give one example of something that is very much a model for the concept of planning, and it is conservation districts. Conservation districts is a grassroots level of planning including local people to make decisions on all kinds of issues.

Just with that I want to remind the House that this Speech from the Throne puts purpose to prosperity. It says that we cannot just make decisions to become more prosperous without considering why we are doing that. We cannot just decide we want to be more prosperous without having a purpose to our prosperity.

I very much appreciate the time that I have had to speak on the Speech from the Throne, and I am very much proud of the fact that I have

been asked to kick off the debate on this speech. I look forward to the day on which I can vote in favour of this Speech from the Throne.

Ms. Bonnie Korzeniowski (St. James): I am most honoured this day to second the motion made by the honourable Member for Dauphin-Roblin.

Before I proceed with my response to the Throne Speech, I would like to take this opportunity to welcome our new pages for this session and assure them that we are very grateful for all they will be doing to make certain the House is run efficiently and all members of the Legislature have their needs attended to toward that end. I would also like to thank the interns for all they have done and will continue to do. I would like to extend my tremendous gratitude to the clerks and Sergeant-at-Arms for the guidance and support in the complexities of the House they have provided to me and I am certain many others.

Lastly I offer a warm welcome to the newest members of the Legislative Assembly. It has not been that long since I was a brand-new rookie myself. I can still appreciate the overwhelming feelings one may experience in the first days. I am sure though that you will soon find and enjoy that every day is an adventure.

It is fitting that we meet in this House in a new session in the month of December. That is because of the importance of this month for many people from many cultures and faiths who share the Manitoba vision. December is a month that reminds us of the true spirit of humankind, whether that spirit is found in religious, family, or social reflection and celebration. It is a month that reflects our optimism for the future. This optimism for the future is rooted in our recognition of our past.

For us in government we recognize the tremendous strides we have made since December 21, 1999, when we assumed office. Those efforts were lead most ably by the First Minister, who articulated our commitment to Manitobans. Among those covenants are rescuing health care and restoring hope for young people. Throughout the year, our Government has moved on these health care

issues on a number of fronts such as a comprehensive nursing plan featuring a new two-year diploma program and a nursing advisory council. There has been an expansion of home care and Pharmacare and palliative care both in terms of service and drug provision. Drugs for our terminally ill will allow them to die in dignity in their home, and I am very pleased to have been part of an initiative that will allow our seniors to travel south with an extended program of drugs that they will be able to be reimbursed for and come back healthy and safe.

The renewed hope for young people was spearheaded by increased funding to both colleges and universities and a reduction of 10 percent in tuition fees for post-secondary education. To this end, our Government committed an additional \$10.8 million for colleges and universities to ensure that the tuition reduction was passed on to students. As well, our Government increased support to public education by increasing the total support for school infrastructure capital projects to \$51.2 million.

Renewing hope for our young people and providing them with opportunity was the impetus behind an announced \$29.7-million increase to public school funding in the past year, the largest increase, Mr. Deputy Speaker, in a decade. These dollars were dollars earmarked for classroom programming, special needs students and library services. They were dollars earmarked to provide opportunities for Manitoba's children to learn and thrive in the new millennium.

At this point, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I would like to speak of the impact of such a commitment from our provincial government and speak about this impact on the ground, so to speak, in our local communities.

In this Legislature, I have the honour of representing the constituency of St. James. As all members of this House know, Elections Manitoba clearly defines the limits of each of our constituencies. Mine is no different. It commences at the intersection of the centre of the Assiniboine River with Century Street and then north to Portage Avenue and east to St.

James Street. It moves to Notre Dame Avenue, takes in the Winnipeg International Airport and moves south along Moray Street to Portage Avenue, then east to Vernon Road and back to the centre of the Assiniboine River. Its population is 20 417.

That, Mr. Deputy Speaker, is the definition of the constituency of St. James, but it is not the definition of my community. My community is the industrial eastern end and the Winnipeg International Airport, with 24-hour service making it our gateway to the world. It is the community centres: Bord-Aire, Bourkevale, Deer Lodge, Silver Heights and Sturgeon Creek. It is the local neighbourhoods: east St. James, Deer Lodge, south Portage and Silver Heights. It is the public schools: Stevenson-Britannia, Linwood, Assiniboine, George Waters Middle School, St. James Collegiate, Strathmillan, Silver Heights Collegiate and Golden Gate Middle School.

My constituency is found in Deer Lodge Centre. It is in the Kiwanis Courts. It is in the long-term care and homes for the elderly that dot this constituency. It is the businesses, large and small, spread throughout St. James and in the Assiniboine Chamber of Commerce that speaks for many of them. This chamber represents the second-largest business area in Winnipeg and is the facilitator and protector of our economic base and expansion.

It is in the community groups such as the Friends of Bruce Park, who work tirelessly to improve this community. This is a group of residents who have banded together to diligently conserve and preserve the beauty of this park jewel and of Truro Creek which runs through it.

It is also, Mr. Deputy Speaker, in 17 Wing Air Command, where the men and women of our armed forces work and live with their families. It is all these groups and many others who work to make our community a better place. It is the Legion Branch No. 4, the second-largest legion branch in the country. This legion branch is very active and maintains a high profile. On Remembrance Day, they organize an event held in Bruce Park which draws 2000 people. The legion is also to be congratulated for their work with young people in ensuring that the sacrifice

of our soldiers in the wars of this century, the Great War, the Second World War and the Korean conflict are not forgotten.

As well, it is important to acknowledge the efforts made by Ivan Poitras and other members of the UN peacekeeping division supported by other veterans' associations to ensure that the contributions of our peacekeepers throughout the world are not forgotten.

Many of our citizens today make sacrifices which include risking their lives, as well as many months away from families to ensure peace in countries around the globe. Mounties, Red Cross workers, Elections Canada workers and other agencies are among the men and women serving to keep peace in war-ravaged countries.

August 9, the day in 1974 when nine Canadian soldiers were shot over Syria, it was declared Peacekeeping Day last session in recognition of these citizens. I took great pride in being part of the initiative and once again thank all the members of the Legislature for the unanimous passing of this resolution.

Troops from 17 Wing, among others, are going to be spending this Christmas in Bosnia. They deserve our thoughts and gratitude. This is the real definition of my constituency. It is people, people whose lives and opportunities have improved over the past year. These are people who will soon see the beginning of the construction of a new gymnasium for the George Waters-St. James Collegiate complex. They have seen the emergence of the new Academy of Science and Technology at St. James Collegiate where students will learn the latest in computer and information technology.

Our provincial government, Mr. Deputy Speaker, takes great pride in supporting the St. James-Assiniboia School Division and the staff and students of St. James Collegiate in these initiatives. Silver Heights high school also enjoyed a flourishing year with a 30% increase in enrolment from students outside the division. They credit this to the diverse academic, athletic and arts opportunities. Their band is second to none.

* (16:00)

As it is in my constituency, so it is across the province. People, Manitobans have seen changes over the last year. They have seen \$6 million put into a provincial bursary program, the first since 1993. They have seen additional support for computers for schools and libraries and \$5 million for 400 new public internet access sites to be located in schools and community facilities across the province.

They have seen supports for new medical technology and equipment for hospitals and initiatives such as the Healthy Child initiative that earmarked money for parent/child centres and prenatal and early childhood nutrition programs. The appreciation for the increase for day-care workers was exemplified for me in the heart-warming presentation of a huge thank you card made by the children at Linwood day care whose staff walked them to my constituency office to present it. Those smiling faces, children and staff, are imprinted forever in my memory.

As well, Mr. Deputy Speaker, over the past year Manitobans have seen and heard about tax reduction. They have heard about the \$75 reduction in property taxes beginning in the year 2000. They have heard about reductions in personal income taxes totalling \$100 million and change to the family tax credit, and they have heard of the plans that will remove 15 000 low-income Manitobans from the tax roles.

Similarly, they have seen or perhaps been involved in the massive consultation that our Government has undertaken with Manitobans from business and labour to community groups in the farming community. Our Government has reached out to Manitobans in the spirit of co-operation to find out what their vision is for our province as we move into the new millennium.

In my own constituency, I would like to acknowledge the work of the Winnipeg Airport Authority which has worked very hard to bring the community into its deliberations concerning the future of the Winnipeg International Airport. They have reached out to the community through a series of public consultations on the 20-year plan for the airport. They have also worked with Manitoba Conservation on

environmental issues and recently hired a full-time professional to hasten resolutions. Their recognition that the airport is part of the greater community is commendable.

Members on this side of the House recognize that in 1999 the people of Manitoba provided us with the opportunity to exercise trusteeship over this land and these communities we call Manitoba. It is a trusteeship that we all take very seriously. Fulfilling this trusteeship is not something we can do or should do single-handedly. It is one that has to be done through consultation with all the diverse groups in our province. It must be done by listening to the points of view expressed by all the people of Manitoba.

In the spring of this year, the Manitoba Century Summit brought together business, labour and community leaders to assess the challenges and opportunities facing Manitoba. Such consultation will continue through the Premier's advisory council so that strategic initiatives in training, immigration and investment are co-ordinated. Our vision for Manitoba must be done by building a consensus among those points of view and articulating a vision and a plan of action out of that consensus, that vision in both the First Session of the Legislature and this session as articulated by the Speech from the Throne.

To reinforce my point on consultation, at this point, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I wish to extend my gratitude to the ministers of our Government who over the past year have joined me in visiting the people of St. James. The Minister of Health (Mr. Chomiak) has visited Deer Lodge Centre to listen to residents and staff on several occasions on the food issue. The Minister of Education (Mr. Caldwell) has visited several schools to see first-hand the needs and advancements. The Minister of Industry, Trade and Mines (Ms. Mihychuk) has visited Boeing and Air Canada maintenance bays. The Minister of Family Services and Housing (Mr. Sale) has visited Kiwanis Courts. The Minister of Labour (Ms. Barrett) has a visit planned for January to Bristol Aerospace.

These visits greatly assist me in better knowing the institutions and assuring them of

our sincere interest in them. The vision articulated in our first Speech from the Throne on November 25th spoke about renewing our commitment to northern development and working with First Nations to ensure their share in the benefits of future development. It spoke to the need to preserve the vitality of rural communities and to revitalize the commercial and neighbourhood cores of our urban centres. It spoke to the need to preserve and improve a quality health care system and to build a modern and responsive education system for our young people. It spoke to the need for participation from all Manitobans and it spoke of trust and respect for all sectors of the community.

The sectors of the community called Manitoba are reflected in my own community of St. James. As with all members of this house, I take great personal satisfaction in meeting with and providing support and help to my constituents on issues of importance to them. One of the greatest pleasures I take from my role as a member of the Legislature is being able to work with people who show such a commitment to their community.

I am reminded of several students at Golden Gate Middle School who were unhappy with the city by-law that prevented them from taking their skateboards to school. Their solution: change the by-laws. They contacted the Winnipeg Police, their city councillors, the Mayor, my honourable colleague the member from Assiniboia and myself. With the help of their principal, they organized a petition to City Council to change the by-law. City Council this past summer voted to allow skateboarders to travel on residential sidewalks.

These students learned first-hand the citizen's right to practise democracy. They are to be congratulated.

I am reminded also of the parent councils and volunteers of Stevenson-Britannia and école Assiniboine, who did fundraising to provide new play structures for their schools. Manitoba's Community Places Program and the Department of Conservation were able to help école Assiniboine in their efforts. The parent councils

of George Waters and St. James Collegiate also worked diligently toward ensuring a new gymnasium.

Similarly, I would like to acknowledge the work of the St. James BIZ, through whose efforts Portage Avenue businesses in St. James have painted elaborate and colourful murals depicting scenes from our collective history. Park benches and additional metal trees have also contributed to identifying and beautifying the area.

I am also gratified by the community groups in sponsoring community resources network sites for public Internet access in St. James. The Community Connections Program offered by the Government is considering three seniors sites which will ensure seniors, otherwise unable to access the outside world, will avoid isolation as well as stimulate and educate for a better quality of life for all seniors. They are also considering sites with a more diverse population and age range.

I am awed by the skill and versatility in our aerospace industry in St. James. I have visited the Boeing plant. I have seen the commitment to quality in both the management and workers. I visited the Air Canada maintenance operation and have been told of the efforts to bring union and management closer together to work for the betterment of our province.

Again, I am most appreciative of the opportunities to work with the Winnipeg Chamber of Commerce, the City, Tourism Manitoba, the military, my honourable colleague the member from Assiniboia and a few members from the private sector to promote the integration of our citizens at 17 Wing Air Command into the surrounding community. We are all currently attempting to establish a military affairs committee, a working group to determine needs and direction. Having come from a military family, army brat, I like to say, I am keenly aware of the potential for feelings of disconnectedness with each move into an area, so I take personal pleasure in this initiative of including our military families.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, from skateboarders to parent councils, from the St. James-Assiniboia

neighbourhood resource centre to the Western Canada Aviation Museum, to the St. James-Assiniboia Senior Centre to Deer Lodge Centre, to our churches, to our daycare centres, I am gratified and heartened by the work of the St. James community in adding to quality of life in our community. Such is the commitment articulated in our first Speech from the Throne.

Our second Speech from the Throne was presented yesterday to the House and assembled guests by His Honour the Lieutenant-Governor. This speech outlines the continuation of the program articulated ably in our first speech and our commitments made to Manitobans, among those to restore public health care to all regions of our province and to provide new hope for young people through opportunities in education.

* (16:10)

These commitments form a basis of laying the foundation for the long-term future of our province. They are the basis of a Manitoba vision, a vision that recognizes that it is the welfare of all Manitobans, both present and future, that is at stake here. It is a vision that recognizes that learning on the part of our citizens is not something confined and prescribed to an age group but that continues throughout a person's life.

I am reminded at this point of a person I mentioned in a previous speech, a young mother of two who shared her vision with me of returning to school and making something more of herself one day. She said to me that we need a government who will not make it difficult for people to fix bad choices they make when they are young. I believe this is the government of which she spoke. It is government that sees a vision that recognizes that the strength of a society is found in the opportunities for its members to expand and enhance their skill and learning throughout their lives, and to the end, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I am proud to support an agenda that will rebuild and expand our educational infrastructure at both our universities and colleges, an agenda that will ensure that post-secondary education is affordable, is essential for the well-being of our province.

It is also an agenda that recognizes that it is in the home with their parents that most children set the course for success in learning in school. Our Government has committed itself to supporting the nurturing role of parents through increasing parental leave provisions to 37 weeks to coincide with federal legislation. As well, as a first in Canada, our Government proposes a prenatal benefit for pregnant mothers. Under the Healthy Child Initiative, we are seeking the establishment of a network of parent-child centres across Manitoba. I am proud to be part of a government who looks to the future and recognizes that to achieve a secured future we must invest in our children and grandchildren. It is only through our capacity and willingness as a government to support and assist the caregivers of our children in providing the opportunities that will ensure an educated, thoughtful citizenry in the 21st century. This Government has also recognized the community nature of public schools. Increasingly these schools can be served as the hub of life in a neighbourhood. In my own constituency of St. James, the school division operates a highly successful continuing education evening program.

The security needed for our children and in our economy are similarly needed in our health care system. Our Government recognizes that the success of the health care system resides in the skill and quality of the people on the front lines providing service. To that end, we are developing a plan to recruit and retain physicians to work in the province. Doctors and nurses are the pillar upon which the health delivery system stands. We need to ensure that we do not repeat the mistakes of the '90s and drive these groups out of the province.

I am reminded here of what I said in my first speech in the House. In reading some of the speeches from the Tories, I was struck by one comment that helped me realize what a big part of the problem health care was. One former member of the former government suggested that the members of the governing party did not have the expertise to make decisions in health care and therefore must look to the higher authorities for direction and answers. That was the problem, too much looking up and not out or down. In these times of change, both formal and informal caregivers need to redefine their role

and involvement in health care. The challenge for policymakers is to provide avenues to allow inclusion and involvement of those caregivers in determining how best to meet the range of needs identified. I know that from the remarks in the Throne Speech that this is the government to resolve these issues.

We will assure the professional working in the public service professions that we want to work with them in enhancing and improving the service provided to the public. Mr. Deputy Speaker, before I was elected in the St. James constituency I was one of those health care professionals. During all of my working life in health care I operated under the assumption that whatever the problem was in health care, my colleagues and I would be part of the solution to those problems. I have friends who are teachers who speak about having the same assumptions about their roles in education. What became clear to all of us in the '90s was that the government of the day did not see it that way. What became clear to us was that we were not seen as part of the solution but as part of the problem.

I am now part of a new government, a government for a new century and a new millennium. It is a government that says to health care and education professionals that they were right. They are not part of the problem but indeed part of the solution and we ask them to join with us in solving the problem. We have an opportunity to build a society where all have a right to expect fair treatment, to build a society that protects its most vulnerable members. We have already taken action to reinforce the protections for seniors and persons in care. We are looking in the future to issue a white paper for a strategy on disabilities and a new plan for mental health treatment and support.

If we seize this opportunity to build such a society based upon the principles outlined in the Throne Speech, the child born today will have had the benefit of supports and resources provided to his or her parents which augment the loving nurturing they will provide. The child born today will have access to an effective and caring public health care system. That child born today can experience a lifetime of learning opportunities in a province whose natural

resources are treated like precious jewels. That child born today can have the benefits of a vibrant, forward-looking economy in which his or her future is limited only by the strength of the desire to achieve it. That child born today will be able to walk down any street anywhere and feel safe. That child born today will be able to choose to live in a rural community secure in the knowledge that that decision is not going to mean an extra burden or limited chances for a gratifying life.

December is a perfect month for a Throne Speech that articulates such a vision, a Manitoba vision. December is the time for reflections of what has been and dreams of what can be. I support strongly our Government's vision of what can be. Thank you.

Mr. Stuart Murray (Leader of the Official Opposition): Mr. Deputy Speaker, I move, seconded by the Member for River East (Mrs. Mitchelson), that the debate be now adjourned.

Motion agreed to.

Mr. Speaker in the Chair

House Business

Hon. Gord Mackintosh (Government House Leader): Mr. Speaker, on a matter of House Business, I would ask that you canvass the House to see if there is leave to proceed with the second readings of the five Government bills that we gave first reading to earlier today.

Mr. Speaker: On a matter of house business, I canvass the House to see if there is leave to proceed with second reading of the five government bills that were given first reading today. Is there support? *[Agreed]*

* (16:20)

SECOND READINGS

Bill 5—The Helen Betty Osborne Memorial Foundation Act

Hon. Gord Mackintosh (Government House Leader): Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the Minister of Aboriginal and Northern Affairs (Mr. Robinson), that Bill 5, The Helen Betty

Osborne Memorial Foundation Act; Loi sur la Fondation commémorative Helen Betty Osborne, be now read a second time and be referred to a committee of this House.

Motion presented.

Mr. Mackintosh: I rise today to honour Helen Betty Osborne by bringing in a bill which will establish a foundation in her name. It is fitting that I do this on December 6, a day which has come to commemorate violence against women and our fight against that.

If Helen Betty Osborne had not been a woman, she would not have been subjected to the sexual assault and murder that, of course, ended her life. This is a double tragedy, however, because Helen Betty Osborne, known as Betty, I understand, to her friends and family, was an Aboriginal woman. After the extensive study of this tragedy and its consequences by the Aboriginal Justice Inquiry, there is little question that those who victimized Betty were able to escape justice for as long as they did because she was Aboriginal.

The inquiry's detailed review of the case also concluded that the justice system's response was affected by the fact that she was an Aboriginal woman. For many people the manner in which this case was handled provided proof of the inability of a criminal justice system to have adequately served Aboriginal people.

Sixteen years passed before the justice system was able to bring those charged with the murder to trial. This caused immense pain to the Osborne family. While the tragedy of this case cannot be undone, we can recognize the aspirations of Ms. Osborne to become a teacher. She dreamt of becoming a teacher. While that dream was cut short, this legislation will ensure that hopes of other young Aboriginal people can become a reality. With this legislation, out of tragedy, we can create a positive legacy that provides certain Aboriginal persons interested in pursuing post-secondary education with the financial means to attain their goal.

Helen Betty Osborne was a young woman who wanted to get an education and then wanted to go on to educate others. It was our feeling that

a fitting memorial to her would be to establish a trust which would allow other young Aboriginal persons to enter post-secondary education. The act establishes a foundation that will be responsible for receiving donations, monetary or otherwise, and for providing financial assistance to those who qualify under the act.

The affairs of the foundation will be managed by a board of trustees appointed by the Lieutenant-Governor-in-Council and will consist of no fewer than five and no more than seven individuals. It is my understanding the Osborne family has accepted a position on the board of trustees. The board of trustees will be responsible for managing the affairs of the foundation, managing and investing any donations received by the foundation and determining the selection criteria on which the awards will be established.

The act allows for a fund to be established to aid the foundation in achieving its objectives. I am pleased to advise that my department has committed an initial grant of \$50,000 to be provided to the foundation to support Aboriginal people. The department believes that it is essential to provide students with the support in pursuing their dreams of obtaining post-secondary education. Therefore the act allows each student to use the award as needed. Awards will take the form of scholarships, bursaries or grants. They may be used to cover the cost of books, tuition, or any other expense such as rent or travel that may be required to allow the student to attend school.

A foundation is required to submit an audit paid for by the government at the end of each fiscal year. An annual report including audited financial statements as well as statements outlining the board's activities of the past year will be presented to the Legislative Assembly.

I am pleased today that this bill marks part, I believe, of the healing process that is so important to attaining closure for the family in this matter. The fact that this foundation and the awards are sanctioned by statute elevates the significance of this in the Manitoba community. I highly commend it to the House and I look forward to the proceedings leading to royal assent. Thank you.

Hon. Eric Robison (Minister of Aboriginal and Northern Affairs): It is indeed an honour for me to stand here and second the bill as proposed by the Minister of Justice (Mr. Mackintosh).

I believe that all of us are quite aware of the case that has received widespread media coverage. In 1971 four non-Aboriginal men participated in the abduction and brutal murder of a young Aboriginal student, Helen Betty Osborne, at The Pas, Manitoba. Her family was devastated, and for the next two decades their concerns were largely ignored by the justice system. For 16 years no one was charged. Finally in 1987 charges were laid against two of the men when one of the four testified. At the trial only one man, Dwayne Archie Johnston, was convicted and sentenced to life imprisonment.

Aboriginal people across this province were deeply disappointed and understandably angry at the injustice. The next year the Aboriginal Justice Inquiry was launched to investigate this murder along with the murder of J. J. Harper in Winnipeg and the treatment of Aboriginal people by the justice system.

Justices Alvin Hamilton and Murray Sinclair spent three years interviewing more than 1000 presentations from witnesses across the province. They visited 36 Aboriginal communities of which 20 were accessible only by winter road and air travel. The 2 reports issued in August of 1991 were landmark documents.

Volume 1 dealt with recommendations for change. It began with the statement: "The justice system has failed Manitoba's Aboriginal people on a massive scale." A year ago this Government announced the formation of the Aboriginal Justice Implementation Commission under the leadership of Paul Chartrand and Wendy Whitecloud with elders Doris Young of The Pas and Eva McKay of Sioux Valley as their assistants, and their work continues to this day.

Volume 2 deals with the murders and investigations into the deaths of Helen Betty Osborne and J. J. Harper. Both volumes are

highly recommended for reading for anyone interested in the justice system.

In September of 1995 Manitobans were shocked to learn that Mr. Johnston had been granted day parole for over a year, and a petition campaign was launched and followed by a Walk For Justice from Norway House, the home community of Helen Betty Osborne, to the provincial Legislature. The march of the family of Helen Betty Osborne and hundreds of others put the rights of victims on a national agenda.

That December representatives of the family and that community met with the National Parole Board in British Columbia. As a result, in January of 1996, for the first time the parole board came to Manitoba to hear the concerns of the family and the community. The parole board of the Pacific region also agreed to review the previous decision and to allow the family at future hearings. That April the parole board revoked day parole for Mr. Johnston.

Several times, both in 1996 and since that time, myself and others have met with Mr. Johnston to bring closure to this matter. This healing circle has been vital to assisting the family to deal with the tragedy. At the end of November of 1996, the parole board held a two-day session with Johnston, family members, the grand chiefs of MKO and AMC at that time, George Muswaggon and Phil Fontaine respectively, and myself. For the first time, Mr. Johnston spoke about the crime to the family and then gave a statement to the RCMP. The RCMP and the Province of Manitoba were considering at that time laying additional charges as a result of that statement.

In October of 1997, Mr. Johnston was granted full parole, and that application for a full parole went unopposed by the family due to the reconciliation efforts that had been made by Mr. Johnston. This is the first time that there has been such participation between an offender and the family using the parole board and is a model for other victims seeking closure. Regrettably, despite the evidence and efforts of many people, it was decided not to lay charges against the

other men that were involved in the abduction and murder.

*(16:30)

The Osborne family has gone great distances to deal with the injustice that they have faced with the murder of Helen Betty Osborne. I have a great deal of admiration for Justine Osborne, the mother of the family, the many siblings of the late Betty Osborne, but most particularly to Cecilia Osborne who was, at the time of Helen Betty Osborne's murder, a 10-year-old girl. She has been in the forefront, standing up for the family, dealing with these difficult issues, and her determination and courage are a model for others, I am sure. I am privileged to call her a friend, a sister, and I deeply admire her successes in overcoming great challenges in her own life.

Quite recently, I received a letter from a woman by the name of Barbara Malloch from Westmount, Quebec. In that letter, she says: Dear Mr. Robinson, I enclose a cheque in the amount of \$1000 as a contribution to the Helen Betty Osborne Fund. I am glad that something good may have come from such a terrible tragedy. I am sure that the Osborne family has suffered greatly over the years. Please let them know that others across the country have shared in their pain. I am glad the fund will be directed towards young people who wish to become teachers, and I wish them well. She signed that letter Barbara Malloch, Westmount, Quebec. I do thank her for the contribution.

As the Justice Minister indicated, Betty Osborne wanted to become a teacher. Sadly, this dream was ended by the murder. I am very pleased to speak on the legislation establishing a foundation in her name that will benefit young Aboriginal people wanting to act on the dreams that she had as well.

As we celebrate the new foundation today and look forward to the many students who will benefit in the years to come, I want to say how pleased I am to see this very positive development in what has been a very tragic and sad story for the family, the community of

Norway House and Aboriginal people in this province.

I would like to encourage all members in this House to support Bill 5, The Helen Betty Osborne Memorial Foundation Act, and speak out on this fitting memorial in her memory.

Mr. Marcel Laurendeau (St. Norbert): It gives me great pleasure to rise today and speak on this matter before the House.

The bill before us today is a bit of legislation which is about fulfilling a dream. As the Attorney General and the Minister have brought forward, Betty Osborne wanted to be a teacher. The dream of being a teacher was never fulfilled, but the fund will give that possibility to a number of other Aboriginals who will want that dream fulfilled in the future. I am pleased to see this type of fund coming forward from a tragic situation like this to be able to say that there is some positive out there and that Betty Osborne will never be forgotten.

People within my constituency at the foundation who have got addiction problems, who have been through the system and have not had that ability to get assistance, they have that dream, but they never had that ability to go that extra step. This will put that extra step for the books, to travel and the other mechanisms in play that might just give them that opportunity to move ahead, to be the teachers and the doctors and the lawyers.

Mr. Speaker, I think it is important because it makes them, as a whole, a bigger and better part of our community as we work together for a strong Manitoba. So I am proud of this legislation, and I am looking forward to it getting to committee. I know that we have one other member who wants to put his views on the record.

Mr. Darren Praznik (Lac du Bonnet): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased, as the Justice critic, to add a few comments on this particular piece of legislation. As I think members of this House have gathered already, the Progressive Conservative caucus will be supporting this bill. We are certainly pleased to provide the necessary approvals to expedite its passage in a

timely matter, as the Attorney General (Mr. Mackintosh) explained to me last week, because certainly there has to be a time period to have this foundation in place so that it can be operative for the next educational season and opportunity to provide scholarships. So we certainly accept that as a very valid reason to expedite its process and to assist it on its way.

I also want to thank the Attorney General for the briefing that he provided. One of the concerns that we had that I think he fulfilled fully for us was that the provisions that scholarships be available to Aboriginal persons was our concern when we saw the first draft of the bill as to the definition of Aboriginal persons. We were somewhat concerned that it might not be interpreted to include Metis and Inuit, which is the definition used in the Canadian Constitution. When I met with the minister, I think we had been thinking along the same line, and he had made the changes in the bill that will be coming to this House that includes such a definition. So the co-operation in working through those issues and the discussions and the common line of thinking, I think, are very admirable for this Chamber and certainly prove to Manitobans that, where there is a common will, much can be achieved, and where we find a common ground, that it is always a very pleasurable experience for us to be able to take such action.

Mr. Speaker, I would just like to add a few comments on the importance of this legislation. Having served as a Minister of Aboriginal Affairs and having been the Minister of Northern Affairs and the holder of a variety of Cabinet offices during my time in Government, one more fully, I think, appreciates the need for this type of gesture as part of, as the minister and the bill clearly indicate, a healing process, how important it is for this Legislature, representing the whole of the people of this province, to be able to take an action to say to the family, to say to the community, to say to Aboriginal people in our province that the viciousness of this murder, which was based on sexism and racism, yes, several decades ago, the horror of that is so terrible that this Legislature has picked this particular case to take an act of healing, but one in which sends a very clear message that sexism

and racism should not be and will not be, we hope in the future, a part of life in our province.

I think none of us would be so naive to think that either sexism or racism is gone from us. It certainly exists today. I would like to believe, and I think members would join with me in this statement, that we have come a long way from the 1960s and 1970s in the context of the time in which Helen Betty Osborne was so viciously killed. I would like to believe that. I honestly, sincerely believe that we have come a long way on both fronts, but there is still a ways to go. It is one of those areas where we must always be vigilant.

So I commend the Minister of Justice (Mr. Mackintosh) for bringing forward this very important gesture of this piece of legislation to establish this foundation as an ongoing tribute. It does more than recognize one life or one terrible incident, but I think it stands as a reminder for future generations of society how it was and society as it is and society as we would like it to be. It stands as one more reminder of the battles within our own province that we must continue to fight on a daily basis and I think we are fighting with some success.

To the family of Helen Betty Osborne, I would hope that the Minister of Justice (Mr. Mackintosh) has been able to persuade them to perhaps, if circumstances are favourable, attend that committee. Hearing their words would be, I think, welcome to us all, hearing their thoughts. I think it is also part of the healing process for them to be there. I know the Attorney General and I had a chance to speak, as our House leaders have, about ensuring that we provide an appropriate committee setting for that to happen, and I am pleased to see that taking place.

I offer these thoughts and my own reflection on this particular incident. I remember very well the series that was done by I believe it was the CBC on this particular incident when we got to see—I was very young at the time, very, very young, in my first decade of life. I remember those days from a child's eyes. To see them portrayed in a drama about the way people viewed each other, a way non-Aboriginal society viewed Aboriginal society is really telling, because my children today thankfully live in a

world where they would not tolerate what we saw in our province just a few decades ago. It is very telling, and again I think it recognizes the changes that our society have undergone in the last few decades, certainly for the good.

* (16:40)

As the father of two daughters, the horror that a parent must feel to lose a child in such a brutal and terrible manner, one can feel but certainly not know it. For many in this Chamber who are the parents of children, the parents of daughters, to just contemplate the horror that that family must have undergone and the pain that they still must bear is tremendous indeed. I think the greatest nightmare for any of us as parents is to know that our children who we bring into this world, who we nourish, who we care for, who we give our unending and unconditional love to every waking moment of our lives, who we try to protect from every danger, from all the horrors and ills that this world can contain, our great fear is that someday we cannot protect them. Yes, that is part of growing up, but to think of any of our children having to undergo that horrible, horrible experience that Helen Betty Osborne underwent in the moments and time leading up to her death is I think a burden that no human being should ever have to bear. And to think that it happened in such a callous and terrible way, because of the sex of that individual and because of their race, makes it even more horrific and terrible.

So I say to the family today that although we cannot bring her back, although we cannot experience the pain that they must feel, although we cannot make up for the years that have been lost, the memories that never will be, in our own way on behalf of their fellow citizens and neighbours we can at least perform this gesture in an attempt to say that our society and community stand very firmly on the ground that what happened was wrong and should never happen to anyone else's child again. Will we be successful? I hope. Will other children die unnecessarily in the future? Probably. But should we ever abandon the battle? Never. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: Is the House ready for the question? The question before the House is

second reading of Bill 5, The Helen Betty Osborne Memorial Foundation Act, be now read a second time and be referred to a committee of this House. Agreed?

Some Honourable Members: Agreed.

Mr. Speaker: Agreed and so ordered.

Bill 4—The Manitoba Employee Ownership Fund Corporation Amendment Act

Hon. MaryAnn Mihychuk (Minister of Industry, Trade and Mines): I move, seconded by the Minister of Education (Mr. Caldwell), that Bill 4, The Manitoba Employee Ownership Fund Corporation Amendment Act (Loi modifiant la Loi constituant en corporation le Fonds de participation des travailleurs du Manitoba), be now read a second time and be referred to a committee of this House.

Motion presented.

Ms. Mihychuk: It is my pleasure to introduce Bill 4, The Manitoba Employee Ownership Fund Corporation Amendment Act. This bill amends The Manitoba Employee Ownership Fund Corporation Act we refer to as the Crocus act because it governs the Crocus Investment Fund. This bill repeals subsections 6.8 of the Crocus act which is the cooling-off-period rule. The cooling-off-period rule says that if you own shares of Crocus and you redeem those shares, you may not for a period of three years buy any more shares of Crocus. The bill also corrects an error in the French translation. The purpose of repealing the cooling-off-period rule is to put Crocus on a level playing field with the other labour-sponsored fund, ENSIS Growth Fund.

ENSIS is governed by a different act, The Labour-Sponsored Venture Capital Corporations Act. ENSIS's governing act does not have a cooling-off-period rule. ENSIS's act does not have this rule because, between the time that Crocus was established in 1993 and ENSIS was established in 1997, the best practices for labour-sponsored funds has changed. Cooling-off periods are now handled under the Manitoba Income Tax Act. Under The Income Tax Act, if you recently redeem shares of a labour-sponsored fund you may buy shares of a labour-

sponsored fund, but you will not be eligible to receive a tax credit.

This cooling-off-period rule applies to both Crocus and ENSIS. It applies for three years after you redeem shares of Crocus or ENSIS. Because The Income Tax Act provides a cooling-off-period rule, the cooling-off-period rule in the Crocus act is redundant. But redundancy is not the reason for repealing the cooling-off period in the Crocus act. Fairness is the reason. If we do not repeal the cooling-off period, Crocus will be at a competitive disadvantage vis à vis ENSIS. In the upcoming RRSP season Crocus and ENSIS will be competing with each other to raise new funds, that is, to sell shares.

Should the status quo prevail, a person who redeems shares of Crocus may buy ENSIS shares but is prohibited from further buying or reinvesting in Crocus. Further, that person will get a 15% federal tax credit for having purchased shares of ENSIS. Therefore, the status quo provides an incentive to redeem your shares of Crocus and buy shares of ENSIS. This would result in an unlevel playing field for the upcoming RRSP season.

I would emphasize to members that there is an urgency for this particular amendment to be made now in this session. The whole period on labour-sponsored funds is eight years. This means that, if you bought your shares of Crocus eight years ago, you have fulfilled your obligation with respect to having received a tax credit, and you may now redeem your shares without penalty.

In 2001, six million dollars' worth of Crocus shares are eligible for redemption. This will be the first time that that sizable amount of shares of either Crocus or ENSIS has been eligible for redemption. It is because of this first-time situation that there is an urgency to amend the Crocus Act. Repealing the cooling-off period in the Crocus act will allow the six million dollars' worth of shares of Crocus that are eligible for redemption of this year to be reinvested in either ENSIS or Crocus, if that is the preference of the individual investor.

I hope that this clarifies the intention of this bill. I thank the House for its attention to this matter and hope that we will be able to deal with this legislation in an efficient manner so that investors will have an opportunity to invest in either Crocus or ENSIS.

* (16:50)

Mr. John Loewen (Fort Whyte): I do have a few comments I would like to put on the record with regard to this bill, but before I do that, I wonder if I could have permission to ask a question of clarification of the minister.

Mr. Speaker: Does the honourable minister wish to answer a question? *[interjection]* The Honourable Minister has agreed.

Mr. Loewen: I thank the minister for that. Just in her explanatory discussion of the bill, she raised a point a couple of times about the cooling-off period being three years. My understanding was that it was two years, and in fact in the explanatory note it explains that it is two years. I understand it could be some timing where it could differ a little bit, but I do believe it is only a two-year cooling-off period. I wonder if she could just clarify that for the House.

Ms. Mihychuk: Yes, the member has pointed out an inconsistency. Having checked on the actual bill and the provisions, the three-year cooling-off period is actually correct and that the two-year printed on the bill must be amended. It is a mistake in the printing.

Mr. Loewen: I thank the minister for that clarification. On this side of the House, we have no particular objection to repealing this cooling-off period. It does, in fact, put the Crocus Fund at a little bit of a disadvantage, not only in Manitoba, but we also note that we do not believe there is anywhere else in Canada where funds like this have that type of cooling-off period, so I do not think it is of particular importance that that clause remain.

As I said, we have no problem with this—only I guess as a matter of principle. The minister spoke about fairness, which we heard the word often used in the Throne Speech. I guess I would just like to remind the minister

that "fairness" should mean fairness. While this does in fact make this particular aspect of the bill, put it on an equal footing with the ENSIS Fund, there are many restrictions on the ENSIS Fund in terms of where it can make investments which definitely put it at a distinct disadvantage with the Crocus Fund in terms of selling; and, particularly when we are this close to year-end, definitely the ENSIS Fund is at a disadvantage when compared in the marketplace to the Crocus Fund. I think that is a fact— I see the minister nodding her head—that I think has been recognized.

Certainly, the ENSIS Fund has requested that the Government put them on equal footing. I guess I am a little disappointed that, while the Government could move quickly for the Crocus Fund, it did not find it in its power to move as quickly for the ENSIS Fund to put them on a fair footing over a year-end. I am not sure—well, I am sure that nothing will be done about it prior to the end of this year as, if it was going to be done, I would have assumed that we would have had the legislation introduced today so we could pass it for year-end.

So while we will be supporting this amendment, I would just like to put on the record our disappointment that we have now a situation in Manitoba where a minister once again has stood up and talked about fairness but who by her very actions has in fact made sure that we have a situation where fairness does not apply. So once again, as we see in this legislation and in the lack of any amending legislation of the ENSIS act, an unfairness in the system is perpetuated.

I would ask the minister, maybe at a different time during Question Period we would ask the minister if she would commit to an overhaul of the ENSIS act so we are not in this situation next year and that at that point the ENSIS Fund is in fact on an equal footing and in terms of fairness in all respects to the act will be treated equally to the Crocus Fund. Thank you.

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 4, The Manitoba Employee Ownership Fund Corporation Amendment Act, that it be now read a second time and be referred to a committee of this House. Agreed?

Some Honourable Members: Agreed.

Mr. Speaker: Agreed and so ordered.

Bill 2—The Employment Standards Code Amendment Act

Hon. Becky Barrett (Minister of Labour): Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the Minister of Industry, Trade and Mines (Ms. Mihychuk), that Bill 2, The Employment Standards Code Amendment Act (Loi modifiant le Code des normes d'emploi), be now read a second time and be referred to a committee of this House.

Motion presented.

Ms. Barrett: Mr. Speaker, I am very pleased today to introduce Bill 2, which proposes to amend the Employment Standards Code for purposes of extending the period of parental leave, lowering the employment requirements to qualify for maternity and parental leave and requiring employees on leave to give their employers notice as to the date that they intend to end their leave.

In June of this year, the federal government amended employment insurance legislation to provide for an additional 20 weeks of parental leave benefits. As well, the number of hours of employment in the previous year needed to qualify for benefits was reduced from 700 to 600 hours. The benefits provided for by these amendments will be available to parents, whether child born or adopted, on or after December 31 of the year 2000.

To enable Manitoba workers to take full advantage of the improved federal employment insurance benefits, it is being proposed that the Employment Standards Code be amended to provide for 37 weeks instead of the current 17 weeks of unpaid parental leave. This additional leave would be available to both biological and adoptive parents and will enable either or both

parents to spend additional quality time with their newborn or adoptive children. In the case of a natural mother, the maximum period of leave would increase to 54 weeks, consisting of 17 weeks of maternity leave and 37 weeks of parental leave.

In addition, to provide greater consistency with legislation in other jurisdictions, the code would be amended to decrease the qualifying period for maternity and parental leave from 12 months to 7 months of employment with an employer. As a result, more employees will be eligible for leave. In other jurisdictions the qualifying period ranges anywhere from 13 weeks to 12 months of employment with an employer. The proposed change will place Manitoba in the midrange as compared to qualifying periods in other jurisdictions.

In addition, new provisions are being added that will require employees on leave to give their employers two weeks or one pay period, whichever is longer, advance notice as to when they intend to return to work in cases where they choose not to take the full amount of leave available to them. This will give employers the necessary time to properly notify any employee who may have to be let go as a result of another employee returning from maternity or parental leave. Most other jurisdictions have a requirement of this kind.

In closing, Mr. Speaker, I do want to acknowledge several groups of people who have assisted in making this bill come to this point and assisting in getting it passed expeditiously. The first is the Official Opposition and the Member for River Heights (Mr. Gerrard) who have availed themselves of briefing that I have given to them and have been very supportive of expediting this process. A second group of people is the number of community and employee and employer groups that I met with over a very short period of time to discuss the issues in this potential legislation who also provided me with a great deal of very good advice.

* (17:00)

Finally, and certainly not least, I want to thank the Labour Management Review

Committee, a committee that met just earlier this week and did something that has been very unusual in the history of the Labour Management Review Committee. They were able in a very short period of time to reach consensus on every single element that was given to them and every single element that was given to them is in the bill. Seriously, Mr. Speaker, they did a wonderful job. They all worked very closely together. The employer groups and the employer representatives on the LMRC were elected or selected, I think elected, by the Employers Council, all of whom were represented by the groups that I have met with individually. So it was a very co-operative effort on the part of the LMRC and again kudos go to the chair of the LMRC, Professor Wally Fox-Decent, who facilitated it extremely well.

So I just want to with those brief comments say that I am thrilled and delighted actually that this very important and very positive piece of legislation we expect to pass very expeditiously. It will have an enormously beneficial effect on parents and children at the earliest stages of their life, where I understand, from information given to me by the Member for Springfield (Mr. Schuler), in the first year of life young children learn 80 percent of what we learn the rest of our lives. So with those few words, I commend the process that has led to this and appreciate in advance the support that I have received from all partners in this proceeding. Thank you.

Mr. Stuart Murray (Leader of the Official Opposition): Mr. Speaker, I am delighted to speak on this bill. I think it is a very important piece of legislation. I think that one of the things that is very important I believe is—and I think the minister agrees with me on this—that we must allow parents to spend as much time as possible with newborn children.

I can tell you from my experience that at a company that I was involved in, we had many, many young mothers, women who were working at that company. Indeed while I was there, some of them had one and two children during that time. I just think that what we saw was a great sense of—from a business perspective it made us able to work with those people. It allowed I think for growth. It allowed the women who were employed with us to have a sense that they

were raising their children, but there was never any ambiguous opportunity that they might not be able to get their jobs back. I think the longer that young mothers and, in fact, if it is fathers—that is a decision the family makes—I think it is important that they have a chance to spend those crucial, crucial first months with the newborn child.

I do think, Mr. Speaker, that it is unfortunate that we have known this bill has been discussed, and I guess one of the things that I find a little interesting is that, rather than proceed on a basis of harmony, which really is not a political issue, it is about doing the right thing for Manitoba families, this Government chose instead to put a priority of driving a wedge between business and between labour, and I think that is unfortunate. I think, when all is said and done, I know that we had great opportunities, a lot of challenges. A lot of our members were receiving phone calls because they were somewhat confused when they heard that the federal government was prepared to move on this and the provincial government was stalling. The provincial government was stalling on what we felt on this side of the House was a very important issue.

I am delighted that the Government listened to what we had to say on this, Mr. Speaker, and to put this bill forward. I am certainly delighted on behalf of my colleagues to speak out in support of this bill. Thank you very much.

Mr. Ron Schuler (Springfield): It is indeed a pleasure to get up and speak to this House. I would like first of all to take the opportunity to welcome the two new members. Our leader, I am not allowed to use the name, the Member for Kirkfield Park (Mr. Murray), I would like to welcome him in particular to the House, and my colleague who is sharing the bench with me, the Member for Tuxedo (Mrs. Stefanson). I would like to welcome them. They are two very great additions to our caucus. It is great to have both of you on board.

The other day, Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Education (Mr. Caldwell) and I were at a reception, and he asked how things were going with my family. I know this House is waiting for its regular update. It has been a while since we have been together on how things are going, and

Corina is just growing and getting strong. She is just the cutest little baby, probably the cutest I have ever seen. She brings a lot of joy into the house. At six months, I mean, really, that is what we are talking about. We are talking about young children, infants who are developing, are growing. Probably for many in this House, they are getting the same joy and excitement out of their grandchildren and great-grandchildren, and in this case, we get to watch our daughter develop. She is sitting up, and she is starting to—she is driving, and she just worked her way through the Encyclopedia Britannica. I do not know what we will do with her in the seventh month. I mean, it is—[interjection]

Yes, she surfs the Net already. There are a lot of things that a young child at that age actually does. I mean, when you think of it, a child of that age really does come with an incredible blank slate. It sounds so insignificant, Mr. Speaker, but she actually found her fingers, and it was such a joy. She sits there and she admires her fingers, and she found her feet and on and on and on. These are the stages that a young child goes through.

What this parental leave does is it allows for individuals to stay at home and take their children through these different stages in their life. I believe there is a study out that, in the first several years of life, a human being will learn more in the kitchen of the home than they will learn for the rest of their lives. It just shows you the kind of learning that goes on in the first couple of years.

When we found out and when we heard that the federal government was looking at extending parental leave, certainly we on this side were interested to see what the federal government was going to do and see what was going to come out with it. In early summer to beginning of fall, we saw where the Government was going to be going with parental leave, and our leader of the day, incoming leader, Stuart Murray, approached caucus, and we discussed this particular issue. One of the reasons why we have been so strong and supportive in this particular bill is that, as our leader stated, it was the right thing to do, and that is what we felt right from the start going into this.

We have seen and the Minister of Education will know probably better than most of the early intervention programs that are coming in, the studies that are coming in where they are saying the younger you can start building that foundation for a child, the younger the age, the less you will end up spending later on in the Senior 1 to 4 years. You were better off putting our money into the early years, into the age of where Corina is at, at six months. You are better off having more money placed with her at that age when they are really going through that incredible learning curve, that developmental stage.

You know, we have got great kindergarten programs. I know this House has been very supportive of it. Now we are looking at nursery programs. In fact, we have always been strong advocates as parents. We had Brigitta in it, and our son is going to start in January because you start moving that whole learning curve to a younger age. If you notice that there is a little bit of a developmental difficulty, that is the time to start dealing with it, and it involves parents in the large degree. So we have been very supportive of early intervention. I know that the previous government—I had the opportunity to work with them when I was on the school board. Early intervention programs were the leading edge of where we wanted to go with education, so I believe that this whole parental-leave issue really plays into that. It has been a long time in coming and certainly we have looked at it.

Again, like I said, our leader, the Member for Kirkfield Park (Mr. Murray), said right off the bat this is something that we will support because it is the right thing to do. The studies have shown that. In fact, you know we are very, very pleased in the opportunity our leader has had to state the position of our caucus and of our party. I quote from the *Winnipeg Free Press* of November 23: Fresh from his victory in the Kirkfield Park by-election, Tory leader, the Member for Kirkfield Park, says one of his first moves in the Legislature will be to help quickly pass a law allowing new parents in Manitoba more time off after their children are born.

That is certainly the position we have taken.

* (17:10)

I have had opportunity to meet with the minister. The minister briefed us—pardon the pun—briefly, and then gave us opportunity to speak to her, and we certainly indicated the kinds of things we were looking at in the bill. It has been a very good process. A lot of people say, you know, is that all you guys ever do is fight in the House. Well, this is one of those instances where we do not. Certainly we do have one issue that we believe the Government opposite should have acted on this a lot sooner. In fact, I will quote out of the same newspaper article: that our leader condemned the NDP for dragging its feet on matching the federal initiative but said he would support the Government making changes before Christmas if its legislation met his party's approval. Again on that, perhaps, to the minister, and in hindsight I am sure she probably agrees with us, is that maybe Bill 44 could have waited a year and Bill 2 could have come forward a little bit earlier. It shows when political people get together you see that there is something that has to be addressed, it is the right thing to do.

I would like to just quote an article from the *Winnipeg Free Press* of November 24 in which our leader is also quoted saying: By showing so quickly a willingness to co-operate with the Doer government—when I am quoting newspaper articles, I cannot see the name. My apologies. By showing so quickly a willingness to co-operate with the Government, the Member for Kirkfield Park seems to be signalling that his approach will be different. Then the often-vicious partisanship that has been the hallmark of Manitoba politics for decades is easing, at least on the opposition side of the Legislature. The bonus in this instance for the Member for Kirkfield Park is that he very quickly has seized an opportunity to show a progressive side on social policy. The name of the party he leads is so familiar that it is sometimes easy to forget that Progressive Conservative is not simply a label. It is also a signal that Tories are not one dimensional, but their fiscal side is tempered by a belief in progressive legislation.

I think that capsulizes very clearly what we have been trying to do in this House. The editorial goes on to say the party he now leads he can mould to be something different. In the first days, he seems to be saying that the party

will be conservative and progressive. That is certainly the way we view this bill. I would say to the minister if I would recommend any kind of amendment, it would be an amendment that maybe we could make this retroactive. It would have been something we would have liked to have utilized, but whether it applied to last year or not, I think it is very important that the bill did come through and that those individuals that are going to be having children will have the opportunity to spend more time at home.

Again, as I said, we are concerned about the time that was allowed for this. It would have been nice if it would have come earlier and would have probably not added so much confusion out in the public. We have had a lot of inquiries in constituency offices about where is this bill going, what is going to happen, currently who applies under the federal legislation and will this apply provincially. Certainly we are glad to see that it did come forward, but, to the Government and to the minister, it would have been nice if it could have come in the last session.

We are looking forward to passing this on to committee. We understand there are going to be various organizations and groups that will be coming forward. Certainly they have given indication, and we want to hear what they have to say. I think we have all read an article from the *Free Press* of December 2 in which it deals with, in this particular case, it talks about the unfair side of it and certainly hope that the individual involved in that would be Kevin Rollason and his family. Perhaps they would have an opportunity to come and make their case. They make a very compelling case, and I certainly hope that the Government and the minister and the members of the committee will take the opportunity to listen to this concern. I would just take one quote out of the article: "Ironically, the longer a child stays in the hospital the less time with benefits a parent has when the child arrives at home."

The article talks about that the child was also very ill, and when the child did get home the parents spent a lot of time getting up nights taking care of the child. The child was very sick, had a lot of different difficulties. Maybe there is something that we can look at that is not so hard

and fast, that if the child is in a maternity ward for six months that that would not necessarily be taken off their paternal leave, off their maternity leave, because it certainly is a disadvantage for individuals who have disabled children or who have children, preemies and that kind of thing.

So when these groups come forward, I hope the minister and her department and all members of the House will have an open attitude towards this. Certainly we have been very, very fortunate in our family, my wife and I, that we have not had a sick child, we have not had a colicky child. To have to get up and constantly take care of a child every hour and a half, every two hours, I simply cannot imagine what that would do to you physically, the kind of hardship, the kind of strain that would put on your family.

One of my sisters had a child who was ill. I saw the strain that put on them, but to actually go through that I think is very difficult. I believe as legislators we should have compassion. Perhaps if the Rollasons will come forward, we would certainly like to hear if there is something that they would like to see.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to conclude by saying again we believe this bill was late in coming. We will be looking forward to having it passed on and that is why we have given leave. We would like to see it passed on to committee and look forward to hearing any individuals from the public to hear what they have to say and voice their concerns and look forward to seeing the bill move through the legislative process.

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 2, The Employment Standards Code Amendment Act, be now read a second time and be referred to a committee of this House. Agreed?

Some Honourable Members: Agreed.

Mr. Speaker: Agreed and so ordered.

Bill 3—The Civil Service Superannuation Amendment Act

Hon. Becky Barrett (Minister of Labour): I move, seconded by the Minister of Finance (Mr. Selinger), that Bill 3, The Civil Service Superannuation Amendment Act (Loi modifiant la Loi sur la pension de la fonction publique), be now read a second time and be referred to a committee of this House.

Motion presented.

* (17:20)

Ms. Barrett: I am pleased to introduce Bill 3, The Civil Service Superannuation Amendment Act. This act covers approximately 26 200 public servants and approximately 11 000 pensioners. Approximately 50 percent of the employees covered are civil servants, while the remainder are employees of various Crown corporations, boards and agencies. Participating employers include Manitoba Hydro, the Manitoba Liquor Commission, the Manitoba Public Insurance Corporation, as well as a number of smaller boards, agencies and commissions.

The Civil Service Superannuation Fund, noted here and after as the fund, currently has assets of approximately \$2 billion. An actuarial evaluation of the fund as of December 31, 1998, determined the assets in the fund exceeded the accrued obligations of the fund by over \$292 million. It is in this context that I introduce these amendments to The Civil Service Superannuation Act.

The key changes to the act incorporated in this bill are: an increase in the pension benefits formula from 1.4 percent to 1.6 percent per year of service after 1965 on earnings up to the maximum Canada Pension Plan pensionable earnings; the costs of these increased benefits will be funded out of the Civil Service Superannuation Plan surplus; an increase to the employee contribution rates from 5.1 to 6 percent on earnings up to the maximum CPP pensionable earnings; a provision which will enable employees to purchase at full cost periods of service with participating employers that are

otherwise not pensionable; a provision which will enable employees to purchase on a cost-shared basis with the employer services relating to a maternity leave; if an employee has already purchased service relating to a maternity leave at full cost, one half of the employee's contributions will be refunded with interest; a provision which enables a refund of the additional pension contributions made by a correctional officer where a correctional officer moves to a non-correctional officer civil service job and therefore cannot access the special correctional officer retirement provision; a provision which enables former Centra Gas employees to participate in the Civil Service Superannuation Plan as Manitoba Hydro employees.

These changes have been jointly recommended by the Employee Liaison Committee, the elected body that represents employees and pensioners, and the Employer Advisory Committee that represents employers participating in the plan and are the result of lengthy discussions and consultation between the parties.

I must say, Mr. Speaker, this process is a process that has been underway in the province of Manitoba dealing with the Superannuation Fund for approximately 30 or 40 years and has worked very well.

The negotiations began over two years ago under the former government when it was first recognized that the pension plan would have this \$292-million surplus. I must say that it is interesting and important to note as well that this surplus is totally from results of employee contributions, because this to date is not a funded fund. The employer, i.e., the Government and Crown agencies and boards, has not participated to date in funding the benefits of this fund. So it is employee contributions that have led to this increase in the surplus, and employees are going to have the benefits of their contributions.

This agreement, as I said, was a signed agreement ratified by the two committees, and as well this piece of legislation basically is a

ratification of that negotiation process that has been undertaken.

Using the surplus to increase the basic pension formula will result in pension improvements ranging from approximately 4 percent to 14 percent for both active and retired employees. By and large, the larger percentage increase will be for those at the lower end of the pay scale and the smaller increases for those at the upper end of the pay scale, so that there is a levelling effect in this benefit change as well.

The actuary for the fund has determined that the approximately 292-million surplus is not needed to meet the accrued pension obligations under the act now or in the future. As with any actuarial determinations, a significant amount of caution has been used by the actuary to ensure that the fund remains adequately funded.

The act currently enables an employee to purchase, at the full cost, service relating to a maternity leave. This amendment will allow an employee to purchase service relating to a maternity leave on a cost-shared basis with the employer. Those who have purchased it at full cost will now be able to get a refund of one-half their contributions plus interest.

The bill also contains a number of amendments of an administrative or house-keeping nature that were recommended by the Civil Service Superannuation Board. These amendments serve to clarify the meaning of various sections and provide for more streamlined and responsive administration of the plan but do not have any basic change to the legislation.

All the amendments have been reviewed by the plan's actuary to ensure that they are sound and comply with relevant legislation. I am pleased to announce that I had a good briefing with the Official Opposition member and the Member for River Heights (Mr. Gerrard) on this change to the Civil Service Superannuation Fund Act and am pleased to anticipate quick passage of this so that the pensioners and the current employees can access the change in benefits that is as an outcome of their contributions. So they are now going to be able to reap the benefits of their contributions. I look forward to speedy

passage of this bill into committee and then through the House within the next short while.

Mr. Ron Schuler (Springfield): I will keep my comments brief on this particular bill. *[interjection]* There seems to be so much objection to that, I will just lengthen them a little bit.

This particular issue is another one of those issues for the public that is listening that shows again that we in this Chamber, the Manitoba Legislative Assembly, are coming together. We are going to agree on this particular issue. I think it is something that is to be commended of the individuals involved.

First of all, we are talking about the employees' money. The employees' money was well invested, and it showed a strong surplus. This surplus, through agreement, is going to be divided up in an appropriate fashion. It is money that basically comes back to Manitobans. It goes back into the economy, and certainly the individuals involved are to be commended. This has been done with no acrimony. It has been done with consensus. We certainly are pleased to stand up and support this. It means more income for those individuals who will be retiring. When you get into later years, inflation erodes a lot of the pension plans, and this allows for more payment to take place.

On this note, I would like to thank the minister for her briefings. She had myself in and one of our staffers, and we got to go through the whole procedure. We are now quite willing to see this go to committee. I believe it is going to go to committee on Monday, and we look forward to any presentations. If there are some concerns from the public, I know the minister is going to be open to what individuals have to say at committee. We look forward to it coming back to this Chamber. On that note, let this be a record for the House, another issue that the minister and I actually can agree on. Thank you very much.

* * *

Hon. MaryAnn Mihychuk (Minister of Industry, Trade and Mines): Mr. Speaker, I would ask for your indulgence to clarify the

record. Unfortunately I have put some inaccuracies on the record, and I wish to clarify a mistake. It is very unfortunate, given this is my first bill, and we are back here at a new session.

It is two years, and my notes today were inaccurate. I am here to clarify the record that it is indeed two years as the bill indicates and the opposition member pointed out. I just wanted to take the first opportunity to make sure that the records are correct.

An Honourable Member: Are you saying you are wrong?

Ms. Mihychuk: Yes, I am wrong. I have been wrong and in this case I clearly made an error.

Mr. Speaker: I thank the honourable minister for that clarification.

* * *

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

The question before the House is second reading of Bill 3, The Civil Service Superannuation Amendment Act be now read a second time and be referred to a committee of this House. Agreed?

Some Honourable Members: Agreed.

Mr. Speaker: Agreed and so ordered.

* (17:30)

Bill 6—The Pension Benefits Amendment Act

Hon. Becky Barrett (Minister of Labour): I move, seconded by the Attorney General (Mr. Mackintosh) that Bill 6, The Pension Benefits Amendment Act (Loi modifiant la Loi sur les prestations de pension), be now read a second time and be referred to a committee of this House.

Motion presented.

Ms. Barrett: I am pleased to introduce Bill 6 which proposes to amend The Pension Benefits Act. This amendment is intended to clarify and

modernize a benefit provision of the act. Currently the act generally requires that every pension plan must provide on a member's termination of employment with their employer or on retirement that not less than 50 percent of the value of a benefit paid to an employee be provided by the employer direct contributions to the plan and that the employee's direct contributions are not to exceed 50 percent of the value of the benefit paid to the employee. This provision does not reflect the modern reality of pension plans as in many defined benefit plans investment performance and other gains under the plan play a very significant role in providing for members' benefits or improvements to those benefits. The modern reality is such that the value of a plan member's benefit is provided by the pension plan from the following sources: employer direct contributions, employee direct contributions, successful investment performance in the investment of plan funds, and what are called actuarial gains in the plan which result when the actual experience under a plan was more favourable than was estimated by the plan's actuary, resulting in more funds being available to provide benefits.

In removing the reference to employer contributions in this provision, the legislation will recognize the impact of these sources in a pension fund which, in addition to employer and employee contributions, are used to provide the remaining value of the member's benefit. The provision will continue to provide that a member's contribution will never exceed more than 50 percent of their benefit. It should be noted that this amendment will make Manitoba law consistent with the provision in every other Canadian jurisdiction. The legislation of each other jurisdiction recognizes the reality of pension fund investment performance and actuarial gains in providing benefits or improvements to benefits. This issue was of particular concern to pension plans that have members in more than one province or territory given that Manitoba law is out of step with the law of all other jurisdictions. This amendment will see Manitoba's provision in this area harmonize with other pension jurisdictions in Canada. It should be stressed that the employer's requirement to ensure that a pension plan is solvent will continue to be provided for in the act. Provisions of the act which require the

employer to ensure the financial ability of plans to meet their obligations and to ensure that the plan is solvent will continue to be in place. Under these provisions, where applicable, the employer will continue to be required to make any additional contributions necessary to ensure the plan's solvency.

In closing, this bill proposes to amend The Pension Benefits Act to reflect the modern reality of the provision of pension benefits under pension plans while ensuring that member benefits continue to be protected. As in every other province, the act will continue to provide that a member will never provide more than 50 percent of the value of their benefit.

Again, this is the third bill this afternoon that I have had the honour of introducing into the House for both first and second readings, and I would like to again recognize the assistance that has been provided by the Official Opposition and the Member for River Heights (Mr. Gerrard) in ensuring the swift progress of this bill through the House.

Mr. Ron Schuler (Springfield): In the newspaper article of December 4, the new leader of the Progressive Conservative party is quoted as saying that he has pledged to work with the NDP to get legislation passed for the Christmas break. Mr. Speaker, that would then make Bill 6 a three-peat. We are going to be supporting this. I would like to thank the minister for having taken the time to have us in and explain exactly what was taking place. She had her departmental staff, who laid it out very carefully, answered all of our questions and listened to any concerns we had.

Following the lead of our new leader and the next premier of Manitoba, we will be pleased to be sending this on to committee and hearing what concerns any Manitobans may have. Thank you.

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

Some Honourable Members: Question.

Mr. Speaker: The question before the House is that Bill 6, The Pension Benefits Amendment Act, be now read a second time and be referred to a committee of this House. Agreed? Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the motion?

Some Honourable Members: Agreed.

Mr. Speaker: Agreed and so ordered.

House Business

Hon. Gord Mackintosh (Government House Leader): Mr. Speaker, well, first, if I could I would just like to recognize the efforts of everyone in the House in allowing for the timely dealing with second readings on these bills. I think it speaks to what is best about this House, and, as well, the observations and the suggestions from the Opposition. I speak in particular with regard to The Helen Betty Osborne Memorial Foundation Act, and the Opposition Justice critic's thoughts on that. As well, I extend to the Member for River Heights (Mr. Gerrard) my thanks.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to announce that the Standing Committee on Law Amendments will meet on Monday, December 11, at 7 p.m. to deal with Bill 5, The Helen Betty Osborne Memorial Foundation Act.

I would also like to announce that the Standing Committee on Industrial Relations will also meet on Monday, December 11, at 7 p.m. to deal with bills 2, 3, 4, and 6.

Finally, Mr. Speaker, I would like to announce that the Standing Committee on Public Utilities and Natural Resources will meet on Monday, January 22, 2001, at 10 a.m. to consider the February 29, 2000, report of the Manitoba Public Insurance Corporation and the annual reports of the Manitoba Liquor Control Commission for the years ended March 31, 1997, 1998, 1999 and 2000.

Mr. Speaker: It has been announced that the Standing Committee on Law Amendments will meet on Monday, December 11, at 7 p.m. to deal with Bill 5, The Helen Betty Osborne Memorial Foundation Act.

It has also been announced that the Standing Committee on Industrial Relations will also meet on Monday, December 11, at 7 p.m. to deal with the following bills: Bill 2, Bill 3, Bill 4 and Bill 6.

It has also been announced that the Standing Committee on Public Utilities and Natural Resources will meet on Monday, January 22, the year 2001, at 10 a.m. to consider the February 29, year 2000, report of the Manitoba Public Insurance Corporation and the annual reports of the Manitoba Liquor Control Commission for the years ended March 31, 1997, 1998, 1999, and 2000.

Mr. Mackintosh: Mr. Speaker, is it the will of the House to call it six o'clock?

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

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Wednesday, December 6, 2000

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