



Second Session - Thirty-Sixth Legislature

of the

Legislative Assembly of Manitoba

**DEBATES
and
PROCEEDINGS
(Hansard)**

*Published under the
authority of
The Honourable Louise M. Dacquay
Speaker*



Vol. XLVI No. 3 - 1:30 p.m., Thursday, December 7, 1995

MANITOBA LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
Thirty-Sixth Legislature

Members, Constituencies and Political Affiliation

<u>Name</u>	<u>Constituency</u>	<u>Party</u>
ASHTON, Steve	Thompson	N.D.P.
BARRETT, Becky	Wellington	N.D.P.
CERILLI, Marianne	Radisson	N.D.P.
CHOMIAK, Dave	Kildonan	N.D.P.
CUMMINGS, Glen, Hon.	Ste. Rose	P.C.
DACQUAY, Louise, Hon.	Seine River	P.C.
DERKACH, Leonard, Hon.	Roblin-Russell	P.C.
DEWAR, Gregory	Selkirk	N.D.P.
DOER, Gary	Concordia	N.D.P.
DOWNEY, James, Hon.	Arthur-Virden	P.C.
DRIEDGER, Albert, Hon.	Steinbach	P.C.
DYCK, Peter	Pembina	P.C.
ENNS, Harry, Hon.	Lakeside	P.C.
ERNST, Jim, Hon.	Charleswood	P.C.
EVANS, Clif	Interlake	N.D.P.
EVANS, Leonard S.	Brandon East	N.D.P.
FILMON, Gary, Hon.	Tuxedo	P.C.
FINDLAY, Glen, Hon.	Springfield	P.C.
FRIESEN, Jean	Wolseley	N.D.P.
GAUDRY, Neil	St. Boniface	Lib.
GILLESHAMMER, Harold, Hon.	Minnedosa	P.C.
HELWER, Edward	Gimli	P.C.
HICKES, George	Point Douglas	N.D.P.
JENNISSEN, Gerard	Flin Flon	N.D.P.
KOWALSKI, Gary	The Maples	Lib.
LAMOUREUX, Kevin	Inkster	Lib.
LATHLIN, Oscar	The Pas	N.D.P.
LAURENDEAU, Marcel	St. Norbert	P.C.
MACKINTOSH, Gord	St. Johns	N.D.P.
MALOWAY, Jim	Elmwood	N.D.P.
MARTINDALE, Doug	Burrows	N.D.P.
McALPINE, Gerry	Sturgeon Creek	P.C.
McCRAE, James, Hon.	Brandon West	P.C.
McGIFFORD, Diane	Osborne	N.D.P.
McINTOSH, Linda, Hon.	Assiniboia	P.C.
MIHYCHUK, MaryAnn	St. James	N.D.P.
MITCHELSON, Bonnie, Hon.	River East	P.C.
NEWMAN, David	Riel	P.C.
PALLISTER, Brian, Hon.	Portage la Prairie	P.C.
PENNER, Jack	Emerson	P.C.
PITURA, Frank	Morris	P.C.
PRAZNIK, Darren, Hon.	Lac du Bonnet	P.C.
RADCLIFFE, Mike	River Heights	P.C.
REID, Daryl	Transcona	N.D.P.
REIMER, Jack, Hon.	Niakwa	P.C.
RENDER, Shirley	St. Vital	P.C.
ROBINSON, Eric	Rupertsland	N.D.P.
ROCAN, Denis	Gladstone	P.C.
SALE, Tim	Crescentwood	N.D.P.
SANTOS, Conrad	Broadway	N.D.P.
STEFANSON, Eric, Hon.	Kirkfield Park	P.C.
STRUTHERS, Stan	Dauphin	N.D.P.
SVEINSON, Ben	La Verendrye	P.C.
TOEWS, Vic, Hon.	Rossmere	P.C.
TWEED, Mervin	Turtle Mountain	P.C.
VODREY, Rosemary, Hon.	Fort Garry	P.C.
WOWCHUK, Rosann	Swan River	N.D.P.

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Thursday, December 7, 1995

The House met at 1:30 p.m.

PRAYERS

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

PRESENTING PETITIONS

**Emergency Health Care Services—
Community Hospitals**

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Inkster): Madam Speaker, I beg to present the petition of Isle Udow, R.G. Stirling, Shari Mannis and others urging the Minister of Health consider making a commitment to the people of Manitoba that emergency health care services in Winnipeg's five community hospitals will remain open seven days a week, 24 hours a day.

READING AND RECEIVING PETITIONS

**Emergency Health Care Services—
Community Hospitals**

Madam Speaker: I have reviewed the petition of the honourable member for The Maples (Mr. Kowalski) and it complies with the rules and practices of the House. Is it the will of the House to have the petition read?

An Honourable Member: Yes.

Madam Speaker: The Clerk will read.

Mr. Clerk (William Remnant): The petition of the undersigned residents of the province of Manitoba humbly sheweth:

THAT emergency health care services are the core of Manitoba's health care system.

THAT Manitobans deserve the greatest possible access to this care.

WHEREFORE your petitioners humbly pray that the Legislative Assembly urge the Minister responsible for

Health consider making a commitment to the people of Manitoba that emergency health care services in Winnipeg's five community hospitals will remain open seven days a week, 24 hours a day.

Introduction of Guests

Madam Speaker: Prior to Oral Questions, I would like to draw the attention of all honourable members to the Speaker's Gallery where we have with us today Mr. Anatolii Ivonin, head of the Department for Co-operation with the Subjects of the Federation at the Federation Council of the Russian Federation; Ms. Valentina Adrianova, head of the Department on Co-operation with Regional Legislatures at the State Duma of the Federal Assembly of the Russian Federation; and Mr. Andrey Krivorotov, advisor to the Department of Interparliamentary Relations in the State Duma of the Federal Assembly.

On behalf of all honourable members, I welcome you this afternoon.

Also seated in the public gallery, we have forty-five Grades 4 to 6 students from Monsignor James K. MacIsaac School under the direction of Ms. Theresa Bachynski. This school is located in the constituency of the honourable member for Osborne (Ms. McGifford).

On behalf of all honourable members, I welcome you this afternoon.

ORAL QUESTION PERIOD

**Health Care System
Emergency Services**

Mr. Gary Doer (Leader of the Opposition): My question is to the First Minister (Mr. Filmon).

Yesterday we cited October 6, October 10, October 16 and October 19, Hansard information, Madam Speaker, that is totally contradicted by reports we released yesterday in terms of the urgent and emergent cases at the Winnipeg emergency hospitals.

The minister later answered, the reason his information was wrong was he was going by 1992 to 1994 information. But in 1994, the minister said to the people of Manitoba, on July 14 of that year, that he would not close down any of our community hospital emergency wards. Because he did not have the data and he would have to monitor the impact on the intake on emergency wards in those community hospitals, he would not close those hospitals down.

How can he say now that he was using data from 1992 to 1994 when, prior to the election—and I would like to ask the Premier—this government said, based on the data they had they were not going to close down those community hospitals? The same information, different decisions.

* (1335)

Hon. James McCrae (Minister of Health): Madam Speaker, the honourable member misses the point, the point being that everybody in the system agrees we have sufficient and indeed excess capacity in our emergency services.

Whether, as I said yesterday, Madam Speaker, the average usage—which ranges, by the way, in any given year at any given hospital between 1 percent up to 12 percent and perhaps in some cases higher percentages of the pure emergency services, so that whatever percentage one is talking about, the issue is the overall usage of the emergency rooms.

How many times has the honourable Leader of the Opposition been asked, what are we going to do about the inappropriate use of our emergency services in the city of Winnipeg? I wonder what the honourable member's answers would have been. I am sure they would have been, oh, well, yes, we certainly have to do something about that.

That is exactly what we are trying to do, and thrown into the whole process is the fact that early this fall, on Labour Day, the physicians and pathologists went on strike, putting us really to the task, Madam Speaker, at which we have been quite diligent ever since.

Mr. Doer: Madam Speaker, my further question is to the new-hope-and-accountable Premier (Mr. Filmon) in terms of government decision making.

When the Filmon government made the decision to not close the emergency wards at our community hospitals and announced those conditions on July 14, 1994, not only did they talk about monitoring and gathering more data, which obviously they used later on, they talked about five conditions that would be necessary before they would make any changes to the emergency wards.

This is the promise the government made to the people: five conditions, a provincial trauma centre, a hospital bed co-ordination, interfacility transportation program, a training centre for ambulance personnel at our community colleges. Those would be five conditions. The minister and the government went on to say, where would you go at three o'clock in the morning if you closed down the emergency wards at our community hospitals? We will not let that happen.

I would like to ask the Premier why they had one position before the election and now we have the kind of Mike Harris breaking a promise after the election by the Filmon government, Madam Speaker.

Mr. McCrae: I suppose it is beside the point, Madam Speaker, that the honourable Leader of the Opposition failed to refer to the issues that I referred to in my first answer.

The issues he speaks about, i.e., a trauma bed usage, transportation and the other two that I did not get down as he was asking his question, are all the subject of the work that is being undertaken now and has been undertaken for years. We have monitored for years and we have been monitoring very, very carefully ever since that strike began, Madam Speaker, throughout the duration of the strike and since the strike as well.

The honourable member also refuses to make reference to the fact that what has been happening has been a reopening of services. When the strike ended, normal service delivery resumed during the daytime hours and that, as I had said yesterday and was reported upon today, further changes are possible as we prepare for the busier season and also as we look to the longer-term future.

* (1340)

Mr. Doer: Madam Speaker, my question is to the Premier (Mr. Filmon).

The minister just contradicted the government's position on July 14, 1994, when the minister said that no emergency ward would be closed down until the five conditions would be met. He said that in July of 1994. He is now saying they are looking at these conditions now after they have closed down those emergency wards. We have a Minister of Health who is flying by the seat of his proverbial pants, and it is putting at risk the people of this province.

I would like to ask the Premier, in light of the fact that his own minister said, why go to a busy hospital and wait in line for hours and hours or be on a stretcher in the hallway when you do not have to—that was the position of the government in July of 1994—will this Premier give us a new Minister of Health who will be straight with the people of this province, and will he reverse the decision of his Minister of Health and reopen these community hospitals, as they promised prior to the election?

Mr. McCrae: In the summer of 1994, indeed my concern, as expressed by me at the time, was patients and how they would be looked after in the middle of the night because there were recommendations that there be downsizing or closure of emergency wards at that time. We were thrust into a situation on Labour Day. We have now had September, October, November, over three months of experience and of very, very careful monitoring. Each and every time honourable members would bring to me anecdotal incidents relating to emergency services we were very careful to check them out, Madam Speaker.

We have probably more concern than honourable members opposite on this point because we are the ones who are going to be asked about it should there be a problem, and we have monitored very carefully. We have expanded service when necessary and where necessary to ensure that the patients are looked after. We recognize the issue of some inconvenience for some people. We are mindful of that, and when it comes to people in nonurgent situations, we get complaints of longer waits as a result and those are the kinds of issues that we now need to address as well, Madam Speaker.

Minister of Health Replacement

Mr. Dave Chomiak (Kildonan): Madam Speaker, my question is for the Premier (Mr. Filmon).

The minister misled the people of Manitoba when he said five conditions would be met before they would close any emergency wards. He misled the public when he said it was 4 percent and not the 12 percent he had in his hands. He misled the public when he said there was consensus that the wards should be closed and instead it was only him and his consultant who recommended the closing of the wards.

My question for the Premier, Madam Speaker, will this Premier replace this Minister of Health before he does further damage to the health care system as he has done with emergency wards?

Hon. James McCrae (Minister of Health): Madam Speaker, when it comes to misleading the public the honourable members opposite could do seminars to teach people how to mislead other people. In terms of any misleading, the misleading that the honourable member talks about is nonexistent.

We have been working very, very carefully with all kinds of stakeholders, including providers of services and consumers of services, as we develop these policies. You cannot be misleading people if you are going to have that kind of a process. That is the kind of process we have. We consult. Honourable members opposite do it the other way.

Health Care Facilities Alternative Uses

Mr. Dave Chomiak (Kildonan): Then perhaps the Premier (Mr. Filmon) can assure individuals who live in the vicinity of Misericordia Hospital and individuals who live around Seven Oaks Hospital that their hospitals will not be converted, Misericordia into an outpatient daycare facility and Seven Oaks into a chronic rehab facility. Will the Premier give assurances that those hospitals are not to be converted, since we are told by officials of Health that it is a 95 percent certainty that is going to happen?

* (1345)

Hon. James McCrae (Minister of Health): Madam Speaker, I understand the honourable member took advantage of the opportunity to attend the seminar or the forum that is being facilitated by KPMG, and that forum is used to assist us in developing plans for the future of acute care and other services in the city of Winnipeg in the future.

You see, the disturbing thing about all of this is that virtually every initiative taken by the stakeholders, providers, consumers and the government in the development of a reformed health care system virtually every step of the way has been attempted to be blocked by honourable members opposite. They say they believe in reform. Their actions belie that.

Seven Oaks General Hospital Emergency Services

Mr. Dave Chomiak (Kildonan): Madam Speaker, if the Premier (Mr. Filmon) will not listen to MARN, he will not listen to the nurses, he will not listen to the doctors, he will not listen to any experts in emergency care, will he listen to the 2,107 residents of the constituency of Kildonan who wrote letters to me demanding and asking the government to reopen the emergency ward at Seven Oaks Hospital? If the Premier would like, I am prepared to table the 2,107 letters from residents to the Premier, to me and to the Minister of Health saying, do not close the emergency wards and reopen it at Seven Oaks Hospital.

Hon. James McCrae (Minister of Health): Madam Speaker, the honourable member for Kildonan has demonstrated ever since he has been critic for Health for the New Democratic Party that they have no interest whatever in taking part in any decision making or discussions related to integration of services, related to getting rid of inefficiencies, related to getting rid of duplication of services in our health care system—no interest whatsoever.

Yet, look at their colleagues when they are given an opportunity to govern in other jurisdictions, how they do it, in Saskatchewan, for example, where their colleagues closed 52 rural hospitals; in Ontario, where before the Rae government was removed from office,

they closed 10,000 hospital beds; where, in British Columbia and Vancouver, the Shaughnessy Hospital has been closed by a New Democratic administration, cutting off whole arms and legs of the health care system without consultation and without getting people involved in designing their own health care system.

Madam Speaker, the honourable member, if we listen to him, we would not have a health care system.

Louisiana-Pacific Federal-Provincial Review

Mr. Stan Struthers (Dauphin): Madam Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Natural Resources.

On at least three occasions in the last sitting of this House, members on this side asked the minister to address concerns coming from federal departments on Louisiana-Pacific before public hearings took place. The member for Swan River (Ms. Wowchuk) and I wrote the minister, again asking that his department deal with these concerns so that the CEC had all the information for a fair and comprehensive review. The minister did not act and as a result the hearings have been delayed.

My question is, will the minister and his colleague the Minister of Environment (Mr. Cummings) call for a federal-provincial review so that gaps in information do not continue to delay and tarnish this process?

Hon. Albert Driedger (Minister of Natural Resources): Madam Speaker, there is an old saying that says a little knowledge in the wrong mind is a very dangerous thing, and I think that would probably apply to the member for Dauphin.

I want to say to the Leader of the Opposition (Mr. Doer) at the same time, as well, who is always talking about press releases—he is making fun of press releases from the government side—he should maybe go and check with the member for Dauphin and the member for Swan River (Ms. Wowchuk) who run around making press releases without having very much information, based on how they make these statements.

The issue—and I will address that later on when I am making my address to the Speech from the Throne

when I will have more time to basically go into details—but I want to tell you that the member for Dauphin, as well as the member for Swan River who keeps hiding among the trees I guess on the issue of Louisiana-Pacific and cannot seem to make up her mind which side of the fence she wants to be on on this issue, Madam Speaker—

Madam Speaker: Order, please.

* (1350)

Point of Order

Mr. Steve Ashton (Opposition House Leader): On a point of order, Madam Speaker, I expect we are getting a preview of the minister's speech later in the throne speech. I was wondering if he could save his debate comments and perhaps deal with the very serious question raised by the member for Dauphin.

Madam Speaker: Indeed, the honourable member for Thompson does have a point of order. I would request that the honourable minister respond to the question posed.

* * *

Mr. Driedger: Madam Speaker, I will save the spicy ones for later then.

I just want to say, Madam Speaker, that my professional people who spent an awful lot of time preparing the information that was basically presented to the environmental hearing process which is still in progress—it has been postponed for a month; it will be resumed in January—our information is complete. We feel very confident in the professionalism of my people there and I stand by those reports.

Information Release

Mr. Stan Struthers (Dauphin): Madam Speaker, if this minister had done his job we would not be delayed now.

Given that yesterday the minister referred several times to a proposal sent to the federal government, in

the spirit of disclosure, will he now table that document?

Hon. Albert Driedger (Minister of Natural Resources): When the Leader of the Opposition (Mr. Doer) was speaking yesterday—and I was encouraging some comments from him, I suppose, and he made reference to the fact that we should divulge the position—he asked whether we were supportive of a federal-provincial joint process. I told him that we had a proposal, that the Minister of Environment (Mr. Cummings) had a proposal before the federal minister. At that time he was trying to draw the question or make me reply to the point as to whether we supported a joint environmental process. Again, I replied that the Minister of Environment has a proposal before the federal minister and that ultimately—

An Honourable Member: Table it.

Mr. Driedger: Well, that is his business to do so.

If the member for Dauphin wants to raise that question with the Minister of Environment, given the permission with your consent, Madam Speaker, maybe the Minister of Environment would like to address that.

We have the best environmental system in the country, and I stand by that.

Mr. Struthers: I will ask then the minister of the Department of Environment. Will he table the proposal that has been sent to Sheila Copps?

Hon. Glen Cummings (Minister of Environment): I think the member for Dauphin should be mindful of a number of times in this House that we have referenced the fact that we have been working for years with the federal authorities to make sure that we have a clean process here that always acknowledges the interests of both the provincial and federal responsibility in doing these reviews.

We have taken every opportunity, both at the provincial and the national level, to encourage the harmonization of environmental assessment and environmental reviews. When my colleagues reference that activity, I can tell you there is probably a file about

that thick that talks about how we have been attempting to bring further harmonization to environmental assessment.

I think we should all be reminded of the fact that Manitoba is the only jurisdiction in Canada that not only does it require a forest harvesting licence, it also requires an environmental licence to be required at the same time. That is the toughest environmental process in Canada.

Education Newsletter Production Costs

Ms. Jean Friesen (Wolseley): My questions are for the Minister of Education. I wanted to ask the minister some questions about the blue news sheet that she has asked Manitoba children to deliver home taking useful information to their parents about changes in the education system.

I was a little concerned the parents might mistake this for a Tory election piece because the colour is the same and the format is somewhat similar, but it does say very clearly right down here at the bottom that this is from the Department of Education.

So I want to ask the minister, first of all, if she could tell us the cost of the writing, the design, the printing and the distribution of this news sheet.

*(1355)

Hon. Linda McIntosh (Minister of Education and Training): Madam Speaker, I will take the question as notice and get the specific information for the member as to the exact cost. I will also ask the department for an explanation as to why they chose that wretched colour.

Content

Ms. Jean Friesen (Wolseley): Madam Speaker, I wanted to ask the minister if she would consider an insert in her next news sheet, perhaps such as the one I have prepared here which offers more and equally useful information for parents about the impact of New Directions on the elimination of senior level Canadian history, the reduction in physical education, the elimination of—you can take your choice—industrial arts, home economics or basic French, reduced emphasis on

English at the senior high level, a loss of 900 teachers in the last four years and reductions in clinician services.

Would the minister consider that vital information for parents about Manitoba education?

Hon. Linda McIntosh (Minister of Education and Training): Madam Speaker, I apologize for my sarcasm when the member had as her biggest issue in the first question a particular colour of a publication.

The comments she has raised just now, I think she and I have discussed and can discuss in some detail. If she has suggestions for the Department of Education on any topic, I have indicated before and I indicate again that any suggestions coming from the opposition, if they are constructive and useful and of some ability to improve things, I am most willing to consider them. If they are for other reasons, I would still consider them but probably reject any reasons that are not in that first category of constructive, helpful, meaningful criticism.

Ms. Friesen: Well, then, I assume that the minister will clearly undertake to send out in her next piece this accompanying graph that I have prepared for the department which does document the long-term decline in financial support for public education from the Filmon government, which is constructive and useful for any parent in Manitoba who wants to evaluate their education system.

Point of Order

Mrs. McIntosh: On a point of order, Madam Speaker, the member rose and made a preamble but followed it with no question.

Madam Speaker: There is no point of order. If the honourable Minister of Education did not hear a question, that is her prerogative to not respond to a question.

Health Care System Emergency Services

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Inkster): Madam Speaker, I would like to quote from the member for River

Heights (Mr. Radcliffe) for the Minister of Health, and it is an interesting quote: "The quality of health care provided to the community must be the primary consideration of all health care providers."

That can, in fact, be found in Resolution 27 on today's Order Paper. The member is right, and I ask for the minister responsible for health care, would he not agree as a health caregiver that the primary concern has to be the community health centres that we have, community hospitals? I would ask the minister specifically to assure this House that no political preferential treatment will be given to any or some community hospitals over the others when it comes down to reopening of emergency services in Winnipeg's community hospitals.

* (1400)

Hon. James McCrae (Minister of Health): Madam Speaker, I am pleased that the honourable member for Inkster calls attention to the significant contribution to policy development made by the honourable member for River Heights. We appreciate his input very much.

We also appreciate the input of the honourable member for Inkster who has tried to play a constructive role in the development of health policy in the last year or so, but he does not always follow my advice either.

One of the reasons we need to develop a more efficient and effective health care system, of course, is that his colleagues in Ottawa are making that necessary because of the reduction of funding in the amount of \$147 million this coming year, \$220 million the next year coming off the health and social services account. But even if that was not happening, Madam Speaker, it would be a good idea to make our health system work and make it sustainable for the future, and so we appreciate any input the honourable member has to offer. The days when considerations other than health outcomes considerations had a place in the debate are clearly over.

Mr. Lamoureux: My question is fairly clear. Will the Minister of Health ensure or indicate to this House that the Seven Oaks Hospital and the Misericordia Hospital will be given equal treatment when it comes to

emergency services being provided to the communities in which they serve?

Will the Minister of Health make that commitment today?

Mr. McCrae: I do not think it is my place to give any lectures to the honourable member, Madam Speaker, but we will try to give proper treatment to the people of Manitoba.

Mr. Lamoureux: Madam Speaker, then I would pose the question to the Premier of the province. Is the Premier prepared, as the Leader of this government, to ensure that Manitobans, in particular Winnipeggers in the Seven Oaks and Misericordia communities, will have emergency services well into the future under his administration?

Hon. Gary Filmon (Premier): Madam Speaker, I just want the member opposite to know that in all of the decisions that we make, we seek and solicit the best advice possible. We are in the process of extensive consultations and we will indeed be guided by the advice that we are getting from the professionals. We will not go around making the kinds of political decisions that the member opposite would make if he were in government, or members there, for instance, political grandstanding day after day, suggesting to people, like the Burger King solution, that they can have it their way all the time. That is absolute falsehood and that is why they are in opposition.

Canadian Wheat Board Government Position

Ms. Rosann Wowchuk (Swan River): Madam Speaker, in the November 16 issue of the Manitoba Co-operator we have two government backbenchers advocating dual marketing of wheat and barley. However, in the same article we have the Minister of Agriculture saying this is not their policy and the Premier (Mr. Filmon) said the same at the Pool annual meeting.

However, today we see the Minister of Agriculture is saying his position on the Wheat Board is the same as it is on hog marketing, which is dual marketing.

It is no wonder that Manitoba farmers are confused by this government.

I want to ask the Minister of Agriculture to clarify this government's position on the Wheat Board. Yes or no, do they support the monopoly of the Wheat Board, or not?

Hon. Harry Enns (Minister of Agriculture): Madam Speaker, I am pleased to have the opportunity to clarify the statements that were attributed to me. I was asked specifically yesterday about the Alberta plebiscite and the future of the Canadian Wheat Board. Some view a greater flexibility in any marketing system as the automatic demise of the system currently in place, and it was in that context that I used the analogy of Manitoba Pork.

I do not view the introduction of a greater flexibility in the way in which we market hogs in this province as the automatic demise of Manitoba Pork. In fact, everything I have said to Manitoba Pork directly and/or publicly has indicated quite the opposite.

I believe that Manitoba Pork can and will continue to be a major force, a major player in the marketing of hogs in Manitoba. I believe that the Canadian Wheat Board can and will continue to be a major player in the marketing of grain in western Canada and in Manitoba, Madam Speaker.

I do not believe that introducing some question of flexibility need in fact be the demise of either of these organizations.

Ms. Wowchuk: Madam Speaker, I want to ask the minister if he understands that this is not an either/or situation. If the monopoly of the Wheat Board is changed, then it is going to take money out of farmers' pockets and put money into grain companies' pockets.

I want to ask the minister who he is speaking for. Is he speaking for the Farmers of Justice or is he speaking for the many farmers who voted for the advisory committee pro Wheat Board? They want the Wheat Board to stay. Which farmers is he speaking for?

Mr. Enns: Having been in this House for some while and having sat opposite the members opposite, on both sides of the House for a period of time, it is surprising

that they have in fact become the party of no new ideas, no change in radicalism, just as they are with respect to the health situation.

I might ask her, where does her party now stand on the matter of the \$700 million Canadian taxpayers paid out to the Crow? Would they sooner see that to help ease the pain in terms of health cutbacks that all provinces are facing? Is she still calling for the return of the Crow as though this was ancient history time?

Let us get on with it. Agriculture is changing; agriculture is not immune to the changes that we are all experiencing, and that quite frankly is my responsibility, to help Manitoba farmers face these changes in the best possible way.

Madam Speaker, while I am on my feet, let me acknowledge the Leader of the Opposition (Mr. Doer) on the opening day of the session. He acknowledged that in agriculture, in agribusiness, this province and the farmers of Manitoba are responding in a positive way and he lauded their accomplishments, and I support the Leader of the Opposition in that statement.

Ms. Wowchuk: Madam Speaker, after that confusing answer, I want to ask the minister, how can Manitoba producers have any confidence in a government or in a Minister of Agriculture who says in the throne speech that they are going to have a task force that will listen to rural Manitobans on their views on changes in policy and programs and then, the next day after the throne speech, tell them that he is supporting dual marketing of the Canadian Wheat Board which producers have told them they do not want? How can they have any faith in a government that says they will listen and then makes arbitrary decisions?

Mr. Enns: What I can tell the honourable member, Manitoba farmers and producers have a great deal of faith in the future of agriculture, and that is being demonstrated every day in the farms and in the farm businesses across this province of Manitoba.

The member is hung up with the words "dual marketing," "flexibility," "choice."

An Honourable Member: Freedom.

Mr. Enns: Some would call it some freedom of marketing. Madam Speaker, what is obvious as a result of the significant numbers of producers who were asked a question on that matter in Alberta, there is a great debate going on on the western Prairies on that issue.

As I have indicated before, I am quite prepared, I am looking forward to the panel appointed by the federal minister, whom I am sure will be spending time and having public occasions to discourse with Manitoba producers on the future of marketing grains by the Canadian Wheat Board in Manitoba, and await their decision on the future of that organization come this spring.

* (1410)

**Atomic Energy of Canada Ltd.
Pinawa Research Facility**

Ms. MaryAnn Mihychuk (St. James): Madam Speaker, my questions are to the Premier.

We are seeing today many of the people of Pinawa and southeast Manitoba rising up and speaking about the proposed closes or pending closes or possible closes to the Whiteshell research facility. We are very concerned about this potential loss, as we are of the loss of over 300 jobs that we have already seen since 1988.

Almost two years ago our Leader called for an all-party agreement to protect the jobs in Pinawa and to try and remove some of the politics from this issue.

Can the Premier tell the House what proactive measures his government has taken to develop the linkages between Manitoba businesses and the research facility in Pinawa?

Hon. Gary Filmon (Premier): Madam Speaker, we have facilitated a number of different meetings and linkages through the Economic Innovation and Technology Council. In fact, the Economic Development Board of Cabinet met with senior officials from Pinawa. I personally have been there at least twice in the past year and spoken to officials there, held meetings there. We have attempted, as

much as possible, to create opportunities for commercializing some of the developments that have taken place there and set up linkages with the business community.

We have also, as the throne speech says, appointed a committee that will be chaired by the member for the Pinawa area, the Minister of Energy and Mines (Mr. Praznik), who will be leading a delegation of his colleagues, and we have invited the participation of members opposite to help us in the effort to convince Ottawa that, when it comes down to a political decision, there are very, very strong reasons why AECL's operations ought not to be centred in Chalk River but ought to remain distributed because of particularly many of the locational advantages and the assets that are in Pinawa that can help them do a better job than they ever could do in Chalk River.

Ms. Mihychuk: My question to the Premier: Has the Premier, given the seriousness of this situation and the importance of that industry to Manitoba and the people of Manitoba, called up the Prime Minister and asked him to intervene, to be fair with Manitobans? And, if so, what was the result of that conversation?

Mr. Filmon: As I indicated, the member for the Pinawa area will be leading a delegation of ministers and members to Ottawa and has himself initiated discussions. I leave that option obviously for a future potential, depending on what we are told.

The fact of the matter is that AECL has taken out ads in the major newspapers claiming that nothing is happening, and we will want to see the results of the actions before I proceed to the Prime Minister level.

**Real Estate Industry
Fraud Investigation**

Mr. Jim Maloway (Elmwood): My question is to the Minister of Consumer Affairs. In 1993 and 1994 at least 30 houses were flipped under a ring that worked together to defraud CMHC for well over \$500,000 and likely much more. I would like to know, on what date did the minister contact CMHC on the need for proper appraisals, and what were the results of any investigation that was launched?

Hon. Jim Ernst (Minister of Consumer and Corporate Affairs): The question of jurisdiction with respect to the control of the real estate industry in the province of Manitoba rests with the Manitoba Securities Commission. The complaint is lodged with the commission, they investigate and, if necessary, take the appropriate action. It is a quasi-judicial board and as such there is no ministerial interference.

Mr. Maloway: I would like to ask this minister, when he became aware of the investigation that was ongoing, why did this minister not issue some sort of public warning on the fact that these operations were preying on low-income people?

Mr. Ernst: As minister responsible for the Manitoba Securities Commission, I became aware of this matter yesterday upon my return to the city, having read some certain newspaper articles that occurred. If there is legitimacy, if there is evidence of wrongdoing, then it should be lodged with the Manitoba Securities Commission, and they will take appropriate action.

Mr. Maloway: I would like to ask my final supplementary to the Minister of Justice.

Has the minister launched any investigation as to how these properties were listed at the Land Titles Office?

Hon. Rosemary Vodrey (Minister of Justice and Attorney General): I am very careful about any details which I reveal relating to investigations, so I will have to take the question as notice and, if possible, provide some information to the member.

VLT Revenues Information Release

Mr. Steve Ashton (Thompson): Madam Speaker, yesterday I raised questions about the commitment in the throne speech to, after nine years of this government, greater accountability of public sector institutions, and no public sector institution is probably more secretive, nor is the government more secretive in the area of lotteries, and particularly in regard to the breakdown of lotteries that have been siphoned out of rural and northern communities.

I would like to ask the Minister responsible for Lotteries whether under this legislation and supposed new policy of the government, we will now receive, as has been requested by such organizations as the Union of Manitoba Municipalities, information on how much is taken out of communities, far more than the current 27 municipalities that are listed out of the 202 in Manitoba, because we do not get information on the rest, Madam Speaker.

Hon. Eric Stefanson (Minister charged with the administration of The Manitoba Lotteries Corporation Act): Madam Speaker, I think the member for Thompson knows that the reason that a summary was prepared in the fashion that it was, that it only shows breakdown for communities that have more than three locations, is because of third-party confidentiality. That was something that was acknowledged by the Manitoba Lotteries Corporation, was supported by the Ombudsman. Certainly I would hope that he would appreciate that in many instances there is a need to protect third-party confidentiality and that information will continue to be prepared on that basis.

Mr. Ashton: Madam Speaker, how can the minister justify this supposed new policy not giving a breakdown for close to 180 municipalities? Those are machines that are owned and operated by the Manitoba Lotteries Corporation. That money goes directly into his Treasury. How can he justify under this supposed new policy still refusing to give information to the municipalities on how much money is taken out of their community?

Mr. Stefanson: Madam Speaker, all I can do is repeat the same answer to the member for Thompson and hope that he listens, that the Ombudsman and Manitoba Lotteries Corporation respect third-party confidentiality. I know he does not and at times the NDP party does not. We do, and we will abide by those rulings.

REDI Program Information Release

Mr. Steve Ashton (Thompson): So, if nothing has changed, Madam Speaker, I have a further question in

regard to the other side of the lotteries ledger which is in terms of such programs as REDI which has also been subject to some criticism by the UMM.

I would like to ask the minister responsible for the program if, under this new policy of accountability, we will still—as we currently have as recently as this week—have to go through Freedom of Information through his department to try and get a breakdown on where REDI grants go, or will we finally get information given to us without the kinds of delaying tactics we have had over the past nine years of the tenure of this government?

Hon. Leonard Derkach (Minister of Rural Development): Madam Speaker, I was not aware that in fact the member had requested information on the REDI program, but indeed that information is available. I would be happy to provide him with the information with regard to the REDI projects that we have proceeded with over the last couple of years. I would be pleased to do that.

Madam Speaker: Time for Oral Questions has expired.

* (1420)

Speaker's Rulings

Madam Speaker: I have two rulings for the House.

On October 24, 1995, I took under advisement a point of order raised by the honourable Leader of the Opposition (Mr. Doer) about the content of a nonpolitical statement being made by the honourable member for Sturgeon Creek (Mr. McAlpine).

In raising his point of order, the Leader of the official opposition indicated the subject of the statement, that being the Charleswood Bridge, is a matter of political disagreement in this Legislature and that the statement was therefore political.

The government House leader (Mr. Ernst), in his submission, stated that the project was completed and the politics of the project were over.

I have reviewed the comments of all concerned with care and have looked at past rulings of Manitoba

Speakers. On October 24, 1989, Speaker Rocan, in ruling on a point of order about what was complained to be increasing political content of nonpolitical statements, noted the following points: Nonpolitical statements are made by leave and are allowed for by practice of the House, not by our rules. The history of nonpolitical statements appears to have begun in 1973 and for about 15 years the statements were what we could call truly nonpolitical or nonpartisan, focusing on community or athletic achievements. Since 1988, it appears that the trend has been that the statements have been more political in words and intent.

As recently as June 9, 1995, the Deputy Premier (Mr. Downey) was called to order when he attempted to congratulate a political party on its election to government.

Turning to the specifics of the statement on October 24, I have carefully considered the topic and I must rule that the honourable Leader of the official opposition indeed had a valid point of order. The building of the Charleswood Bridge has been a controversial and a political issue, and the statement of the member for Sturgeon Creek (Mr. McAlpine) was not in order.

Having ruled, I would like to reiterate what I said on October 24, that I believe members' statements would be a good topic for an early discussion of House leaders. Perhaps using some of the practices of other Canadian Legislatures would be useful in facilitating members being able to make statements with a greater degree of freedom of topic than the Manitoba tradition has provided for up to now.

* * *

Madam Speaker: I have a second ruling for the House.

On Tuesday, October 31, 1995, during Question Period, a point of order was raised by the government House leader (Mr. Ernst) stating that words used by the honourable member for St. Johns (Mr. Mackintosh) were unparliamentary. I took the matter under advisement to check Hansard.

Having done so, I find that there was no point of order. Procedurally the matter had already been dealt

with when I cautioned the honourable member for St. Johns on his choice of words.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

THRONE SPEECH DEBATE (Second Day of Debate)

Madam Speaker: On the proposed motion of the honourable member for River Heights (Mr. Radcliffe) for an address to His Honour the Lieutenant Governor in answer to his speech at the opening of session, and the proposed motion of the Leader of the official opposition (Mr. Doer) in amendment thereto, standing in the name of the honourable member for Inkster (Mr. Lamoureux) who has 15 minutes remaining.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Inkster): Madam Speaker, yesterday just before we adjourned I believe I had taken a significant portion of my time to try to explain to the Minister of Health about the transfer payments, the \$147 million, the \$220 million, and I guess it just did not seem to have sunk in with respect to the Minister of Health. I really appeal to members and ministers, in particular responsible for those three departments.

I really do appeal to those ministers to be a bit more forthright and honest with people when they start to talk about the \$147 million, and once again appeal in particular to the Premier and others to tell me where they get the \$220 million from when they talk about the following budget, that being the '97-98 budget, because I am unaware of where they are getting that \$220 million. I would welcome and appreciate—and particularly from the Premier because the Premier has also made reference to this not only inside the Chamber but outside the Chamber, whether it is on radio or other groups.

Madam Speaker, I want to continue on where I left off yesterday when I was talking about the greatest potential for economic growth that is here in the province of Manitoba is in fact within the small business sector. What government needs to do in order to facilitate that growth is to start working with small business people, trying to get better ideas on how they might be able to streamline.

I recall a release which our party had put out in which we talked about getting rid of some of the paperwork, some of the duplication that is out there that the average small business person has to go through in order to get a business up and going.

We also talked about capital, how difficult it is for the small business person to be able to acquire the financial resources that he feels is necessary in order to get himself into the market. These are areas where, Madam Speaker, I would hope that this government would take more of a proactive approach. We need, very much so, to expand the apprenticeship, the way in which we train people or provide post-secondary education and in fact, I would argue that we do not have to wait until a student graduates from high school in order to start training that individual for a particular job. You do not have to wait until they go to Red River College or to the university.

You can in fact implement more apprenticeship, work training, co-operatives within our high school system, our S1 to S4. Some school divisions have done that. I look in particular at Seven Oaks; one of the school trustees was talking about some of the programs that are out there. I believe ultimately that the government, the Department of Education in co-operation with the Department of Labour are in fact in the best position to ensure that there is a co-ordinated approach so that school divisions that do not have the same sort of resources do have the ability to bring in apprenticeship or work-sharing programs that will in fact train individuals that maybe might not have the desire, in some cases might not even have the ability, to go to a university or to some of the courses at Red River. But, Madam Speaker, those individuals do have a right to be provided some form of training as we offer all individuals who graduate, even those many individuals who do not graduate from Grade 12.

I would hope and I would like to see government more involved in that area. I recall during the last election when I had an opportunity to tour a number of businesses and one individual was talking about lathe work, steel lathe, and he was indicating how he had one student who was coming in there, gaining the experience, first-hand experience while still being able to meet a certain academic performance by having to

be obligated to go to school to finish those basics, while at the same time gaining real-life work experience so that in fact when this individual graduates from high school he is going to be walking into a job. Whether it is a he or a she, Madam Speaker, this sort of programming and government involvement, whether it is at the municipal, provincial or federal level, should be applauded, and hopefully we will see more of that.

I wanted to talk very briefly on rural development. Rural development is something that is very important, always has been important to the Liberal Party—

An Honourable Member: To you?

Mr. Lamoureux: To me, too, Madam Speaker, to the minister who asked, to me.

When the government came out, for example, with the Grow Bonds Program, the REDI program, contrary to what the government might try to give Manitobans the impression, in fact, the Liberal Party was quite supportive of the programs. [interjection] One minister says we called them small potatoes. Well, Madam Speaker, I have seen those small potatoes being misused, misquoted. It is much like when the former Leader of the Liberal Party Mrs. Carstairs made reference to personal care homes and if we had better home care services for seniors in their homes that there would not necessarily be as much of a demand for personal care homes.

Well, put everything in its proper perspective, and the ministers, and some more than others, have an excellent way of taking things out of perspective so that in fact they can try to put such a spin on it that it portrays us Liberals to look possibly in a bad light. I find that somewhat unfortunate, but that is a part of the game I guess. It might not necessarily be the highlight of the game, but it is unfortunate, and we have seen many different examples of that.

* (1430)

Madam Speaker, when it comes to rural development or agriculture, what we are really talking about is rural diversification and how government can in fact enhance that diversification so that the vibrancy of our

rural communities is going to be there well into the future. All Manitobans, I believe, want to see a vibrant rural Manitoba. I know I do, members of the Liberal Party do, and I choose to believe that all members in this Chamber in fact support that.

So, Madam Speaker, when we see good ideas such as the Grow Bonds or the REDI being brought in, we welcome that and we applaud the government on its actions. Sometimes, depending on an election cycle, you might see more advertising and so forth, we could question that. There are some aspects in the way in which government brings in programs of this nature that do warrant some sort of questioning and constructive criticism, if I can use that term.

Another issue which I want to touch upon is the whole issue of gambling. We have a very important commission report that is coming down sometime this month. That commission report was actually supposed to be coming down in September, but it has been put off, put off. I hope and trust that this government will, once they have received that report, bring forward that report to the public, that they do not sit on it.

Madam Speaker, it would be wonderful to see a standing committee of this House, one of which the Liberal Party has presence on that standing committee, that we could actually discuss it so that in fact we can once again provide that constructive criticism, because in this area this government needs to be criticized. Gambling policy has been nothing more than a tax grab. That is the driving force for gambling policy in the province of Manitoba from this government.

Madam Speaker, all we need to do, as I pointed out in the Question Period, is go across from the high school out in The Maples and you will see VLT machines. Every little corner in this province, city of Winnipeg, rural Manitoba, you have VLT machines scattered throughout. We, in the Liberal Party, acknowledge that there is to a certain degree gambling and that gambling is going to exist. We would rather see it based on tourism as opposed to what this government is doing.

Our Leader has made reference to this government's policy. It has more of training Manitobans to gamble

so that they can go down to the States, and when Regina opens up with their first-class drinking, I do not know what they are going to have in that particular casino. The NDP have made a fine art out of gambling—[interjection] No, I have not booked; actually, I have not been to any of the bingo palaces here or VLTs.

Anyway, Madam Speaker, I digress. I would like to see the government take a policy on gambling that is tourism based and start opening their eyes to some of the social costs that have been put on Manitobans as a direct response of irresponsible government policy, and that is in fact what has happened.

I used to be the lotteries critic for our party a couple of years back, and I recall the way in which gambling was brought and introduced into the province, Madam Speaker. I think that this government proved itself to be extremely manipulative, demonstrated its ability to try to cover the real issues of gambling, and they were successful. They were successful in bringing it in, trying to tie it to economic development in rural Manitoba and the VLTs in the city of Winnipeg, the casino. They tied it to health care in order to prevent that legitimate debate about the social costs of gambling, and that is unfortunate.

Also, Madam Speaker, limited time, unlike the Leader of the New Democratic Party, so I have to try to crunch as much as I can.

The Winnipeg Jets—you know, I had a very interesting comment over the weekend from a fellow who attended the McDonald's, and he said you know, Mr. Lamoureux, it would be wonderful if government did not subsidize pro sports at all. In fact, if you take a look at all those successful NHL teams, who is actually subsidizing them? You have all these company boxes and company seats and all these huge corporations, to a certain degree, that are using them as tax write-offs which give an advantage to cities like Toronto and New York and Boston and Chicago, that in fact Winnipeg could if you took away all of those tax incentives that are given to all these major cities, if you took away those tax incentives that in fact we would be able to sustain. There is a lot of disappointment, no doubt, that the Winnipeg Jets are leaving the city of

Winnipeg, but the way in which this government has dealt with that issue has been most unfortunate, most unfortunate, and ultimately Winnipeg will survive.

Madam Speaker, there is no doubt many other issues that I should be talking about such as the Canadian unity and the importance of trying to resolve this issue. I look forward to being able to participate. I was a bit disappointed in the Leader of the Opposition's (Mr. Doer) opening remarks regarding it, somewhat concerned. It will be interesting to see how it follows. I would like to pledge the support from all three of the Liberal caucus members here that in fact we are going to do what we can to ensure that the country does in fact stay together while at the same time protect Manitoba's best interest.

Madam Speaker, at this time I would like to move, seconded by the member for The Maples (Mr. Kowalski),

THAT the amendment be amended by adding thereto the following words:

And further regrets:

- (a) THAT this government still has no solid vision of health care reform and instead of consultation has, as demonstrated by this government's decision to reduce access to emergency care, resorted to ministerial decisions without reference to the public's health care needs; and
- (b) THAT this government has failed to recognize that competitive advantage in the global economy is the product of one's ability to acquire and apply knowledge and that this is fostered by an effective and modern education system: and
- (c) THAT this government in an effort to cover their own mismanagement seeks to blame the federal government for all its problems and refuses to accept responsibility for their own decisions.

Madam Speaker: The subamendment is in order.

Motion presented.

Hon. Albert Driedger (Minister of Natural Resources): Madam Speaker, it is always a privilege and an honour to participate in debate in this House even after the many opportunities that I have had.

From time to time I have been semicritical about the benefit of having the kind of debate we have in here but then the longer that I am in this building, the stronger I feel, I suppose, about the system that we have in place, the democratic system. In spite of all its faults, it is still the best system there is in the world. We have our days when sometimes we feel that we are not accomplishing an awful lot, but I think that by and large even the opinions—and we are entitled, in the throne speech especially as well as in the budget debate, to expound our own views and opinions as to what happens. How productive it is, I do not necessarily want to say, but it is certainly better than the different options or the alternative to that.

I find, Madam Speaker, in this particular case, a lot has happened within the last year. We had a provincial election in the spring. We have had the civic elections in the fall. We had the referendum election in Quebec and it has been a relatively hectic period of time for Manitobans and Canadians, I guess, but Manitobans more so. I feel now that all the voting and electioneering has taken place there seems to be a bit of stability that has developed within the province and the people especially of Manitoba, because one thing that I feel when I get out among the constituents is that there is a feeling of quiet optimism out there.

* (1440)

I get the sense that people have a feeling of satisfaction out there, and over the 18 years that I have been in provincial politics that has not always been the case. Many times it has happened that the general public is annoyed with the government of the day, that they have issues that they are violently opposed to or concerned about. When you look at what are the issues out there today, there are not really that many. The one thing that probably comes to mind in terms of a debatable issue is to some degree in the rural area related to the dual-marketing system with the hog commission. I know that my colleague the Minister of Agriculture (Mr. Enns) will be dealing with that in his

comments within the next few days, so I will not get into that, but by and large there is a feeling of confidence out there and especially at a time when we are getting close to the Christmas season, the holiday season. If you walk into a shopping mall these days, I think there must be a tremendous optimism out there, because they are packed and people are buying, spending money. I think that is a very positive sign.

I was listening to the comments of the Leader of the Opposition (Mr. Doer), who has been there a considerable amount of time. In fact I think this is, if I am correct, Madam Speaker—you could probably give me a sign whether I am correct. I think this is the eighth time that we have the chance to debate a throne speech this government. Would I be right? Yes, I think it is the eighth time, and for the same reasons that we then speak positively in the throne speech, it is the eighth time that the Leader of the Opposition has got to come up with his response to it. I listened with interest to the enthusiasm of the Leader of the Opposition in terms of being negative. It seems as if—[interjection] You were enthusiastic about being negative. I guess it comes with the territory. If you have been in opposition, the Leader of the Opposition for that long, negativism comes automatic. He is enthusiastic. He is saying all the things that are wrong, I found, and chuckled to myself and felt it must be challenging. There must be times, when the general public—like it is now in Manitoba—is optimistic, that you must feel optimistic as well. It cannot always be negative.

I can recall having been in opposition. I was in opposition from '81 to '88, and it was challenging to always try and look at the negative sides of the government of the day. It was more easy with the government of the day at that time than it must be for them with us.

Madam Speaker, there is an optimism out there. In fact, the information that we have received lately, the Minister of Finance (Mr. Stefanson) has said that we have a tremendous increase in the sales tax in this province year over year. I will tell you something, if people are not happy they will not spend money. Obviously, there must be a lot of happiness out there because the position of the people in Manitoba is much, much more positive than I have felt it for a long time.

Madam Speaker, you start feeling proud to some degree for the people of Manitoba because if you compare whichever province you want, I think almost anybody would like to be in our position at this point in time. Over the last eight years, we have made some difficult decisions. We have had our unpopularity but now it is finally showing that they were positive things that we did compared to what happened in Ontario. I saw the budget come down from Ontario the other day, and, oh, geez, I mean, just unbelievable and irrespective of whether it was Tories, Grits or the NDP, somebody would have to bite the bullet. The reason why the previous Premier Rae got thrown out was because even the tough things he did were not satisfying the people anymore.

So if we do a comparison province by province, this is a nice place to live. I like it and I am proud to be a minister of this government at a time when there is a positive thing happening in Manitoba. I am glad my colleague the Minister of Industry, Trade and Tourism (Mr. Downey) is here as well because he has had a very challenging last six months. I do not know how much work he has really been doing but he has sure been going around doing openings and announcing openings of new investment, new businesses—tremendous. [interjection]

Well, I will tell you something, that somebody has to do that, but it shows the confidence is not just that we have here as government. It is not just the confidence that Manitobans have. It is the confidence that the people across Canada have in this province, and that is why announcement after announcement is coming, has come and more coming. So it is these kinds of trends.

This is early on in our mandate. We are what, seven months into our new mandate, and things are starting to build. The job creation is there. The wealth is starting to accumulate.

We are looking at a balanced budget, first time, the strongest one. I have to say that with some tongue in cheek a little bit. It made me a little nervous when we passed that kind of thing where it maybe could be affecting our wages. But things are coming along very nicely, and I think we all should feel proud of what we are doing with that legislation.

Madam Speaker, having said this in a sort of a general consensus to start my comments, I want to discuss a few issues here today related to my departmental challenges. In spite of the fact that there is optimism out there—generally the majority of the people are very happy—that does not mean that there are not problems. There are problems in the various departments. There are always challenges out there, and certainly I have those within my department and I want to just maybe address a few of them.

An Honourable Members: There are still problems with the NDP MLAs.

Mr. Driedger: Yes, yes. Incidentally, thanks for the—I have to go back to general comments again.

I guess maybe what makes me proud to be part of this government in the eight years or going on eight years that we have been government, there has not been any scandal within our government, and you show me any government with that kind of a record. You show me any government with the kind of record that we have in terms of major taxes. Our sales tax has stayed consistent all the time. We decreased the personal income tax, corporation tax. This is why people like to come here. It used to be a challenge to get people to come and move into Manitoba to take up certain positions. Now they are coming. They want to come here. They feel comfortable living here.

But as I said, Madam Speaker, there are challenges, certainly within my department, and other ministers can make reference to theirs. I want to make some comments about water issues. I want to talk about forestry in a minute, because I said I would address some of the concerns out there, and I want to talk a little bit about the environmental process that we have in the province.

But, Madam Speaker, related to water issues, we have had a challenging year. You know, things have changed in the last two years dramatically compared to what they were for the seven years prior to that when we had dry conditions, very little water problems. The last year, just so that members maybe would want to know, was an all time record flood in the Assiniboine Valley. It was more than double anything we had ever

seen in the recorded history of the valley, and with that of course came related problems. Flooding affected people all the way down from the Shellmouth, all the way down to Brandon, all the way down to Portage and through the diversion that we were operating at Portage. We also had flooding along Lake Manitoba, so once you have that kind of thing happening it spreads throughout.

However, most of the planning of the past that took place many years ago saved Winnipeg harmless from these floods. The Portage diversion was operating effectively. We did that until finally it came to the point that we had so much water in Lake Manitoba that my colleagues, the constituents out there, the Minister of Environment (Mr. Cummings) had major concerns about the levels of water that were affecting his farm people out there, but by and large, considering the size of the flooding, we basically managed to get out of it. It affected some people. There are still concerns out there. Some people were affected very negatively financially, but by and large it could have been dramatically worse.

* (1450)

Madam Speaker, what I foresee happening in the water issues is that we have new challenges facing us. Life as we knew it in the past is not the same any more. Where we used to take and deal with draining every pothole, draining sloughs, draining water off the farmers' land as fast as possible, we as government—and I think everybody, the farmers included—are now talking of saving a very valuable resource which is basically water.

As a result of the concerns that are out there, we have established a deputy minister's committee which is starting to work on water policies related to water retention, because we have problems developing, and the—help me out a little bit—where we have our Assiniboine Valley at the far end at the Shellmouth Dam where the Saskatchewan farmers by and large have developed extensive drainage systems, and as a result they are looking at—and you cannot fault them—

An Honourable Member: Langenburg, Langenburg.

Mr. Driedger: The Langenburg project is out there. Maybe some of the members opposite know about that.

Certainly I believe the member for Swan would know about the Langenburg projects, major drainage projects that have been undertaken which basically lead into on both sides of the Shellmouth Dam, and we have major concerns that have to be dealt with.

I can just say that myself and two of my colleagues went down to the Saskatchewan government after the last election, sat down with the ministers, had a good meeting, and as a result of that meeting we have agreed that we will take and develop a major study together with the federal government, the government of Saskatchewan, the government of Manitoba, and address what is happening with the major drainage concerns out there.

Further to that, Madam Speaker, we also are looking at doing water retention. And I have some concerns about where we have gone to some degree with the environmental process, because if we had had an environmental process in place at the time when the Winnipeg floodway was built, when the Shellmouth Dam was built, when the Portage diversion was built, I do not know whether those projects would have ever got off the ground, and, still, they have served a very, very good purpose for us as Manitobans here.

I think that, ultimately, when we look at dealing with the important asset of water, that we probably have to start looking at having retention programs again, and that could involve dams. It could involve major dams. If I had my way, I would like to see some of that happening because there are many benefits. Just look at what has happened at Shellmouth with that dam out there. You have recreation, you have the water control, the flood control, which is the purpose it was built for. We should have more of those.

Related to the need for water, because there is an old saying that if you drain it, it rushes through and it is gone. There is no value in it, and I will tell you something. With the announcement that was made by McCain at Portage, part of that is related to the requirement of having irrigation take place. That is just an example, and I think we can expand on that greatly, but we have to make sure that we have the water resource there.

From time to time, I have made the comment, Madam Speaker, that water is the most important asset

that a country can have. If you look at history, more fighting has taken place about water than about anything else, and I think we are getting to that point again, where possibly we have to be very concerned about what we do with water. Certainly, I know that our neighbours to the south have major concerns. They would just love to have the water resource that we have here.

So the challenge that I perceive at least, and I think my colleagues agree, for my department and Water Resources is how do we best deal and try to make maximum use out of the water resource. We are working in those areas. I hope that we can do these things, expeditiously move it along, and, again, making reference carefully that the environmental process is necessary but it should not necessarily stop or be a total deterrent for many of the projects that I think we have to undertake.

Madam Speaker, I want to address to forestry issues, as well. During Question Period, the member for Dauphin (Mr. Struthers) raised some questions, and I, of course, anticipated it would happen because I happened to make some comments related to some of the news releases that were put out. I want to just clarify to some degree that forestry is a very important asset for Manitobans. It is a renewable resource that if handled properly is always going to be able to provide the kinds of jobs that people need. It will provide economic benefits that we need.

The challenge that we are faced with, especially my department which is responsible for forestry, is how do we do this in such a way that an annual allowable cut is there, that we have a sustainable product out there, that we can do it in such a way that we address wildlife concerns, fisheries concerns, the concerns of all the people involved.

There is a process in place, Madam Speaker, which is a very extensive one. It has been said many times, and nobody can challenge the fact that the Manitoba environmental process is the toughest in the country. It is tougher than the federal government one, and this is where the argument starts developing because we have a process in place that is going to address the concerns of the public.

I want to maybe just give a little bit of a snapshot. My department basically deals with maybe about a hundred applications for development of all natures, big, small, otherwise. The normal process is when it comes into my department, it would get circulated into the district, and then the district supervisor, my district individual, circulates it to the various games people, the water people, the fisheries people. Everybody has a chance to reply to it.

The normal process is that it takes about—what are we looking at, 100 days, 30 days, the process from the time that an application comes in? It gets put out there, and they have 45 days. The region then basically responds back. It gets back into my policy department who then take and gather all the information and then submit that forward to the Clean Environment Commission. If we have concerns, they are registered. If not, we say so as well. That is a process that basically evolved with Repap. That is a process that has evolved basically with Louisiana-Pacific. My people have responded, professional people.

I cannot tell you whether it is going to affect the rabbits and the poplar trees out in Swan River or not or whether it will affect the fish swimming and spawning in certain streams. That is why I have professional people out there, biologists, other people, that basically know exactly what effect it will have. I rely on that and accept the fact that we have professional people out there that know the impact that it has.

When the application comes in, we develop our scenario. The information package, it is then forwarded to the Clean Environment Commission, and basically then our people have to defend it. That is the process that we have been on right now. The member for Dauphin (Mr. Struthers) and the member for Swan River (Ms. Wowchuk) were at the CEC hearings, both in Swan as well as here in Winnipeg.

When the questions were raised by whomever—anybody can raise questions out there. In fact, one of my own staff people, which is highly unusual, was criticizing his colleagues in terms of the information that they had. I do not think that was very wise, really, but that is what happened.

So the member for Dauphin raised today the question in the House as to, you know, if we would have had our

information there, they would not have had to postpone the hearings. That is not the case at all. What has happened here is that the federal government is trying to develop a stage where they feel that they have a requirement or a say in the matter in terms of the environmental process.

As I have said before, our process is much stronger than the federal one would be, and they are basically creating some difficulty right now. That is why some of the questions that have been raised for responses, my director of Forestry was there responding to it. This thing will evolve as it should.

Madam Speaker, I saw the news releases where the member for Dauphin (Mr. Struthers) and the member for Swan River (Ms. Wowchuk) are putting out news releases saying we should resubmit L-P review to CEC, and they asked the Auditor to review the Louisiana-Pacific deal. That is why I was a little sarcastic in my replies during Question Period, but justifiably so because, I repeat again, a little information in the wrong minds is a dangerous thing. If they would have taken time to find out exactly what the process was related to the deal—

* (1500)

I want to talk specifically to the Louisiana-Pacific deal, where the concern that my critics raised, said it is a bad deal. I have to read this. This is the final statement in one of the releases. It says here: We believe the Provincial Auditor can address some of these concerns so that Manitobans are not faced with another fiscal fiasco like the Jets' operating losses agreement, Struthers concluded.

I nearly fell off my chair when I read that. I do not know how they could get the Jets tied into a Louisiana-Pacific deal. Then, in doing some of the checking, I find out that they have some concern related to the agreement where there is a commitment by the province somewhere along the line as conditions change. It is a 20-year agreement that if conditions change that there is some liability by the province. Now let me back up.

It was the community of Swan River who invited Louisiana-Pacific to come into their area there and try

and establish a plant. It was Swan River that invited Louisiana-Pacific and then asked the province whether they could assist in trying to see whether they could establish a plant in that area, a very economically beneficial plant.

So the process started, Madam Speaker, and one of the requirements that Louisiana-Pacific basically needed was a commitment for supply. They claimed that, and we have an agreement, they need 900,000 cubic metres of hardwood annually, hardwood being basically poplar and ash, basically the product that we have burned and we have cut it down and nobody ever had any use for it, but Louisiana-Pacific makes strand board out of it and they have a use for it.

So we cut this agreement and people said, well, how can you give away that amount of resource? First of all, they pay stumpage, and that agreement is also renewable, you know, where they have to renew the resource, sustainable development.

Madam Speaker, when people say 900,000 cubic metres, first of all, nobody knows how much that is; it is pretty hard to figure out how much that is. However, we have available annual, allowable, harvestable hardwood to the tune of almost 1.4 million cubic metres, and 900,000 cubic metres of that we have allocated to Louisiana-Pacific.

Now, in that agreement, there is provision if there are some variances, you know, that we need some of this area for some of the wood for parks and other things. We have a variance factor in there of 45,000 cubic metres. That is stage one. Now, if there is going to be under treaty land entitlement or for whatever other reasons there is going to be a major variance in there, at that point in time the province is then committed to take and replace that wood. If for certain reasons we would withdraw a certain portion of that wood from the 900,000 cubic metres, we then have to replace that.

We have no difficulty with that, Madam Speaker, because we have very close to 1.4 million cubic metres of wood and of that total allowable cut that we have—let me explain an allowable cut. That means, every year you can cut that much wood, and that is based on the information that we have that that supply is out there.

That is why we have the reforestation agreements which are part of it. However, in hardwood, let me tell you that you do not have to replant popular trees. You cut and they grow. Softwood is different.

Now, the deal that we have with Louisiana-Pacific, they are going to be accountable for that whole region for the forestry areas that we have allocated to them. They have to do the forest renewal thing, reforestation, not only for the hardwood, according to our terms that the department has set out, the department of forestry, but also for softwood. They have no quota to cut softwood. They have to do that because if we were going to go back and ask, we have 300 smaller quotaholders in the province, Madam Speaker, and if we would ask each one of them to take and do the renewal, it would be a mess, so the deal the way it is set up with Louisiana-Pacific, they will do the total renewable, they will do the reforestation.

The final clause, Madam Speaker, the one that really sticks in the craw of the member for Dauphin (Mr. Struthers), I think, is the fact that if we do not have enough wood somewhere along the line in terms of replacement that we would have an obligation to take and pay the company monies.

Now we have an investment here by L-P, a 20-year agreement that we have. They have made a substantive investment, millions, an \$80-million investment in the plant. It is a good agreement. It is a good deal. It is a good deal for Manitoba and it is a good deal for L-P, but they also need some assurances. Let me illustrate. If, for example, governments change—and God forbid that the NDP would form government—and then they decided, Madam Speaker, to withdraw the Porcupine mountains and the Duck mountains out of this agreement, then, by concurrence of the Manitoba government that they would do so and so much wood that it could not be replaced, there would be a financial obligation, but only if the Manitoba government concurred.

That is the reason why that agreement is in there so that when there is change somewhere along the line then there is an obligation. Why would somebody put in an \$80-million plant and not look for some assurances? It would be stupid. It would be ludicrous. They are sticking in \$80 million; there have to be some

assurances that, if governments would change the rules in five years time or 10 years time, there has to be some obligation. So we have covered everything off the way we feel.

Now, Madam Speaker, I want to continue, but I wanted to clarify that because I think there was a misconception. That is why the member for Dauphin (Mr. Struthers) makes reference to the Jets fiasco. How do you compare that? It is stupid. That is why I felt this was something that I could not really respond to totally in the Question Period. Knowing I was speaking, I wanted to clarify that.

Madam Speaker, I find it a little frustrating—and that is why I made the remark about the member for Swan River (Ms. Wowchuk) hiding among the trees—because she is the beneficiary. Her area is the beneficiary of the jobs that are being created and the economic spin-off that is taking place there, and then we have the naysayers and the critics that try and make this thing out to be a bad deal. It is the area that wanted it. Everybody is a winner in this thing, and our challenge is to make sure that all Manitobans are protected as well as being winners in this thing. I cannot, for the life of me, sometimes see how these people come up with these negative attitudes about the positive things that happen.

With all due respect, I do not very often compliment the member for Inkster (Mr. Lamoureux)—I am probably a little bit harder on him than most people—but at least he has enough vision if there is something positive to say it as positive. I am surprised at the member for Dauphin, having been here only seven months, has already fallen into that sort of a category where everything is negative. Maybe that is how he feels about his area out there that he represents. I feel very positive about the area that I represent, and I think all Manitobans feel positive about that. Certainly, my colleagues do.

Madam Speaker, I want to just make a little reference further to the forestry issue before I continue. How much time do I have?

Madam Speaker: The honourable member has nine minutes remaining.

Mr. Driedger: Madam Speaker, are we changing the rules so it has to be less yet? I will leave that for now then. I might have a chance again when we get into the budget. I just want to make some other comments related to my department. We are having a very interesting year, and I want to talk a little bit about wildlife.

An Honourable Member: About whom?

Mr. Driedger: Wildlife. Not like nightlife, I said wildlife.

An Honourable Member: Do you have nightlife too?

* (1510)

Mr. Driedger: My colleagues have. I am getting too old for that.

Madam Speaker, the wildlife situation in our province is in a very healthy state by and large. We have more deer than we have ever had in this province, and, God forbid, we have more beavers than we have ever had too. Many of you probably have realized the problems that we have with beaver, and I will touch on that just briefly.

The average population of the beaver in Manitoba was between 300,000 and 400,000. Well, we are well over a million and going through the roof. As a result, what has happened is that with the beavers being the industrious engineers that they are—God, I wish I could harness them and make them do the things I would want them to do, great engineers—but they happen to build dams and dikes all over the place, in culverts, along roads and the cost to municipality and provincial government is dramatic. That is why we have a control program in place, and that is why we are very concerned when the European union is trying to ban the trapping of fur animals. If that happens, it has a dramatic impact on not only Manitoba but all Canadians who basically—especially the people in the North—make their living from this.

I am very concerned about what has happened with the extensive lobby. The federal government and all provinces join—I mean this is not political for us within

the country—together, Manitobans, Canadians, even the United States and Russia, are all combined in terms of trying to deal with the extreme views of the environmental groups in Europe. We are hoping that we can get this resolved because that could be dramatic.

I want to make reference a little bit to the deer population, as I started off. We have problems, we have expanded our seasons where the hunters can take two deer. We have made provision with the Manitoba Wildlife Federation, to whom I want to give recognition, and with good imaginative thinking have made provision that those people who like to hunt but do not necessarily want to utilize the meat, it can be taken to certain abattoirs and that meat is then turned over to Winnipeg Harvest. It has just turned out tremendously. It has just been working really ace. In fact, because of the kind of approach that is taken, people have brought more than just deer meat. Some of them have brought actually cattle and hogs. It has really caught on. In meeting with the president, Larry Milian, from the Manitoba Wildlife Federation, we feel very positive about the work that they have done.

Madam Speaker, we have too many deer. We have deer problems along the Red River Valley. Close to the urban areas we have—my colleague the member responsible for Manitoba Public Insurance Corporation (Mr. Cummings) can probably give some figures as to how many accidents take place by hitting deer, but we also have people along the Red River Valley who are market gardeners who basically cannot get insurance or any coverage. We have 50-60 deer getting into some of their market gardens and just cleaning everything up. We are looking at the possibility of developing a control program with them as well and utilizing that meat again through Winnipeg Harvest for the utilization of people who need it.

The one concern I have right now, to tell you some of the challenges and problems that have come with making decisions, we have snow, more than we have had for many a year already and we are just barely into December, and under these conditions there is that possibility that—and it has happened in years past—a good percentage, up to 50 percent of our deer population could just literally starve.

Then comes the question, what do we do? Do we continue with the control program for the people along the Red River Valley to deal with the market gardeners? Do we establish feeding programs for the elk and for the deer in certain parts of the province? We really cannot take and afford the cost of feeding deer to that extent.

My first report from my staff people say that under these circumstances right now if we were going to try and feed elk and deer, we would be looking at half a million dollars minimum. I mean, it is just not in the cards. Nature has a way of sort of dealing us a blow of this nature. I would rather utilize the wildlife resource through hunting processes and the process that we do now that maybe that meat can be used for those that are not as fortunate as others. So these are the challenges and decisions that I have to make somewhere along the line.

Madam Speaker, I sense that I am running out of time, but I want to touch on fisheries a little bit. We have major challenges in the commercial fishery. Where numbers are very healthy in wildlife, in the fishery end of it we are having problems, and Lake Winnipegosis has experienced major difficulty. Years ago it was closed down for three years. The fish rebounded to some degree and then in two years time they were fished out and we have a major problem again.

The poor commercial fishermen have the licences and the quotas we have there, they cannot make a living. We are challenged with making decisions and we have great lakes, we have great productive lakes, but we have to manage them wisely. In the case of Lake Winnipegosis, we are working with the commercial fishermen to establish fish hatcheries, and when you do that, then the sport fishers come up and say, you know, how come you are helping the commercial fishermen? We pay this little stamp too and we need it for our own sources, but these are challenges that we will face and deal with.

Then we have Lake Manitoba where we have different challenges, and we have such great lakes, and there is so much history in terms of the commercial fishing that has gone on from the time that commercial

fishing was established. If anybody has ever read some of the history of it, it is quite dramatic, and very innovative people that would—[interjection] Okay, thank you, Madam Speaker.

I just want to say that the biggest challenge I am facing right now is Lake Winnipeg where we have so many diversified groups that are involved with the commercial fishery and questions that were raised here, and one of the questions actually created some of the discomfort that you experienced in this House when comments were made related to—I cannot say the word, I guess—you know, when the member for The Pas raised some questions here with me as to whether our policies were fair, unfair or whatever.

But we are undertaking, we have a private consultant who is doing a third party review of Lake Winnipeg. I am hoping for that report by February, March sometime and I want to say that we will be making some tough decisions related to Lake Winnipeg by the time that the next fishing season rolls around.

Madam Speaker, I would like to actually cover a few other issues yet, but I appreciate the opportunity and I want to say that I think that I want to wish all members of the House a happy Yuletide season and a very good New Year, and I hope that they develop a more positive attitude, especially the members of the opposition. Thank you.

Mr. Stan Struthers (Dauphin): Madam Speaker, I thank the members and I thank you for allowing me a chance to respond briefly to the Speech from the Throne that we heard a couple of days ago. I would like to keep my comments brief, but I realize that with the number of clichés and old, old, tired, worn-out, out-of-touch, out-of-date sayings that came out of the Speech from the Throne the other day, I am going to have a very tough job in keeping my comments brief, but I will try my best.

My opportunity here, the second throne speech of the seven months that I have been an MLA representing Dauphin, I am told though that this is the first real throne speech that I have been able to listen to, because the first one really was not a throne speech; it was just warmed over from a previous throne speech. So I was

really very much looking forward to experiencing a real throne speech for the first time in my political career. I must say that I enjoyed coming back to the Legislature and seeing everybody within the House again and participating in an event that I think is very important.

When I was a schoolteacher at the junior high level, I taught social studies. Part of the social studies curriculum is devoted to civics and working with young people in terms of figuring out how we are governed, learning about how decisions in our country and in our provinces are made, and indeed even at the municipal level.

One of the lessons that I remember as a teacher, working with the students on, was the uses of a throne speech; the uses, the intent, the objective of doing a throne speech, why we do it in the Legislature, what the purpose of a throne speech is. I took it upon myself at this time to bring in some experts, as teachers across the province sometimes do. I figured I was just a teacher, who was I to be talking about what politicians do.

I brought in some real politicians to talk to my students. I brought in a Mr. Brian White, who was our Conservative member of Parliament at the time, and he talked to the students about a throne speech and how important it was at the federal level. I brought in a Mr. Leonard Harapiak, who was the MLA at the time where I was teaching, and he talked about the value and the objective of a throne speech at the provincial level. I want to point out for the member for The Maples (Mr. Kowalski), who is listening here today, that I even brought a Liberal in to talk to my students just to make sure that it was kosher right across the board.

* (1520)

What they told us at the time was that a throne speech, put out to all the people of Manitoba through its elected representatives and through the media, off the desk of the Lieutenant Governor of the province, it set out the goals, the objectives, the road that the government is going to follow along, the guidelines that will govern the future actions of the government for the session. It puts forth, if you will, a road map telling people where this government is heading.

Now, Madam Speaker, these are the kinds of things that we teach our students in schools. Unfortunately, my experience so far in seven months does not back up what we are teaching our students in our classrooms. I think in schools maybe we should continue to teach what a throne speech should be used for, but I think we should also maybe tell them what it has been used for, and in my experience in this year it has been a political tool. It is another way for the government to get its spin on certain issues. It is another opportunity for the government of the day to get a hit in the media, to get a little bit of attention. It provides a lot of nice words, it provides a lot of nice phrases, but they end up being a lot of tired, old, out-of-date, out-of-touch cliches.

Now I would not want to go back to the junior high that I was teaching at and have to tell the students that all that happens in a throne speech is a government taking a political action in setting out—taking advantage of an opportunity to put its own political spin on the issues of the day.

How did things happen over the last session? We heard a throne speech. We all came back into the House, debated bills. We debated budgets, we debated Estimates, we had all kinds of debates on the issues of the day. How were things actually decided over the last session by this government? Did they have anything to do with the throne speech back that they gave on May 23? I do not think so. May 23's throne speech was made up of a lot of nice words and nice phrases, but the real agenda of this government was played out not through the throne speech but through such things as cabinet decrees, Orders-in-Council, ministerial decisions that were made with very little, if any, consultation with the public and very little, if any, debate within this House.

So I have to admit that I am a little bit leery as we start out in this session springing from yet another throne speech that is full of cliches. Now I thought maybe that this is just something that is recent with this government, but I have checked around with other folks who have been here longer than I have, and they assure me that it is not just this one throne speech or not just the one from May 23 that is full of cliches and hot air but that this has been a pattern that has developed with this government, that over the years

that it has been in it has never ever had its throne speech match up with its legislative records that followed.

That, Madam Speaker, is too bad because, when I think back on the students that I was teaching in junior high and I was telling them what the real reason for a throne speech was, and Mr. White and Mr. Harapiak when they came into my classes to help me out on this, they told the students what it should be like. This government could not be any further away from what the idea of a throne speech is.

Here is an example of what I am talking about. If the government had been honest with us throughout that last session, somewhere in the May 23 throne speech there would have been a statement that would have read something like this: My government proposes to close emergency room services in five hospitals in the city of Winnipeg. But as far as I can remember and as much as my research has indicated, it was never contained within the May 23 throne speech. There was no mention of closing hospital emergency rooms in the 23rd of May throne speech of 1995.

Here is another example. If this government had been honest in its throne speech of May 23, the Lieutenant Governor would have read that his government would have unilaterally moved to kill the Hog Marketing Board, that this government would move to dual marketing instead of the Hog Marketing Board.

Nowhere in the May 23 Speech from the Throne did I ever see any mention of going to dual marketing and killing the Hog Marketing Board. Nowhere in the May 23, 1995, Speech from the Throne did I see any lines that the Lieutenant Government said that my government would offload provincial roads onto the rural municipalities across the province. Nowhere, and yet that is what is happening.

Nowhere in the May 23 throne speech did I read the statement that my Minister of Education (Mrs. McIntosh) will stall and stall and stall the setting up of distance education in rural and northern Manitoba. What do we get from the Minister of Education? We get press releases. We get photo opportunities. We get

a fancy kind of a news release but no substance. It was not mentioned in this Speech from the Throne. It was not mentioned in the May 23 Speech from the Throne.

I understand in a Speech from the Throne sometime back in the history of this government that they did put a line in there about distance education where they made a commitment, a commitment that a vast majority of schools in rural Manitoba would be set up with distance education facilities. Where is that now? How close is this government to obtaining that objective? They are not even close, not even close, nowhere near their objective that they set. So it does not surprise me at all that it is not contained in this Speech from the Throne.

The member for Emerson (Mr. Penner) might be interested in this little example that I have of another statement that I think should have been put into the May 23, 1995, Speech from the Throne. I think that the Lieutenant Governor should have had a statement in there saying that my Minister of Agriculture will offload research and development onto the backs of farmers through Bill 15, but it did not. It did not have the courage to tell people exactly what it was doing. This government back in May opted for nice fancy words and nice warm phrases, a whole lot of hot air, but it did not have the courage to say to farmers exactly what it was doing. It snuck this in through as quietly as it possibly could. When we tried to get the public hearings to come out to Neepawa before we made any kind of decisions on this, the government would not come out to rural Manitoba to face farmers on this, not even in as neutral a constituency or as a neutral a town as Neepawa.

So my point that I want people to consider here is that the throne speech which is supposed to outline where the government is heading and is supposed to give Manitobans an indication of what to look for over the next session, that very fine objective has been pushed to the side by this government. In the Speech from the Throne that we listened to on December 5 there were quite a number of cliches that were thrown out, I suppose intended to impress people that this government was doing a good job. Right on the very first page the Lieutenant Governor claimed, on behalf of the government, to continue to fulfill commitments

they made to the people of Manitoba in the spring election—continue. That is the only word there that I really have problems with. If you are going to continue something, you should have started it in the first place.

* (1530)

Prudent financial management. It is easy to throw these kinds of buzzwords and cliches out to people, but if you were really prudently financially managing the economy of Manitoba you would have been able to some time in there balance a budget. Did you? Think real hard. Remember what year you balanced the budget in. None. None. Think back to what year it was when you set a record for the highest deficit ever in this province. Think what year that was. It was not too long ago. That was \$819 million. Think of who got the second highest deficit ever in this province. What government would that be? What fiscally prudent managing government would that be? Would that be the government that is across the way right now? How can they get away with saying in their Speech from the Throne that they are going to prudently fiscally manage this province?

They are talking about innovative approaches, programs providing services to the citizens of our province, better health care.

Let us take this better-health-care cliché that they have thrown into the Speech from the Throne and let us see how that plays out in my constituency of Dauphin. Based on a promise that was made during the election, based on a promise that the Filmon team made during the provincial election in the spring, many health care facilities around the province started to make decisions, financial decisions, and that is what happened in Dauphin at the Regional Health Centre. They were told that there was going to be capital funding available, so they decided they were going to renovate the fourth floor of the Regional Health Centre. They started to move patients out of the fourth floor to other parts of the hospital so that they could make room for people coming from the Brandon mental institute. They were setting this fourth floor up to provide mental services to people in the Parkland. They had got the architect in; the plans were in place. Some of the renovations were started. People had been moved. Staff and administrators in the hospital had taken all

kinds of time and effort to get things set up based on a promise by the provincial government.

Now what do we find out? We find out that a Tory election promise is not worth the paper that it is written on. It is not worth listening to. All of a sudden, no money. Is that better health care? Is that what we have to look forward to over the next session, more of those kinds of decisions?

Building a stronger school system, anyone can say that.

Continue to build on its record of fiscal responsibility and accountability. Accountability, what does that mean? Can we expect more deficits and more giveaways like the Jets and like the corporate training grants that we have been asking questions about? In Dauphin, does that mean that we can expect more farm and business foreclosures? Can we expect more layoffs in hospitals, more layoffs in teaching? Does that mean more unemployment? Because if you are trying to tell us that you are going to continue the policies that you had over the last seven years, then that is what that means. It means higher unemployment levels.

Here is another good cliché that is found within the throne speech from Tuesday: protecting essential public services. Does that mean that you were wrong when you closed emergency rooms in the city? Does that mean that you are wrong when you close beds across the province in our hospitals? Does that mean that it is wrong for you to ignore the doctor shortages that occur right throughout this province? In the town of Grandview in my constituency, there are people right now who are very frustrated with the lack of response on the part of this government to the doctor shortage in that community. What has this government done over the last couple of years to help that particular community? Nothing. [interjection]

Getting re-elected, I would suggest, is a step backward in helping people in rural Manitoba to put doctors into place.

My government will speak out where there is a threat of unfair actions on the part of the federal government.

Let us think of Dauphin again. When the federal government comes up with its transportation policy and helps in the 1993 federal election to get itself elected based on cancelling deals at Pearson Airport and such, now when this federal government comes along and takes the profits that Pearson Airport was making and gives it to a whole bunch of its supporters instead of a whole bunch of Tories from before, and tells rural and northern airports that they are out to lunch now, that they can go and die on the vine someplace in rural Manitoba, where was the provincial government?

Right now, the Dauphin airport is being offloaded from the federal government right past the provincial government, being offloaded right to the R.M. and to the Town of Dauphin. What is this provincial government doing?

It says here that it is going to speak out when the federal government takes unfair action. Well, I am waiting. I want to hear you guys speak out.

Support for our agricultural industry—lets us look at Dauphin again. It was this Premier (Mr. Filmon) who was in Dauphin during the election campaign making a \$10-million announcement on agricultural diversification, trying to get some votes in Dauphin, which, I might add, did not work, but trying to get some votes in Dauphin by saying they are going to put \$10 million into agriculture so that grain farmers can move into cattle.

Well, where is the money? Where is the promise? Support for our agricultural industry—it is easy to put it into a throne speech, it is another thing to actually come through and do something about it.

On May 23, 1995, you said a lot of fancy things in your throne speech and you did not come through on them either.

Another paragraph from the throne speech that I was really particularly interested in was to read that a task force would be established to travel throughout rural Manitoba and listen to people, listen to farmers, consult with people, look at programs that were targeted at rural Manitoba. Then we hear, even well before these consultations take place, that the Agriculture minister

is not only proposing that we get rid of the hog marketing board and shift to something called dual marketing. If we think that we can go to dual marketing and keep the hog marketing board, then we are living in a little fairy tale world somewhere, and we should really wake up and smell the roses.

* (1540)

It is absolutely dishonest for people to try to tell farmers and try to tell Manitobans that you can have a hog marketing board along with dual marketing. It is just as dishonest for people in positions of decision making to go around telling people that we can have dual marketing of wheat with the Canadian Wheat Board as well. You are not being honest with the people of Manitoba when you talk in those terms.

The other thing that you have to worry about is that you have the cart before the horse. You have things backwards when it comes to consultation. Part of the consultation process is that you do not make a decision until you have consulted. You have made your minds up on hog marketing, you have made your minds up on the Wheat Board, you have made your minds up on everything that is fundamental in agriculture today, and now you are going to go out and you are going to talk to the farmers about it. That is not consultation, that is damage control, because everybody knows that when you make your decisions and you go out into rural Manitoba, you are going to get an earful, and they will tell you how counterproductive your policies and your decisions are. It becomes a matter of damage control on the part of a political party.

One of my government's guiding principles has been the management and accountability. If that was the case, why do we have—if that was the truth in the Speech from the Throne, why do we have a situation today where there are layoffs throughout the public service, reduced workweeks throughout the public service and yet the Premier of this province gets an increase in salary? Is that accountability?

One of the other themes that I picked up as I went through the Speech from the Throne was that the government is trying its best to try to convince people that it actually values the input of front line workers,

whether it be in the health care field or the education field or whether it be in agriculture or any of the other going concerns of the government, as far as I am concerned, to say that this government has benefited from the input of nurses and doctors and other health care professionals is ridiculous. Again, when you make decisions in health you make the decisions and then go to consult. It is a pattern that has developed with this government. To try to smooth this over in a fancy Speech from the Throne is just shallow.

Madam Speaker, I have taken a little bit of time to point out some of the things that trouble me about the Speech from the Throne. I also want to point out some things from the Speech from the Throne that I think should be in it that are missing. The first thing that I want to key in on is a lack of support for the Canadian Wheat Board and orderly marketing.

I do not think that the members across the way understand the absolute importance of orderly marketing to agricultural producers, not only in Manitoba, but across the country. Orderly marketing has served our producers very well for a lot of years, and my worry is that we are going to throw out the whole concept of orderly marketing, throw it out at a time when we have signed a North American Free Trade Agreement with the United States which will never allow us to again go back to our system of orderly marketing.

This is something that I think both sides of the House should really understand. We are not making one temporary trial basis kind of a decision. You are making a decision that is going to affect farming forever. Unless somebody in the federal government has enough guts to rip up the NAFTA agreement that we have with the United States, we are never going to get back the Canadian Wheat Board when we lose it, we are never going to go back to the hog marketing board, because the Americans will consider it an unfair trade practice. Now, you know that and we know that. My hope is that you take that into consideration before you actually go and do something silly with the Canadian Wheat Board.

Another thing that was lacking in the Speech from the Throne was any support at all for the Port of

Churchill. Again, this is something that has benefited farmers in our region. It is something that we are in danger of losing. It is under pressure from the federal government, who also does not seem to want to show any support for the Port of Churchill. It is not getting the support from the provincial government that I would like to see. It is not getting support anywhere other than from this side of the House. It is my hope that someplace, seeing that you did not cover this in the throne speech, my hope is that maybe you will introduce something over the next session of Parliament that just might show some support for the Port of Churchill.

There is no indication in this throne speech of any kind of a plan to help farmers transport their product to market. Oh, sure, there are a lot of things that say we are going to take away some of the things that have been helping farmers, but what are we doing to help them out? You are simply saying, by leaving this out, by not addressing this problem, free market system, boys, go ahead, you are on your own, market.

(Mr. Marcel Laurendeau, Deputy Speaker, in the Chair)

That is not co-operation with farmers. That is not going to produce any kind of spin-offs in our rural communities that will eventually help business and keep schools open, keep some sense of community spirit going in rural Manitoba. That is just simply that I'm okay, Jack, kind of an attitude, that very simplistic, individualistic, greedy attitude that we do not need in this province.

What else is missing from that throne speech was a commitment to help kids who live in poverty. More than 60,000 kids live in poverty in Manitoba, and what is this throne speech going to do to help them? What broad general direction, even without being specific in the Speech from the Throne, in some general way how is this going to help kids? It is not. It does not seem to be a priority with this government. It does not seem to be something that this government thinks is important. There is nothing in this throne speech that would lead anybody to believe that you are going to take the problem of child poverty seriously.

A major area that is lacking in this throne speech is any kind of a commitment to the principles of

sustainability. I do not even have to refer to the throne speech much here, I will just refer everybody back to the questions that I asked earlier today in the House having to do with the environmental process that we are now putting the Louisiana-Pacific project through. This government from Day One was not committed to sustainability. If it had been committed to sustainability, it would not have split the process in the first place to allow the mill to be gauged first, and then, gee we got the mill, I wonder, let us take a look to see what the effects are on the trees and the rivers and the wildlife and everything else. That was the first mistake that this government made. That was the first clue that people should have that this government is not committed to sustainability.

So then what happens? Well, we end up in a situation where we have a Minister of Natural Resources talking about how good he thinks the process is. And what do we get from him? We get a lot of old sayings. Today I counted three old sayings that we got from the Minister of Natural Resources (Mr. Driedger), old sayings, old tired cliches. No new ideas on what we should do about sustainability in this province. No commitment to any sort of legitimate process to ensure sustainability, to ensure that there are enough trees going into this plant to allow our children in years down the road to enjoy the same kind of benefits that we have had in our parks, the same kind of benefits that we have had throughout the cut area of Louisiana-Pacific. There is no commitment there to sustainability from this government.

* (1550)

If this Minister of Natural Resources was as committed to sustainability as he says he is, and if he is so positive that his department and himself have been squeaky clean in putting together the information they have had so far, why is it that the chairman of this Clean Environment Commission would have to halt the hearings? He has to halt the hearings because this minister and his government did not take seriously the concerns raised not only by myself and by the member for Swan River (Ms. Wowchuk) and others on this side of the House, but by people throughout the province of Manitoba including people from the Swan River area who have some concerns with the sustainability of this project. Did he act to try to relieve the concerns that

federal departments had in Fisheries, in Forestry Canada and the Department of the Environment? Did he act to do anything to relieve people's minds in terms of Treaty Land Entitlement? Every time the answer is no.

What we learned today in the House is that a hockey game that we may be playing in the future might be quite an exciting one, because I think the Tories have shown and displayed to us that they can stick-handle pretty good. They can pass the puck back and forth from one minister to the next and try to avoid the questions that the opposition has about sustainability. That is about all we learned this afternoon. It is absolutely ridiculous to tell the House that the process is a good one and then turn around and allow the people at the front lines of the department three days to go through the complete Louisiana-Pacific environmental impact statement, and then expect the people of Manitoba to have any kind of credibility at all in the process involving environmental sustainability of any project, not just the Louisiana-Pacific project, but all kinds of projects that will come towards the table here in the Legislature, all kinds of projects that will impact our environment having to do with all kinds of resources issues.

The process is not quite as good as what the minister says, but in any government the process is only as good as the people who make the decisions, and this minister is making the decisions having to do with this process. All they have produced so far is a circumvention of whatever process we have there now.

Madam Speaker, one of the main themes we have to think about—sorry, the new and improved Mr. Deputy Speaker—one of the themes that we have to remember as elected representatives is that people send us here. Who is it that we represent? In some of these cases, I wonder. When we make a decision to go to dual marketing of hogs, who is it that we are representing? Are we representing farms around Manitoba? Are we representing the family farms out there today that are working hard and contributing to our economy, or are we representing those very, very few producers who might benefit from this kind of a move?

Are we representing the lawyers who represent those people who we might benefit? Who are we here

for—the benefit of the majority of people or the elite of this province who are going to benefit somewhat and even may benefit from a decision like this? Who are we representing when we skewer the Canadian Wheat Board? Who are we representing? Are we representing those farmers who live within 12 miles of the American border? Are we representing those farmers who are large enough to supply an American market? Are we representing those farmers who are large enough and close enough to the American border to haul their wheat to the United States? How many of the farmers are we representing there?

In my way of thinking, I think we should be here representing farmers across the province. Come up to Dauphin, come up to Swan River, come up to Roblin and Russell, find out how many farmers up there are going to benefit when you get rid of the Wheat Board. You are making decisions here for those pirates who go down to the United States with their wheat and take money right out of the bank accounts of farmers across this province. You are representing bandits in this province who think they should go to the United States with their wheat and take away money from those who are going through the Canadian Wheat Board. That is who you are representing. You are not representing farmers on this.

Let us think of what you have done on education. When you take money out of the public schools and you dump it into the private school system, who are you representing? Are you representing kids across the province? Are you representing the best interests of kids in public schools right across the province, or are you representing the few people in this province who can afford to spend their money to send their kids to private schools? Who are you representing?

When you raise tuition fees to the point where they are at today, are you representing the students throughout Manitoba who cannot afford to send their kids to university, or are you representing the elite who predominantly live in the city who can afford to go to university?

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I just want to end, now that I have everybody riled up, by wishing everybody a Merry Christmas, a good time with their families and

with their friends and all the best wishes in the New Year. Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Hon. Brian Pallister (Minister of Government Services): It is my privilege once again to rise in this House and put some comments on the record in regard to the throne speech.

I would like to begin by commenting briefly on some things that I think are relevant to the work that is going on in our department right now in terms of customer service. I know that it has been referenced and is something that all parties in this Chamber agree with, the necessity for governments to deliver services to the people of this province as effectively as they can, as cost effectively as they can. I am proud of the fact that we are working to improve that delivery of services in our department. I want to share some of the basic examples of progress that I believe are occurring right now in Government Services with members of this House.

Perhaps I could begin by referencing some of the practical difficulties that we face in government as a necessity of the fact that we are a monopoly provider of most of the services that we handle. It is true that in the small business sector, out of necessity, businesses are competitive and must be competitive and have to maximize their resources in an effort to deliver services to their customer. They are compelled to do that because if they failed to do that, they would be out of business very quickly because the competition will beat them, and the customer will vote with their feet and move to another business that cares more about the service that they offer.

That has not been the case in government historically. Governments have offered monopoly services, and so the customer has not been free to choose, not been free to move elsewhere, not been free to vote with their feet, as I said earlier. So what happens is that as a consequence of that, governments' services have not been responsive to customers' needs as readily as perhaps would be the case with any successful small business that we have encountered in our lives.

* (1600)

The reality is that has to change, and it is changing, and as a consequence of some of the comments made in the throne speech and as a consequence of some of the actions undertaken by this government in recent years that are being pursued more aggressively, in fact, in the present than has ever been the case under previous administrations, we are seeing government value service first and foremost, with service to the customer being the essential ingredient to that service-first initiative.

What has happened in our country, of course, is that there is an increasing realization that resources, in fact, available to government are scarce, increasingly scarce, and so it is that we see now federal reductions in terms of support to our province, reduced by millions of dollars, significant dollars, over the next two years. These are challenges that all governments face. We are not alone, and we are certainly not in a position, I believe, to blame and to place blame, as that is counterproductive.

What we are in a position to do, however, is to restructure the allocation of resources that we have at our disposal with priorities in mind. The key priorities of this administration have been and will continue to be in the areas of health care, education and social services, and that is where the bulk of our resources are allocated.

But that does not stop us from reinventing the way in which we deliver the services within government in a cost-effective way. That certainly does not preclude that limited amount of resources or the reduction in the amount of resources that is available to us. That does not preclude but rather makes necessary every effort that we can pursue within our departments to deliver services in a better way than we have in the past.

The fiscal realities that we face hasten the competitive realities that we have to face in government to do a better job with the services that we deliver or to look for alternative ways of delivering those services outside of government in that competitive climate, in that competitive reality and in combination with the attitudes of many of the members on this side of the House who certainly understand, because they have in their lives done their best to

deliver the services that they have had to deliver in the private sector prior to entering politics to their customers.

They have practical experience, as do many members on the opposite side of the House, in looking after the customer first and providing service first and foremost.

The service-first initiative that this government has proceeded with is essentially designed to re-engineer the corporate processes of government in terms of internal processes like expenditure in the Estimates, procurement revenue, human resources, payroll management categories, to get rid of systemic barriers to customer service to make sure that the customer is thought of first and foremost.

An interesting little story I will share with members of the House happened when I was first appointed to cabinet. I went back to Portage la Prairie, which I am proud to represent here, and one of my constituents, a friend of mine, said, what portfolio are you responsible for, Brian, in cabinet? I said, well, that is Government Services and he laughed. He said, you are the minister of an oxymoron, he said, an oxymoron. Well, I was pretty sure I knew, but I thought I had better ask him what an oxymoron was, and he said, it is terms that are mutually exclusive or contradictory, like jumbo shrimp, like plastic glass, like liberal thinking. They are kind of mutually exclusive terms. I did not want to be nor do I want to be the minister of an oxymoron, and so I will make sure to do everything in my power to deliver as best we can in our portfolio and to influence my colleagues in government to do as best they can to deliver services better to the people in this province.

But my friend pursued this, and he said, you know, my understanding of what your portfolio does is it basically delivers services to other government departments primarily, like vehicles and property management, things like that, so you are really not dealing with customers.

Now, that is wrong, you see. That is wrong-headed thinking. People who come from a small business background know that their first customer is their internal customer, and that is the person they have to serve first, the person at the desk next to them, the

person with whom they are working alongside, because if they do not serve that person's needs, if they are not responsive to the sharing of resources that is so necessary in a small business for it to succeed, if they do not do that effectively, if they do not serve that internal customer first, then there is no way that that business is going to be of real service to the external customer who comes to the counter or comes to the door of the shop.

So we have to understand that in government, and I believe that awareness is increasing daily. The first customer is the internal customer, and my department is committed to setting an example of quality service to other departments that it serves. We believe that by setting that example to other departments, we can preface and perhaps influence other departments to have that same mentality when they deal with the external customer which is the people of Manitoba and elsewhere in this country who demand the services of government and demand they be effectively delivered.

In this government, we have adopted policies and practices which reflect our understanding that small businesses run effectively and cost-effectively as well, and so we have instituted such things as special operating agencies. These SOAs, as they are called, are a way of organizing Government Services so that they can be delivered with the maximum of effectiveness, and there are a number of special operating agencies in existence now. Certainly under my department the first was Fleet Vehicles. There are others. Property Management and Materials Distribution are other examples. There will be others, certainly, to follow.

By instituting principles like full cost recovery which allocate the responsibility for the incurring of costs to the department which incurs those costs rather than to the Department of Government Services, those costs can be more responsibly managed by the department which incurs them being made responsible for incurring that cost. So what we have now is full cost recovery in place with Vehicles, and what happens is, as a consequence the departments which order vehicles order fewer vehicles because they can get away with fewer. They are now responsible for managing those resources, and so we have 500 fewer vehicles in the

Fleet Vehicles operation than we did just three years ago.

In terms of leased space, we have over \$3 million annual savings right now to the taxpayers of this province in reduced lease costs because departments are now fully accountable for the costs that they incur in their departments. So full cost recovery is another mechanism this government has adopted to make its services more effectively delivered.

Something that I am proud to be working on and with many of my colleagues, the members for St. Vital (Mrs. Render), for Turtle Mountain (Mr. Tweed) and the member for Charleswood (Mr. Ernst), as well, is the regulatory reform committee of our government. The regulatory reform committee has been given the responsibility of doing a couple of major, major things that are critically important to our province, I believe; first of all to implement with the full support of our colleagues in the Executive Council a process which will see a reduced outflow of new regulations.

We have over 10,000 pages of regulations in this province. I believe that there is none of us here that do not think we could do with fewer pages.

Anyone who has studied at all the small business sector understands that after the level of taxation, the second greatest concern that small business has in this country is the level of regulatory restraint or paperwork or paper burden that governments place on them. It is a consistent concern that is exhibited by small businesses. Whether anecdotal or by reading surveys from such organizations as the Canadian Federation of Independent Business and others, I am sure all members are aware that this is a concern.

It is a legitimate concern because small businesses after all are the engine of growth and job creation in this province. Anything that impedes small business in its ability to create jobs is clearly of concern to every member of this House and every Manitoban. So government, of course not being the engine of economic growth but rather perhaps having a role as a navigator, has to steer its regulatory structure in such a manner that it can encourage small businesses to do what they do best, and that is to put capital at risk and create jobs in the process.

The second part of our initiative as a regulatory reform committee of our challenge is that we are charged with doing a zero-based review of all regulations in the province. That is underway. That is an exciting and ambitious project that has never been undertaken in any other jurisdiction, to our knowledge. In fact, recently, the Canadian Chamber of Commerce recognized Manitoba as being the leading province in terms of its aggressive pursuit of regulatory review.

The zero-based review means that we will be going after a better understanding of all the regulations that exist in our province, with a view to cleaning out those that are redundant, unnecessary, that overlap with other jurisdictions that do not need to be there. All of that bearing in mind that if we can get the red tape out of the way, we can help small business and the people of all ages who would like to set up and expand their small businesses. We can help them do that and encourage them to do that.

I would like to share some comments because there was reference made in the Speech from the Throne to federal government offloading. I do want to preface my comments which I will make in regard to the disaster assistance arrangements that we have in this country. I want to preface my comments by saying I doubt seriously there is a member of this House who does not have great sympathy with the extreme challenge faced by the federal government in terms of getting its expenditures in line. There is no more formidable challenge and no more important challenge for any government in this country to face than that.

So certainly I do not and, I believe, our government does not have anything but the greatest of sympathy for the federal government in this challenge they must undertake, but I must say that there are certain priorities that have to be reflected in any reorganization. I believe that one of those priorities is to show the greatest possible sympathy and understanding and compassion for people who are the victims of disasters. What we have seen in this province in recent months is something that I think is unfortunately very revealing of a lack of priority on the part of the federal government.

What we have seen is this: We have seen major floods occur in our province, major fires. Millions of dollars of expense has been incurred. Much of this

expense has been incurred at the municipal level. We have a well-established program of cost-sharing in our province, which has been one that has been preceded over many years, which basically the federal government is now saying—well, they are not saying, frankly. They are just simply, through their auditing of the floods in Winnipeg and Swan River, which occurred this past summer—the audit process typically follows a year or two, three even, after the events. The federal government has revealed in its audits that it does not plan to cost-share the cost incurred by municipalities for use of their staff, for use of their machinery or equipment in responding to floods, fires, evacuations, any other kind of disaster.

* (1610)

What the federal government auditors are doing is they are changing the practice of the federal government, and they are removing from cost-sharing formulas one of the major categories of expenditure that municipalities incur. That is not fair, and it is not right. I have written to the federal minister, and I have asked him to clarify if this is a change in policy on the part of his department. He has written me back and said there is no change; but there has been a change. Frankly, the federal minister is not being informed by his bureaucracy. He has been misinformed by them. This is unfortunate because it is not fair to dump the costs incurred by municipalities onto the municipalities themselves. Rather, when those costs reach a certain point, it is only fair and reasonable for those costs to be disbursed among the people of this nation, and that has been the practice well established in this nation.

We are talking about—and thanks to the disaster assistance staff, they have put together literally hundreds of examples over the last decade where the federal government has demonstrated repeatedly that it will cost-share on the use of municipal staff and municipal equipment. These precedents are unquestionable. They are well established in data. The data will be forwarded to the federal minister.

What concerns me here is that what we have under—the previous approach is a fair and reasonable approach to distributing costs for these people who have been victims of circumstances not within their own control.

Now we have the federal government and duly elected members of Parliament going to Ottawa and coming back and telling Manitobans—I have been given copies of letters to community newspapers from the member of Parliament for Brandon, Mr. McKinnon, a Ms. Cowling from Swan River, and a Mr. Jon Gerrard from Portage Interlake. All letters are identical, prepared by the same bureaucrat, nameless and faceless in Ottawa, which reflect a total lack of knowledge and a total lack of understanding of the major departure that the federal government is taking from established precedents.

Each of these members of Parliament is reflecting a bureaucrat's position, which is ill informed, to the people of Manitoba, miscommunicating that information to the people of Manitoba. What they have done is they have taken Ottawa's position and tried to hand deliver it to Manitobans whom they should be defending in the House of Commons.

It is sad when people choose, rather than being a representative from Swan River or Portage la Prairie or Brandon to Ottawa, these individuals have decided they will be the representative of Ottawa to Portage la Prairie, of Ottawa to Swan River, of Ottawa to Brandon. That is not right; that is wrong. When they are ill informed, and when they take the word of nameless bureaucrats in Ottawa ahead of their own municipal elected officials, who would, if they had the common courtesy to pick up the phone and call them, clarify this issue to them unmistakably, they would tell them, municipal officials, who have been selected for their common sense and their ability, by people whom they are accountable to at the local level. If they had the decency to pick up the phone and call those same people, those people would set them straight; rather, though, they choose to listen to people in Ottawa and direct those misinformed messages back to their own constituents. That is not acceptable. That is not right. That is not representation.

What we have in Manitoba right now, developed within our department, within our government, is, I believe, a very good working relationship with elected officials at the municipal level. People who are capable and people who are willing to work and listen for the best interests of their constituents, people who understand cost effectiveness and cost-effective

management and cost containment because they have to do it, because they have to do it in their businesses and in their homes, and they have to do it by the municipal acts provision. They have to manage for a balanced budget. They have no choice but to manage effectively. Those people are who I trust to manage the circumstances around difficult disasters that are unpredictable.

I trust those people to do the best possible job to manage. I am not sure that I can place that same trust in a federal government, which has repeatedly, under various political leaderships, not represented an ability to manage cost-effectively. I am pleased that the Union of Manitoba Municipalities has chosen to pass a resolution supporting our position as a government, that the federal government must return to well-established precedents that are fair in terms of cost-sharing. They have passed that resolution unanimously, and we have the full support of that level of government. I would ask the members of this House to communicate their support to this government and to all of the reeves and municipal councillors, who represent all the rural municipalities of this great province, and to communicate to their federal members of Parliament their error and their misplaced loyalty as quickly as possible, so that we can resume a fair and reasonable and equitable cost-sharing arrangement with the federal government.

There has been a great deal of talk recently about issues surrounding agriculture, certainly around issues of marketing of various commodities, and there has been much talk, unfortunately, in this House just today. We had the member for Dauphin (Mr. Struthers) spreading the gospel according to himself, which was revealing repeatedly his lack of information and lack of understanding of the most basic aspects of the issue.

The member talks about our position in this House. Our position in this House in terms of things like the Wheat Board at this point is totally irrelevant. This is a federal issue, and it is a difficult issue for us to deal with, obviously.

The members opposite have chosen to, as they have with most issues, back the status quo. That is their choice. But I would like to put on the record today

some information which will help, I hope sincerely, illuminate the members opposite and perhaps some of the members of my own caucus on the issues around so-called dual marketing and the Wheat Board.

I will put this information on the record with the sincere hope that members will look at this issue as objectively as they possibly can, rather perhaps a misguided hope given the ideological and idiotic comments of the members opposite on the issue repeatedly revealing their willingness to not adopt any new position but rather to back every position that has been taken in the past regardless of its relevance to today.

First of all, let us clarify some things. The Canadian Wheat Board is not Canadian. It is not the Canadian Wheat Board, nor has it ever been the Canadian Wheat Board. It is the western Canadian Wheat Board. That is all it is. That is all it has ever been. It is not one that was, as the member for Swan River (Ms. Wowchuk) said in the House recently, set up for the benefit of farmers. No, it was not set up to benefit farmers. It was set up to guarantee a supply of wheat to the war effort in the early '40s, and it was done over the strong objections of a great many farmers in this province and a great many elected officials who represent the areas of this province well. It was not a unanimous thing. However, once it was established, farmers being patriots and loyal to the cause of the war effort chose to support it and did so and have done so since.

However, the relevance of arguments made by members opposite concerning this being the Canadian Wheat Board clearly is indisputable. There is no relevance to those comments. This is not the Canadian Wheat Board. This does not apply to farmers in Ontario, Prince Edward Island, or virtually anywhere else outside of the great Canadian western prairie region. So let us clarify that.

Let me ask members of the House—I believe many are aware, but let me ask you: Are you aware of the tremendous successes of family farm businesses in this province in recent years under the faithful stewardship of this fine government? Are you aware of the successes of people like the Pizzey family who actually have their own mill, a small mill, a cottage operation that creates some part-time work? They process flax.

Are you aware of the success of the Parent family? The member for Emerson (Mr. Penner) can give you details on their business venture. But it is an exciting venture that a family has undertaken with great enthusiasm that has created jobs and wealth for the people in its area. Are you aware of the success of the Kent family in my own constituency who chose to invest in an oat processing venture?

An Honourable Member: They came from Virden.

Mr. Pallister: They came from Virden, which is true. We are proud to have them in Portage la Prairie. They are becoming good community people and friends of mine. I appreciate and respect what they are doing because they are creating employment for people in Portage la Prairie, and I thank them for that.

Are you aware of the success of other people who have gotten into businesses very diverse? Multiple, diverse opportunities exist, and they are being captured by the risktakers and entrepreneurs of this province. That is something exciting to see. Are you aware of the corporate successes that we have seen in this province? The expansions of Simplot, Carnation, Schneiders, Can-Agra. Of course in my own community, McCain's.

Are you aware of the tremendous movement? This is unprecedented in the history of this province. Are you aware of what is happening in this province? When you preach doom and gloom in this House, you are obviously not aware.

* (1620)

Let me enlighten you to looking ahead to the future. We have opportunities that are nothing short of exciting. What do all of these various opportunities that are being explored by Manitoba families and Manitoba businesses all have in common? Not one of them involves wheat. Not a single one of them involves wheat or barley. All of them, without exception, are in unregulated industries where risktaking is the characteristic. All of them.

Do you know that with these ventures we will in this province process over two-thirds of our present canola

production, right here in Manitoba? Do you know that we will process three-quarters of our oat production here in our own province?

Do you know, do you understand, when you take pride in the backward practices of the past, when you idolize the railroad and you talk about all those wonderful orange hopper-bottomed cars going along the tracks loaded with that fine wheat we produced, that for every nine of those cars we should be putting a passenger car as the 10th car and putting our kids and our grandkids on it and saying, go where the work is, go where the processing happens, go where the value is added? Do you understand that what has gone on in this province for a long, long time must change?

We have in this province processed some of our wheat, not two-thirds or three-quarters, not half, not a third, not a quarter, not 10 percent, we process less than 2 percent of the wheat we produce in this province today. If you understand that, then you have to ask yourself how many jobs that created and how many could have been created if we processed more here.

Five years ago I was involved with the Portage la Prairie Chamber of Commerce. One of our activities was to put together an ag committee to try and attract industry and development to our community because we were in very difficult circumstances because we had lost two of our major employers. The difficulties we faced would only be combatted by pursuing an opportunity and pursuing it aggressively. So people got together, they got together as only community-minded people can do, and they decided they wanted to attract a pasta plant to Portage la Prairie.

They contacted a major food processor and they invited a senior person from that company to come to Portage la Prairie. They graciously enough agreed to come and meet with our local farmers and business people who made a presentation to them and said to them, we can grow the best wheat of anybody in the world for you, we can deliver that wheat, and we can produce it with quality for you, so that you can therefore invest in our city, in our region and create jobs here. Is this not an exciting prospect? Are you not excited to come to Portage la Prairie and take advantage of this great opportunity?

The gentleman who was at the meeting from the major food company said, may I be frank? They said, certainly. He said, you must think that I am out of my mind, I cannot possibly recommend to our board of directors that we risk a nickel of our shareholders' money in a community or in a province or in a region where there is a single monopoly supplier of the principal commodity we need to produce.

Even today at the present past operation, which the federal government has graciously pumped money into, we do not process our own wheat into flour, rather we import seminola for processing. You have to ask yourselves if there are not some restrictions in place that would limit our ability to create jobs in our province today.

Let me ask you to ask yourself if you can guess how many jobs there would be in this province if we allowed processors to buy grain from producers. Let me ask you how many jobs you think there might be in this province if you stopped McCain or Carnation from being able to buy potatoes from producers, but rather force them to deal with a single-desk seller of those potatoes. Do you think that the jobs would have been developed in our province in that climate or in that environment? I ask you to honestly consider this.

In Portage la Prairie, the previous speaker from Dauphin made reference in disparaging tones to the Free Trade Agreement, and I must tell him that despite the fact that there are always roses and thorns blended together, I believe, in any of the bushes that we see in our garden, there is no question in Portage la Prairie what benefits we have accrued from this NAFTA agreement.

Certainly, in terms of jobs, I could list many, many examples. McCain you are familiar with, a principal exporter of value-added potato products. But there is Westward Industries, there is Portage Manufacturing. There are many, many more—Can Oat Milling, I mentioned earlier.

Portage la Prairie certainly has benefited from this government's positions in terms of rural development, of decentralization, of encouraging and leveraging investments from rural people who care about the

future of their province and their areas and want to see jobs in those same areas.

It is important to recognize that the opportunities presented by trade in a trading province such as Manitoba has been in its history, and will continue to be, are opportunities that we must tap, that we must develop, and we will.

I ask the members to consider a couple of historical analogies if they would. In recent years the Berlin wall was going to be torn down and people inside what was East Germany were very, very afraid of what would happen. They were very afraid of a lack of structure in their economy. They were very concerned that without the structures they had known, without the monopolies they had known, in fact, they could not survive.

When the Berlin wall came down, what happened was an influx of wealth, of investment, of opportunities for the people of East Germany so that anyone doing even rudimentary research would not dispute the fact that the standard of living in that jurisdiction has risen dramatically in recent years. It is a remarkable statement of the benefits of openness in trade, of the benefits of a free market.

Certainly, when one considers that the Berlin wall has come down, one would have to ask why the wheat wall stays up. Now, in the United States, the most valid analogy I can think of to compare western Canada's sole single-desk monopoly which restricts our ability to process in many respects in this part of the country and exports the jobs to other areas where it is much more likely that that would happen—the best parallel I can think of in history is the cotton economy of the South.

In the southern United States there was tremendous skill in terms of producing cotton. It was a climate that was suitable, the land base was ideal and the producers were the best and most knowledgeable producers of cotton in the world. But here in fact was not where the wealth was created, but rather what happened was that cotton was exported to the northern United States and the northern United States benefited from the processing of the cotton to the tune of hundreds of thousands of jobs, while the South remained dependent on producing the raw material.

Here we have in western Canada a parallel to the cotton economy of the South that is indisputable. We have for a half century been the hewers-of-wood and drawers-of-water producers of wheat and barley, and exclusively through a single-desk marketing agency we have exported these things to somewhere else where they have been processed and value has been added to them.

Members opposite may think that this is the bread basket of the world. This is not in fact the bread basket of the world because there is not bread made here any more. For half a century, the first half of this century, the principal employer in Portage la Prairie was the Lake of the Woods milling plant. The Lake of the Woods milling plant was the largest employer in my community for half a century, and coincidentally with the creation of the single-desk-selling Canadian Wheat Board, the Lake of the Woods milling plant and dozens of milling plants across western Canada subsequently lost their reason for being. And so we exported those milling plants to other areas where jobs could be created in milling plants that were going to have the chance to make profit because of the freedom that was offered them there. We exported jobs along with the raw material, both exported simultaneously. This is what the members opposite hoot and cry about when they ask us to defend a single-desk monopoly, a prehistoric attitude, I believe, in the face of the facts.

Recently I attended a cabinet tour gathering in one of Manitoba's finer communities, the community of Killarney. An older gentleman, a farmer—and I have much admiration for farmers. I was raised by one and I have spent my business life dealing with farmers and with agricultural producers and I have enjoyed it. Whether they agree with your view or not, they tend to be very honest people who will tell you to your face, and I like that. This gentleman told me that he felt my brother was a radical. My brother is one of the Farmers for Justice that the previous speaker spoke disparagingly about, a farmer who believes in freedom and who believes he should have the choice as to where he sells his grain which he produces, so he spoke disparagingly about that person—[interjection]

Yes, that is right. That is my brother and I am proud of my brother and I love my brother, and I think that

what he is doing is honourable. Whether I agree with every aspect of what he stands for or what he says is another story, but I certainly think what he is doing is honourable, and I know his motivations are honourable ones. Anyone can stand in the protection of this House and speak in disparaging terms about people outside of this House. I have never enjoyed hearing those kinds of comments and I certainly do not enjoy hearing them about my brother.

* (1630)

So let me share with you the comments of this older farmer from Killarney, who said my brother was dangerous and a radical. And I said, well, sir, I respect the fact that you have made those comments. Let me share something with you. In the 1920s my grandfather, Harry Pallister, went around to the community farmers. He walked into their homes at their invitation and he spoke to them of the need to pool their resources, to gather together their resources and the grain they produced and to market it collectively for the benefit of all of them.

My grandfather was given the honour by his neighbours and friends of delivering the first wagonload of grain by horse and buggy to the Edwin pool elevator. He was considered a radical. He was considered dangerous by some of his neighbours. My brother is more similar to my grandfather than he is different from my grandfather.

In the days of my grandfather farmers were not free. Farmers were not free in many respects in the old days. They did not have choices and when you do not have choices you are not free. They did not have many choices on where to travel because they did not have many roads. They did not have many choices on who to phone because they did not have a phone. They did not have many choices because they were restricted by the lack of technology and the barriers of distance and time. They were not free in the old days and they needed to band together to create freedom. They did that through pool elevators and various other mechanisms that were appropriate to that time, that were appropriate to the people who lived in that time—wise, co-operative moves, wise moves with foresight. My grandfather was a radical and my brother is a

radical, because today farmers have the capability to talk to people all around the world. And in the old days they could not even talk to their neighbour without a long walk.

Today, the farmers of this province have the ability to communicate by satellite. They have the ability to farm by satellite as a recent article in *Grainews* magazine attests, and I would encourage those who have an interest in agricultural issues to read this series. This one talks about global positioning systems. GPS is a system that allows farmers to navigate their equipment by satellite technology, yield map, soil map. Variable rate application of chemical can occur as a result of that. This allows farmers to farm in a technological manner hitherto unexplored by Manitoba farmers.

Many farmers are developing innovative practices that are benefiting all of us in this province, that are creating wealth for all of us. There is tremendous potential in agriculture in this province, and it is being unleashed. It is being unleashed by technology and by the elimination of barriers to innovation and barriers to entrepreneurial behaviour. That we will see the benefits of if we do our best to support those who would like to be innovative. We will benefit by encouraging those who would like to be creative in their behaviour.

Recently, the members opposite spoke of the need for academic freedom for professors at university and how essential that was to be academically free. Well, it is also essential for agricultural producers to be free. It is essential that they be free to pursue the things that they want to pursue in their lives, especially given the fact that it is their investment that they are not positioned to receive taxpayers' money from the public purse. Rather, they are investing money that they have earned, saved and that they deserve to have the freedom to manage—economic freedom. Without economic freedom, what other kinds of freedoms can exist?

Certainly, when members opposite and all of us choose to defend minority rights in this province, when we defend the need to be sensitive to those who are of different ethnic groups of different racial origins,

certainly women who have been disadvantaged in our history, groups who at various points in our history have been disadvantaged need to be supported—the handicapped, the mentally disabled, the mentally challenged, all of these groups.

We stand here and we defend minority rights. Day in and day out we speak of minority rights. Where, I ask you, are the rights for the minority of farmers who choose to market their grain which they have produced where they wish to market it? Do minority rights stop when we start talking about farmers? Do minority rights only apply to professors and public servants and members of special interest groups or do they apply to occupational groups such as farmers who wish to be innovative and entrepreneurial? Why do they not apply to farmers? Farmers who invest their own money to create their own product very likely should have the freedom to market it as they wish if they choose to.

In closing, I do not share the perceptions of the members opposite who constantly fret and harrumph about the possibility that the Wheat Board will be dead tomorrow if farmers are given the choice to market to someone other than the Wheat Board. Frankly, the principal marketing that farmers would likely pursue, at least in the early stages, would very likely be in niche markets which Wheat Board officials have repeatedly said they have no interest in pursuing and do not have the capability or resources to adequately develop for farmers in this province or any other jurisdiction in the Wheat Board ghetto that is western Canada.

(Madam Speaker in the Chair)

So the reality is that the Wheat Board will very likely be able to compete. Certainly the Wheat Board in its history has demonstrated its capability to market to foreign jurisdictions. Intergovernmental marketing has been one of its strengths. I believe if the Wheat Board has those capabilities which certainly, if supporters would support me in attesting to, it will have every reason to succeed in future. It is strong enough to compete with a few vagabond rebel farmers who would like to market their grain in a way they choose. Certainly freedom is something that we should be here to support, it is something that we should speak of and

we should commit to freedom in our deeds as well as in our words.

The members opposite, I would ask them to consider the points that I have made, and I would ask them to consider if looking backward is truly the best way to develop the future of this province. If they understand the history of this issue and they understand the future at all, then they need to understand that dismissing freedoms and dismissing minority rights, as they have done, establishing ludicrous fines, jail terms for farmers is the old way. Perhaps given the new way and the old way and comparing them, the old way being the way of border guards, inspectors, investigators and so on, what the new way has to offer us is perhaps best simplified by one thing, there are fewer police required. Thank you very much.

Mr. Leonard Evans (Brandon East): Madam Speaker, I welcome the opportunity to participate in yet another throne speech in this Legislature, and tell you that I am very pleased to participate and listen to all of my friends on the other side who we may disagree with, but nevertheless to listen to what they have to say and their ideas. No matter how distorted they may be from time to time or how wrong they may be, we enjoy sitting back and listening to them, and of course, I enjoy listening particularly to some of the comments made by my colleagues on this side of the House.

I guess in some ways you can say that throne speeches are usually vast generalizations that really do not mean very much. A bunch of sweet nothings, somebody once said. Whether it be a throne speech of this government or other governments or other provinces or other jurisdictions, the fact is that as we all know the throne speech is not binding on the government. There is absolutely no commitment on the part of the government to fulfill anything that is mentioned in the throne speech so therefore—

Mr. Lamoureux: Fortunately.

Mr. Leonard Evans: Fortunately. My colleague for Inkster says, fortunately. Maybe so, because really it is an indication presumably of where the government wishes to head. It binds the government to nothing. People outside of this building may not appreciate this.

I continually tell my constituents that, yes, there is a throne speech and some of the phrases may sound rather pleasant and some of the suggestions may be exciting and so on, but the government is not bound by these generalizations. The government is not bound by these statements and therefore do not hold your breath.

* (1640)

I believe that this particular throne speech was rather disappointing. This throne speech was disappointing. I listened to it very carefully. I have read through it and I must say that it does lack by way of major initiatives. There are no significant major initiatives respecting economic growth, respecting health, respecting education. There are many references to old programs. There are references to past policies. There are references to, for example, providing job opportunities for those on welfare. Well, so what is new? This has been discussed by many governments before. It has been discussed in past throne speeches and other debates in this House, but there is really nothing new by way of any significance in this particular throne speech. We do have the same litany of cutbacks, the same litany of shrinking programs, of the need to cut, the need to shrink, the need to reduce government.

I guess in some ways, or in many ways, this is in keeping with the philosophy of this government, which, I believe, to sum it up in a nutshell, is, the less government, the better. Whatever they can do to cut programs, eliminate spending and so on, shrink the presence of government, the better they like it.

So, generally, this throne speech is very disappointing, Madam Speaker. In fact, I would say it was boring. It was a very boring throne speech. It need not be, but it was. I contrast this—

An Honourable Member: A noninterventionist government.

Mr. Leonard Evans: A noninterventionist government. That should be expected. We should expect a boring throne speech from a noninterventionist government.

I contrast this with the Schreyer administration. Those were very exciting times. I was first elected as

a member of the Schreyer team in the election of June of 1969. I recall we had an early session. We had to have an early session because the previous government had not passed its budget, so for no other reason we had to go in fairly quickly to bring in a budget and to have it passed so that the bills of the province could be paid, so that the civil servants would be able to be reimbursed for their efforts, so that all the payments that had to be made by governments to whoever could occur. So we had an early session.

I recall the commitments we made in the throne speech back in 1969. One of the earliest was to begin to eliminate medicare premiums. Medicare premium at that time was relatively new in Manitoba, but it was a flat rate tax. Like anything that is flat rate, it tends to be very regressive. Not only that, there was a lot of cost involved in collecting those premiums. Not everybody wanted to pay the premium. Then there were difficulties in various ways, so there was a lot of bureaucracy involved.

I do recall that, when we eliminated the medicare premiums, I think we saved about 200 job positions in Manitoba Health Services Commission. That was quite a substantial saving. There were jobs for those people elsewhere because the government was bringing in new programs and there were other opportunities, so nobody was laid off. But we were able to get by with about 200 fewer jobs because we did not have to process all the red tape, all the paperwork, for medicare.

But the point is, we said we were going to eliminate medicare premiums and we did so in two stages. We eliminated half the first year and the other half the second year. Then we talked about the stay-option. We thought not in 1969, but in the Schreyer years, in the early 1970s, we talked about the stay-option and all the programs we were going to bring forward for farmers to enable them to stay on their farms, to stop the farm exodus, to try to enable farmers and their families to maintain their family farms and to provide opportunities for young people on the farms. We had all kinds of programs to help the farmers of Manitoba, and I think we were very successful.

Nursing homes. You know, nursing homes were not always under the medicare system. Nursing homes

used to be available for you, but you would have had to pay the full shot.

I recall what typically happened. The elderly, particularly, who had to go a nursing home, unfortunately, at some point in their lives, would normally use up all their lifetime savings. They would sell their house, of course, or their property, and then that would be used up. The cost was very expensive, and eventually when all of that was used up, then they would go onto welfare because that was the only option.

I thought that was very sad to see people who lived in dignity and had worked hard and had saved, to have it all gone within a year, two years, three years depending.

When we brought the nursing homes under medicare, we did, I thought, a very positive thing. What it meant at that time is that from then on you paid initially \$4.50 a day for the room-and-board portion—[interjection] Yes, which was more or less equivalent to the pension. This was the amount that was deemed to be for room and board. The balance was considered to be as though you were in a hospital and that would be taken care of by medicare.

As a result, people did not lose their entire lifetime savings; they did not have to sell their homes, their farms, and become destitute.

An Honourable Member: It was cheaper than a hospital bed.

Mr. Leonard Evans: Oh, it was cheaper than a hospital bed, too. I thought it was a good move. So we put the nursing homes under medicare, and not all provinces have done that. We did in that time, and we still have the system.

Unfortunately, the rates have gone up for different reasons; the costs have gone up and so on. The rates have gone up, but nevertheless it was exciting to have a throne speech which said, we are going to put nursing homes under the medicare system.

Likewise with social housing. We built thousands of units of housing for senior citizens around Manitoba,

and many rural communities still see the impact of that housing that was built in the Schreyer years. Of course, we built family housing as well.

I recall the excitement when we brought in Pharmacare. We said to the people in the throne speech, we are going to bring in Pharmacare. I recall when it was first introduced, one lady who lived near Morris said, what kind of a farm program was that? She had not heard of that one up until that point. Now, we have all heard of it since, but that was very significant.

I say it is significant because medicine—I recall talking to a gentleman from Ayerst company. We were at the big announcement that Ayerst made a couple of years ago when they were going to expand in Brandon, and at our particular luncheon table was this gentleman who was a chemist or a scientist from their head office down East. He said: Medicine generally is a very essential part of prevention. By administering, by having adequate medicine, by administering this medicine to people for whatever disease or illness they may have, we can keep them out of hospitals, we can keep them out of nursing homes, we can maybe help them stay in their own homes, or whatever. We can extend their lives, and therefore medicine is a very important part of prevention in that sense.

That is why I have always been very opposed, whichever government, our government or this government, whenever we increase the deductibles and made it more costly for people to buy medicine. We were making a backward move because we should do everything possible to make it financially possible for people to acquire the medicine that their doctor—I am talking about medicine that the doctor prescribes, prescriptions, obviously. We should do everything possible to make prescription medicines available at the lowest possible cost to encourage people to take the medicines that their doctor has prescribed for them to help them with their illness, whether heart disease or whether it be arthritis or whatever.

I had one constituent who has to take Calcium-sandoz. It is a particular drug that helps her, she says, stay out of a nursing home. She has a very bad case of osteoporosis; she has various calcium deficiencies. I

know there are various other kinds of drugs available, but for whatever reason her doctor says that this is the one medicine that she has to have. This is a particular brand that she can manage in her system, and that it is critical.

It was unfortunately delisted at that time, and it has given this person a great deal of financial hardship because she is on a pension but nevertheless is being forced to take this particular kind of medicine. As she said, if she did not take it she would soon end up in a nursing home. She could not possibly stay in her own home, and I say therefore it is a backward move to increase costs of medicines or, putting it another way, to reduce the amount of deductibles under Pharmacare.

But it was exciting to be part of a government who had in its throne speech the introduction of Pharmacare.

Another example, introduction of Autopac. That was a very contentious issue back in '69-1970. We had made it as a commitment as a party back in the '60s and, of course, when we were elected in '69 we fulfilled our commitment and we introduced provincial automobile insurance. As we would all agree in this House, it is not perfect. There are problems with it. It has had its difficulties, but I think by and large we have protected Manitobans on the move in a way that we would not have been able to do otherwise at a cost that is still among the lowest if not the lowest in the country.

* (1650)

So I say I contrast those days of initiatives, those days of exciting throne speeches where we had something to say. We announced it and we carried through. I could cite many, many other examples of initiatives in the social development area. We were talking about community clinics in those days, about the need to keep people out of hospitals, if possible, and to do whatever we can by means of community clinics. We talked about providing opportunities for people on welfare and what we could do to retrain to reduce the number of people on welfare. We brought in a number of initiatives.

The point I want to make in conclusion on this particular segment of my speech, Madam Speaker, is

that when we left office after eight years in 1977, the burden of debt was less than when we took office. In other words, I recall looking at figures just a couple of weeks ago in the library here. The percentage of our total spending that we utilized for interest on the debt—today it is around 11 cents I believe—then it was between two and three cents of every dollar spent at that time. What a difference.

But the point is, when we left office after taking all these initiatives, the amount was less than it was at the beginning, slightly less. [interjection] You know what the reason was? Manitoba was blessed with a lot of economic growth. We had the growth and with the growth you had the revenues.

I do not want to be a little facetious about this, but I recall at least one year at the end of the year we said, well, we have all this money, we have paid all our debts, so to speak, and we have a little left over, what should we do with the money? We did pay down some debt, but it was different times. We had the revenue. It was a lot easier and you could think of all kinds of initiatives. Just generally speaking, the '70s were good times for Manitoba and for the country, right. You can see across the country, a lot of these initiatives we were doing I would be remiss if I did not say you did see them somewhere else. You saw Pharmacare, for example, being brought in in some of the jurisdictions and so on.

I do not like to be negative but here we are on the opposition side. That is what we are paid for, to be negative and to look for failures and faults and so on. I know once in a while some of my Conservative friends in Brandon complain that I am so negative, but that is what I am being paid for.

It is much better to be on that side where you can take initiative and say, we are going to do this, we are going to do that, whatever it is. So I looked through some of the comments made and they sound pretty good but then when you look at them you said, yes, well, that is fine, but. For example, you note that after eight years of prudent fiscal management you refer to no major tax increases, which is true. There have been no significant major tax increases; in fact, there was a tax decrease. I think it was in 1988 or '89, when you

were in a minority position, there was a tax decrease which we supported. We supported that particular tax decrease.

But let us not pretend that there has not been any tax increases whatsoever since this government has been in office because I do recall one Mr. Clayton Manness at some point bringing in a number of measures and in that one particular budget it amounted to over \$100 million worth of tax increases. That included the elimination, I believe, of \$75 of tax credits. There were others: extension of the sales tax to include the Big Macs, to include certain medical supplies, and so on. It was an extension of the sales tax, and of course, there was offloading.

I do not know even today whether we can measure the total impact of the offloading, but a lot of rural municipalities that had certain technical services performed by the province for them free of charge were no longer able to get those technical services. Another example was the provincial roads. There were hundreds of provincial roads that used to be the responsibility of the Province of Manitoba that were simply turned back to the municipalities. That obviously put an additional burden on the municipal government. It was a classic case of offloading.

There are other examples of offloading that have occurred. I think you could look back to the urban transit system in Winnipeg and Brandon. I know in Brandon, the Province of Manitoba pays a much smaller percentage of the operating deficit of the City of Brandon transit system, so there is another form of offloading. So, while you can talk about prudent fiscal management, you do have to recognize that there has been a price paid by Manitoba taxpayers and certainly by municipal governments and municipal taxpayers.

You make reference also to your positive financial performance leading to an increase in investment and economic activity. While there has been significant increase in economic activity, I would say, in the province in the past year, especially the past year and a half, when you compare it over the years, there has not been that much of significance happening. Even the number of jobs. There has been a slight increase in jobs between 1990 and 1995. There has been an

increase of about 4,000 jobs, from 518,000 to 522,000, but in the scope of things that is not a significant change. Out of 522,000, when you talk about a difference of 4,000, that is almost like a minor statistical error. You could put a decimal in the wrong place and more than account for 4,000 jobs.

What particularly concerns me is that in this period of time 1990 to 1995, we have shrunk Manitoba in the total picture in Canada in terms of the number of jobs. In terms of the total amount of employment, Manitoba contributes a smaller percentage of jobs than it did in 1990. In 1990, employment in Manitoba accounted for 3.93 percent of total employment in Canada. By 1995, the very latest information we have, this has shrunk to 3.86 percent. This is something that should concern all of us in this House; that is, because our population is not growing as rapidly as we like and because certainly there has not been the job growth, as a result, the Manitoba economy is becoming less significant in the total Canadian economy. We should all be concerned about that.

When you look at some other figures, the unemployment in Manitoba is relatively favourable compared to other provinces, but this has always been the case.

I recall when we were in government, both in the Pawley years and the Schreyer years, we would have either the lowest, second lowest or third lowest level of unemployment in the country, so in a relative sense, we have not changed in that respect. We have about 7.4 percent unemployed today. In 1990, we had 7.3 percent.

In terms of our real gross domestic product, there has been very little change. In fact, there was a reduction in the GDP for some years in the early '90s, but it has come up the last year or two to \$17,886 million compared to \$17,620 million in 1990, a slight increase. So on balance, there has not been much real economic growth.

Housing, unfortunately, is down substantially, and I do not fully understand that. There are a number of reasons for it, a slow population growth but also I think the lack of personal income, and, of course, that is

reflected in building permits, too, because the building permits are just almost half of what they were back in 1990.

I suppose you might say this is quite a conundrum. On the one hand, you can point to real economic growth in the province, modest as it is. Nevertheless, it has been there, and yet people do not feel wealthy. People, with some exceptions, do not feel as though they are living in affluence. [interjection] We do not have the inflation, that is true, which is good. We do not have the inflation, but still this is not a phenomenon just in Manitoba. I was reading an article about the United States economy. It is called, *If the GDP is Up, Why is America Down?*

This is an article written in the *Atlantic Monthly* magazine that came out in October of 1995, just a month or two ago. They argue in this article we need a new measure of progress. In other words, you cannot rely on the old economic figures and say, well, the GDP is up; the economic growth is there; the figures show that, so why are we not all better? Why do we not feel better about things?

* (1700)

The fact is in many instances there are problems with families. One of the breadwinners has lost a job, or what used to be a full-time job becomes a part-time job, or there is seasonal unemployment. Other things have happened. There has been an increase in crime in the United States. There is continuing pollution problems and so on, so that people do not feel up, as you think they would.

So this is a good question. We should ask it here, too. Why are we not more optimistic, and why are we not more satisfied with our economic situation? We can say, well, we have among the lowest unemployment rates in the country, but, nevertheless, you go out there, you go on the street. I know in my own riding, for instance, every week we run into people who are down. Every week, we run into people who have not got the job that they thought they would get. They have graduated from university or from college, and they simply cannot find employment, or if they find employment, they find a job that is really underutilizing their services.

I remember one lady came to see me about a year ago. She had graduated in computer science from Brandon University, and the best she could do was get a job in a retail store selling computer software at the minimum wage, and the poor person was in tears. She had one child that she was looking after, and she says, I just do not know how I am going to manage. I cannot manage on the minimum wage looking after one child, and I have a good degree in computer science. What can I do?

(Mr. Marcel Laurendeau, Deputy Speaker, in the Chair)

This sort of lament is repeated oftentimes by people who are capable, who are bright, who have been trained, and yet for whatever reason cannot find the work that they thought they were going to be able to find.

I might add, too, I was going over some of the statistics: unemployment, the gross domestic product, housing, building permits. I might also mention about our trade. I know our Minister of Trade (Mr. Downey) is always interested in bragging about our increase in our exports, and indeed, according to the latest figures that we got from Stats Canada and the Bureau of Statistics, the third quarter of 1995, there has indeed been an increase in our trade with many countries of the world, including the United States. I notice year to date in 1995 the exports to the United States has increased significantly, but nevertheless our imports have increased as well. So, as my colleague for Crescentwood (Mr. Sale) is apt to point out, you have to look at both the export side and the import side to get an appreciation of our trade situation.

The fact is that the first nine months of 1994, we had an imbalance of trade. We had more imports than exports, to the tune of \$932 million plus. Unfortunately, by 1995, this imbalance has increased to \$981,600,000. So while our exports are up, we have to recognize that our imports are up even more so and that therefore we have to recognize and acknowledge that trade is a two-way street. While some people were very optimistic about the Free Trade Agreement with the United States and NAFTA that all kinds of good things would happen, the fact is that this does not

always happen. If you have an increase in imports, of course, what you are doing is, depending on the kind of commodities you are talking about, but generally you are replacing jobs. So the more imports you have, the more negative the impact on job creation within the jurisdiction.

At any rate, the economic figures which the members opposite like to talk about in glowing terms, when you look at them in historic perspective, I would say that they should not give us cause for great exhilaration or great exuberance. As I go on through this throne speech, again, we are going to see more and more of this, criticizing the federal government for reducing expenditures, including the social transfer to the provinces. That is serious, and I regret that. I am very critical of the federal government for that. It is a great disappointment to have a government that many people thought would be different from the previous Mulroney government but has turned out to be probably more right wing than the previous Conservative government. I want to point out that although we have these cutbacks—and reference has been made, for example, to the cutbacks in established program funding.

That is reference to the health and higher education cash transfers and some of the Canada Assistance Plan transfers. While there is squeezing going on there, the fact is that equalization is still there. That is where the big bundle of money is. That is the biggest bundle of money. I notice in the budget that was tabled by our Minister of Finance (Mr. Stefanson) a few months back, the last budget, the 1995 budget, when you add the equalization, the health and higher education transfer and the shared costs and other transfers, the bottom line is that this government is getting more in 1995-96 than it did in 1994-95. In 1994-95, according to the budget document, the province received \$1.72 billion. This current year, '95-96, it is expected to increase to \$1.798 billion.

So the bottom line is, there is not less money coming from the federal government; there is actually more money coming from the federal government, albeit not as much as one had hoped for a year or two back before these other transfers were being cut, before health and education transfers were being cut and the other shared costs were being cut. So that has to be recognized.

The other thing, of course, we have to recognize is that the government is getting more money from gambling. Unfortunately, VLTs have certainly caught on in this province, and you have thousands upon thousands of Manitobans every day, every hour, just as we are in this Chamber there are thousands of loonies being poured into these VLT machines across the province and bringing in much revenue. It is the biggest form of voluntary taxation that we will see in this province anywhere. It is a setup of voluntary taxation. At any rate, it brought in, I believe, about \$250 million this year when you compare that with a few years ago when it was only around \$55 million. So there has been a substantial increase in revenues from gambling. So, yes, while the federal government is cutting, at the same time let us recognize that the bottom line, there has been an increase in federal transfers and likely will be in the future because of equalization, unless that formula also is changed.

I agree the throne speech goes on and talks about unemployment insurance being changed and how Manitobans are being punished for that, and I would agree with that in this throne speech. I agree that no matter what Lloyd Axworthy says, the fact is the bottom line is he is taking money collectively from the unemployed in this country, and I would be the first to admit that there are a lot of problems with the way the program is administered. I guess in some ways you can say, well, using it for seasonal work to supplement seasonal workers is a problem. When you think of fishermen and workers in the woods and so on, people who sometimes earn quite a bit of money and then are able to draw down on UI for the winter and increase—we are talking about people with \$50,000-\$60,000 incomes a year, a fair amount of money. When you think originally when this scheme was brought in, seasonal workers were not included. In fact it was John Diefenbaker who brought in these seasonal workers; otherwise, it was meant to be a cyclical unemployment insurance program.

I am critical of the federal government for what they have done, and I would point out that Manitobans, Manitoba workers, Manitoba business, historically ever since this program was established have paid more into UI than they have taken out of UI. In other words, Manitoba is a net contributor to unemployment

insurance and will remain so in the future so that our workers by and large, I think, are being doubly penalized because we are told there are problems with the system and therefore the federal government is going to cut back. Indeed, a substantial amount is being cut out of the system. The workers are suffering, including Manitoba workers who are, as I say, in a net contribution position.

* (1710)

Reference is also made in the throne speech to the mining sector, how it is expanding because of policies aimed at promoting exploration development. Well, I do not want to take anything from you, but the fact is the mining industry is essentially affected by world prices and world demand, and what happens to mining nickel and copper, zinc and these other base metals that we produce in Manitoba, the output and the jobs in that sector is a direct relation to the economic activity around the world. If there is an increase in prices, if there is an increase in demand we will benefit, and we are benefiting now from this world situation.

Similarly for manufacturing, to a large extent what happens to our manufacturing depends on the demand for our manufacturing output from south of the border and from other provinces.

There is one reference made to the apparel industry saying it requires more skilled workers, and I am pleased that you are going to try to work with the industry on domestic training and recruitment. I do have some problems when the throne speech says that they want to work with the federal government to alleviate this shortage through immigration of skilled workers.

The fact is that this is a low-wage industry. It is an industry characterized by, relatively speaking, in a relative sense, poor working conditions. So Manitobans are not necessarily lined up at all the garment factories in this province to go to work in the apparel industry. They are not doing it because of the working conditions and because of the wages, but nevertheless we have to recognize we just have still too many people unemployed, too many people chronically unemployed, too many people who just cannot seem to

get into the workforce, and we have to do even more to help the unemployed get into these jobs. I say, to think that you are going to resolve this through immigration of skilled workers, you have to think again.

As a matter of fact, the industry will grow infinitely if you provide an infinite number of new, foreign skilled workers. For the industry, it will continue to grow. It will grow as long as there are more and more skilled workers who are ready to work for very little money and relatively poor working conditions. I would question—it is really an industry that is thriving in the Third World. That is where the industry has thrived. That is where it is expanding. We are trying to compete with the Third World in a sense with this industry. I do not want to take anything away from the manufacturers or from the workers in the industry. I know they are trying hard, there are some very good people and so on. They make a contribution, but I do lament the fact that we cannot seem to find the workers in Manitoba here and provide them with the training and incentives or whatever it takes to persuade them to offer their services in this particular industry.

I have not time to go over as many points as I would like, but reference is also made to reforms in our social security to reward initiative and enhance individual dignity. I would think that that scenario could be tied in with, as I said, the job shortages in the garment industry. But nevertheless this is talked about as though this is a new idea. It is an old idea. As a matter of fact, Mr. Deputy Speaker, in the 1980s, we had massive job programs. We had thousands upon thousands of Manitobans who had been on welfare or who had been on UI, who were given jobs by the small-business sector, by the nonprofit sector, because of our Canadian jobs and training program. Canadian jobs and training program provided that reward, provided the incentives to people, and we had a very successful program.

So, when the government talks about looking at this as though this is some new reform, I say it is old hat. My criticism over the years is that this government has not done nearly enough to provide job opportunities for those people on welfare. It was not workfare, it was programs that people had some choices in participating. They were some good jobs. Also, there is reference to

implementing new youth programs, so they may gain experience in emerging fields, in employment, such as information technology. Well, my goodness, Mr. Deputy Speaker, we have been advocating new programs for years on this side of the House, but we were always being shot down by people such as the former Minister of Finance, Mr. Manness, saying he did not want to go into these make-work jobs. I ask you, what kind of jobs are these? Are these make-work jobs also? Some of the so-called make-work jobs can be very good and very challenging.

What we have seen instead of new jobs, we have seen youth programs being eliminated. You eliminated the STEP program, the Student Temporary Employment Program. You eliminated the Northern Youth Program. You cut back substantially on the CareerStart program. We have been going backwards, so all of a sudden it says we are going to implement new youth programs. Mr. Deputy Speaker, I say this is too little and far too late.

I had quite a bit more to say on various matters, but unfortunately I believe I am running out of time. I would like to make one last comment, and that is that I would like to make a plea for all members of this House to become more familiar with monetary policy, because we need to put pressure on the federal government to bring down interest rates, to use the Bank of Canada in a more positive way, so that we can get more economic activity in this country.

I just might add that the Bank of Canada is not doing nearly the job that the Federal Reserve system is in the United States. The Federal Reserve system holds a bigger percentage of the federal debt than the Bank of Canada does, and as a result there is less pressure on the U.S. Treasury. If we did this, if we just followed the American example, we would have hundreds and hundreds of millions of dollars more per year, and instead of cutting out transfers to the provinces or the social programs, we would be able to maintain those necessary social programs, including health care.

I am sorry, I have run out of time, Mr. Deputy Speaker, so thank you very much for your attention.

Mr. Jack Penner (Emerson): It is certainly a pleasure to rise once more in this House to speak about the

agenda that our government has set for the people of Manitoba in the throne speech that has just been delivered in this House a few days ago.

It is certainly again an indication of our desire to put the economy of this province on not only an even keel with other provinces in this country but to in fact enhance the opportunities of individuals to take the initiative to help us drive the economy and create jobs.

* (1720)

We all recognize that jobs and investments depend on a stable, competitive economic climate, and it appears to me that from time to time there are people sitting in this Legislature, and most of them, I should say, are in the opposition benches, who simply do not understand the ability for a province to generate revenue, the need for economic drive and the individual's initiative tying together to create the kind of climate that will allow us to establish and maintain good health care systems, social systems, that we need to ensure that those less fortunate can also enjoy a good, solid lifestyle in this province, but above all, to enhance the ability to educate our young people to be more aggressive, proactive individuals who will help us sustain in the long term the economy.

That is why we are looking at discussing with all Manitobans those possibilities, and that is why the throne speech refers to establishing a task force to work with people in rural Manitoba to build upon the existing programs and develop strategies for rural communities, because I have heard the member for Dauphin (Mr. Struthers), the member for Swan River (Ms. Wowchuk) talk about their communities.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order, please. Could I ask the honourable members wanting to carry on this conversation in the back to do so in the loge, please? I am having great difficulty hearing the honourable member for Emerson.

Mr. Penner: Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

But the two members specifically, on the opposition benches from rural Manitoba, talked about their inability and their decline in growth in their

communities. That is why we have initiated such programs as the Grow Bond program, the REDI program, the community assistance program, the Tourism Marketing Council. That is why we have attracted and spent so much time and energy attracting the Pan Am Games to demonstrate to others outside of this province and outside of this country what a great province we have, what great communities we have, but all towards the ability of enhancing the economic climate within those communities that they can cause growth from within, and that is important.

It is important that we foster new markets to attract companies to expand in this province, whether they are established in this province or whether they are looking for a new home, to look at Manitoba and then create an atmosphere that they can be competitive in the world market. We have so often talked about the possibilities in the Pacific Rim countries, the Asian countries and the developing economies in those nations, and yes, the countries that were formerly the U.S.S.R.

I reflect on the U.S.S.R. simply because we had three representatives in this Legislature today from Russia, coming to visit us, extending a hand to us and saying we want to be your friends. We want to be to be your friends, but not only do we want to be your friends, we want to do business with you.

How do you best do it? How do you best accomplish those things? By politicians roaming the globe and searching out these initiatives? I think not, Mr. Deputy Speaker. The best way to do that is to encourage the companies and the individuals that do business in this province and need a market to export their goods to go out there and search out those markets themselves and make those kinds of connections that are needed.

We need to encourage innovation, we need to encourage good customer service, and we need to encourage standards and competitiveness that nobody else can match. We have done that in a number of areas, and we want to enhance those areas to even further the ability of those industries to impact the international marketplace.

How do you do it? Do you pass legislation in this House restricting? Do you encourage restrictive

controls that will only allow us to act within? There are some members on the opposite benches that would love to see the continuation of the kinds of rules and regulation and legislation that were passed during the '50s and '60s and, yes, maybe even before that, but in large part these initiatives were embarked upon at that time to further the then war effort to compensate and to help generate enough revenue to compensate for the war effort. In other words pay for the damage that we had done in the world. Thirdly, to ensure that our emerging industrial effort in eastern Canada could be maintained. So we built the railway. We gave away huge tracts of land to those two companies that chose to build tracks across this nation, and we gave them an assurance that they would be properly and forever compensated to haul our raw goods out of this emerging western nation. During the '30s and '40s and '50s they prospered because they had a guaranteed income, and the amounts that we had indicated they would receive per tonne of grain hauled would keep them viable forever. They had a good deal.

Yet then when energy prices started to soar and other labour costs started to escalate during the late '60s early '70s, what happened? The railways came back to the federal government and said it is not enough. We need more. So we gave them more. We went from a \$200 million compensation package to a \$350 million compensation package, and finally we ended up paying the railway \$750 million annually to haul grain out of western Canada.

Now, did the railways build? Did the economy flourish and grow and abound, and were jobs created because we were growing all this grain? In fact just the opposite happened because we had initiated in barley and wheat a single best selling agency that made sure they were the only one, the only single authority, that we had to sell grain anywhere in this country. No, not only in this country but to the United States and all the rest of the world. No company could sell grain outside of this province and no individual could sell grain even to a local feed mill, their next door neighbour. So did our industries grow during those decades? No, they did not. They could not because they were restricted by legislative authority. They were restricted.

* (1730)

Then in 1972 or the early '70s—I should not say 1970, but it was the early '70s—the feed industry, the livestock industry in this province begged and pleaded the federal government long enough that they finally freed up the system to allow individual farmers to sell grain to feed mills. I well remember the hue and cry that went out at that time because we were going to—not only had we—we were going to forever and a day destroy the Canadian Wheat Board. Who was the government of the day? Well it was the guy that said sell your own wheat. Remember that? Farmers had these huge surpluses on their farms and the Prime Minister of this country came to western Canada and said, sell your own wheat. Well, and we all thought that we had a Wheat Board that was going to do this for us forever and a day, but the Prime Minister said no. No, you are going to do that yourself. So farmers sort of shook their heads and wondered where they were at, and then when worse came to worse, this huge stockpile of wheat not only were evident on the farms but in car dealership lots and machinery dealer lots, and you could buy it at 60 cents and 70 cents a bushel. The Prime Minister was asked again, what are you going to do with our grain? And he said sell your own wheat.

What did farmers do? They went to livestock. They started raising hogs and cattle and poultry, and the feed mills came along and said, well, we cannot buy any barley. They had to buy it from the board. When the board started shipping outside of this country, there was nothing left for them. So the costs that were additional costs over and above the feed mills being able to do business and remaining competitive were too inhibitive to expand the industry, so they begged the federal government to change the Wheat Board Act to allow them to buy directly from farmers.

As I said before, the hue and cry went out and the Wheat Board was going to be destroyed. The single selling desk agency was gone forever and it was. That was the truth. The single desk selling agency has never been there since the early '70s in this country, in this province or anywhere else as far as the Wheat Board is concerned.

Then a few years ago, during the '90s, the then-Minister of Agriculture said, well, we are going to remove oats from out of the Wheat Board and there

were those in this country, again, in this province, that almost went straight through the roof because they said, we will die, the oat market will totally disappear, we cannot be competitive. We need the board to market the oats.

What has happened to the oat market since then? I ask you. We have not only built an industry which processes 75 percent of our oats in this province right here creating jobs and employment and generating economic activity which will help us pay down our debt.

By the way, can anybody tell me how much we have reduced our oat acreage in the last four years in this province? Because it was supposed to die. As a matter of fact we would never raise oats again in this province. How many acres have we reduced? I mean, how much less oats do we grow today than we did then? I daresay to you we have almost tripled our oat production since the time that we took the oats out from under the board. So let it not be said that the single desk authority was there since the early '70s because it was not. Let it not be said that there are not other marketing forces that can do an adequate and a good job for the various commodities.

Now does that mean I am in favour of what some people accuse me of in this Chamber of destroying the Wheat Board? No, exactly the opposite. I truly believe and I have always believed that the Wheat Board has done an absolutely phenomenal job in moving grain into the export market. I believe that an agency such as the Wheat Board can do a very effective job in marketing into foreign countries, because very often governments buy commodities for their people such as foodstuffs and specifically grain. They like to deal government to government, and the Wheat Board does an excellent job there. They have proven their effectiveness in that sort of scenario and should be retained. We should not destroy them, but since the initiative was taken to allow farmers to sell barley to the feed mills during the early '70s, should we have left everything as was at that time?

Well, some would argue in this Chamber that we should have, but we did not, because not only did we allow the feed mills to buy barley, but in fact my

neighbours, who are the strongest proponents of the Wheat Board—as a matter of fact one of them sits on the Wheat Board advisory board, and I was advised this week that he only sold one truckload of grain to the board last year. You know why? Because he could do better for himself outside of the board.

Now why could he do better if the board is a single-desk selling authority? Why could he do better? Because the legislation and the regulations have changed very dramatically over the last 20 years, very dramatically. Any farmer can make the choice today in Manitoba to sell his grain anywhere in Canada whenever and wherever he chooses, or she chooses. There is no single-desk authority on my grain. There is no requirement for me to deliver to a board only. Why am I saying this? Because we have those in this room who have not only accused us of, but said we have done away with the Manitoba hog board, and that is simply an untruth. That is simply not factual. The people who have stood in this House have misrepresented this government, because there is no intention by this government or any one of us sitting on this side to do away with the hog marketing board or their ability to market hogs.

What we have said very clearly and very distinctly is that their monopoly will be gone, their marketing monopoly will disappear. As you are allowed in the grain industry, we will allow individuals to make the choice where they want to market to or who they want to sell to. That is all we have said. Will that allow the hog marketing board to continue to do business as they do today? No, I do not think so. They will have to make change. They will have to climb aboard the winds of change, as each and every one of us has had to do during the last number of decades.

Those people who stand in this Legislature and want to maintain the status quo forever and a day simply have no knowledge of the true business ethics or business climate in the world or in their own community. The status quo simply is not good enough, never was, never will be, whether you are in the automobile business, whether you are in the business of farming or manufacturing, or even in politics, because politicians have constantly had to change, and political parties have constantly had to change in order to reflect the reality of the world.

So what are we doing? Where are we heading? Simply, Mr. Deputy Speaker, if I knew where this whole initiative would end, I would be a millionaire. I do not know.

Let me say this to you: it is important to note that there is a very dramatic expansion happening in this province in the livestock industry today, and that is what our throne speech reflects. That is what our throne speech focuses on. We talk about the need to change. We talk about the changing world and the changing country and the changing communities within our province, and we talk about how to address them and how to program properly economic initiatives, standards, how to change the regulatory system and how to focus on driving the initiative and giving people, giving individuals the incentive to want to. That, Mr. Deputy Speaker, is what is most needed in this province.

* (1740)

I feel so sorry some days, I feel absolutely appalled at all the rhetoric of despair that we hear from the opposition benches, and I, quite frankly, Mr. Deputy Speaker, appreciated what the member for Brandon East (Mr. Leonard Evans) said today. The member for Brandon East made one of the most honest speeches that I have heard in this Legislature in a long time. He was very blunt and very honest. He said many of the things that are happening in this Legislature, that are being initiated, need to happen, and I appreciate that. But let me say this to you: if we do not take the initiative, if we do not encourage our young people, if we do not tell our young people that they have a bright future in this province, that they can do almost anything they choose to do in this province, that they are free to choose and free to do as they will, we will drive them away.

Where will they go? Will they follow the trains that used to haul boxcars back and forth to the coast? Will they stop at the coast or will they climb aboard sailboats and sail into the sunset? Many of them have.

Now, do we want to turn the tide? Do we want to change the wind and sail them back? That is what the initiatives are in the throne speech, and if those in the

opposition benches would have read carefully or listened carefully to the direction that we indicate in this throne speech, they should be very, very supportive because we have made it clear that the borrowings and the deficits, the burdens we have placed on our taxpayers over the past, are no longer part of the future. It is not our plan. We have spent the last eight years trying to absolve ourselves of the inequities that have been created under the previous socialist governments, socialist regimes.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, that era has come to an end, not because politicians drove it but because the general public drove the initiative. They said enough taxation is enough. They simply said, we will not pay any more. Whether we took this initiative and forced further the underground economy as is emerging in this country, and it is growing quickly, and we know it, we could have kept on doing exactly what the opposition parties had done in this province over the last couple of decades. We could have kept on deficit budgeting and imposing higher taxation and new taxes, but we chose not to do that. We took a new direction when we came into power seven, eight years ago.

We took a new direction, Mr. Deputy Speaker, and we have lowered the deficit. We have lowered the deficit very, very dramatically, and we will emerge this year and next year with balanced budgets. We will reduce the debt repayment requirement over a period of 30 years, and our kids and our grandkids will thank this government for having stood firm on our initiative. Whether the opposition members like it or not, they and their colleagues in other provinces are not only doing the same thing, they are taking much more drastic action.

You can talk about our health care system, and many have, and our commitment to our health care system and our seniors, and you can talk about the health care systems in other provinces and their commitments to their health care systems and their seniors, and then let us do the comparison. Let us do the comparison. How many hospitals have we closed in this province until now? How many? [interjection] None, somebody said. That is right, none. How many hospitals have been closed in British Columbia? Some fairly large numbers of closures, bed closures, in British Columbia, closing whole hospitals at a time.

Let us look at our other counterparts right next door, Saskatchewan. When the NDP government in Saskatchewan took over, what did they do? Fifty-two hospitals closed with the snap of a finger. I know some of the opposition members are saying, well, yeah, but they converted them into something else. Well, maybe they did. I hope they did, because there was a lot of money spent to provide hospital medical services to rural people in Saskatchewan. The NDP government in Saskatchewan chose to not provide health care services for rural Saskatchewan people.

We chose to take the opposite view of that. We built new hospitals. We built new hospitals in Vita. We built new hospitals in Altona, and we built new hospitals in many other communities in this province, not because we wanted to but because we had to. The infrastructure was so badly in need of repair because of the neglect in rural Manitoba by the previous NDP administration that we had to spend large amounts of money to rebuild, but we have done much of that.

Now we must proceed, Mr. Deputy Speaker, to take the next step. That is what the throne speech reflects on, that next step. That is economic growth, development, encouragement of our young people to remain in this province, to build here, to raise their families here and to create an economic climate that will cause the growth of our rural communities again, cause them to grow and, yes, maybe even create manufacturing opportunities in those communities.

I want to talk a little bit about some of those opportunities. Some of the growth has already happened, and some new things are happening in this province, in our communities. I reflect, in my backyard, on the changes that we are making on our farms and the huge investment we have made on our farm to change, to meet the challenges of change.

Ten years ago, if somebody had asked us if we could grow beans on our farm and make money at growing beans, we would have said, no, we could not do it, because beans were only grown to the south of us. But today, because of the initiative of some people and because of the research and because of the markets created and because of some of the trade agreements that we have drawn, beans have become an emerging

market and a very significant crop in southern Manitoba.

The Parent brothers at St. Joseph invested millions of dollars to build a processing plant, and the opposition members should listen to this because this is where the jobs are created. The Parent seed operation added a bean processing plant to their operation and created in the meantime 15 new jobs in the small community of St. Joseph—15 new jobs. [interjection] And, yes, the Leader of the Opposition (Mr. Doer) says, yes, like Jack in the Beanstalk. He wants to make light of and fun of those kinds of initiatives. When people take their own money out of their own pocket and invest them in their businesses and create jobs, the Leader of the Opposition makes light of, and I think that is an absolute demonstration of how serious they were when they were in government of the needs that these rural communities had.

Oat processing. Look at Portage la Prairie. Can-Oat built a brand new oat plant. We now process two-thirds of the oats grown in this province right here in Manitoba.

* (1750)

I heard what one of my colleagues on this side of the House said before; he said that we needed to do more of that because I like to eat rolled oats in the morning. Oat cereals have become very, very popular. Oats have become a very popular growth area or very popular growth industry, because it is now deemed and seen as a real health food and it is, but it happened after we took the controls off the commodity.

All of a sudden the markets flourished and the commodities were grown. We produce thousands more acres of oats in this province today than we did four years ago. Why did we do that? We now employ people processing that product.

The potato industry, a nonregulated industry, is a perfect example as to what can happen. The expansion of McCain at Portage la Prairie, the expansion of the Carberry operation and the huge number of acres of potatoes that will be needed to supply those expansions and the huge investments that are going to be required

to meet those demands on farm and the growth that will create in the rural communities and the jobs on farm and in the industry, the processing industries that are going to be required, they will all add to the expansion of the economy in this province.

I say to you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that there is one other industry that has emerged and is going to be announced within the next few days, and that, of course, is the pasta processing industry in this province. Are we going to set up a flour mill next to it to create the semolina, to create the pasta? No, we are not, because if we did we would probably have to contract with our North American durum wheat growers. For some unclear aberration, the North American durum wheat growers could deliver their durum directly to a plant in Altona, Manitoba, and sell directly and contract directly with that plant, but the Manitoba farmers could not do that under our current legislation, could not contract directly and deliver directly to the plant without first selling to a board, buying back from a board and then selling to the pasta plant.

In all likelihood, if a milling plant was set up, they would have to contract all their durum wheat from the United States because that is allowed.

What I am referring to is—no, I do not want to destroy the Wheat Board; I do not want to destroy the hog board, but I want to see change, so that my sons and my daughters and my grandsons and granddaughters can establish here, be creative, build the industries, build our farms, create jobs and produce an economy that will provide health care, that will provide education and provide family services to our people.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, if we make these changes and we make them gently as we go along, they will be accepted, and the people will accept it. If they accept it, we will see growth. If we accept that growth, we will see an economy that will flourish debt-free. That is what is contained in this throne speech, and that is our agenda for the next year and, I would say, indeed, for the next four years.

So I ask my colleagues on opposite benches to support us in these initiatives, and as the member for Brandon did today, look at the good side of what we have done and say you have done a good job. I congratulate the member for Brandon East (Mr.

Leonard Evans) today for doing that because not always can we do that, but those areas where we need to make corrections you should criticize. The member for Brandon East was absolutely right: you are elected as opposition; you are the critics. But so often we receive criticism from members of our constituency when we just sit here and kibitz and kibble over things that are irrelevant.

I challenge all members of the Legislature: let us take a positive view at what is needed in this province. Let us work together. Let us work as a team to accomplish that, and, yes, we will accept criticism some days, but surely we will give you accolades if you provide us with the assistance that is required to see the economy grow.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I thank you very kindly for allowing me these last 30-some-odd minutes to put a few words on the record and a few of my thoughts because they are near and dear to my heart.

Thank you very much.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Is it the will of the House to call it six o'clock? [agreed]

When this matter is again before the House, this matter will remain open.

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

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Thursday, December 7, 1995

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