



Second Session - Thirty-Seventh Legislature

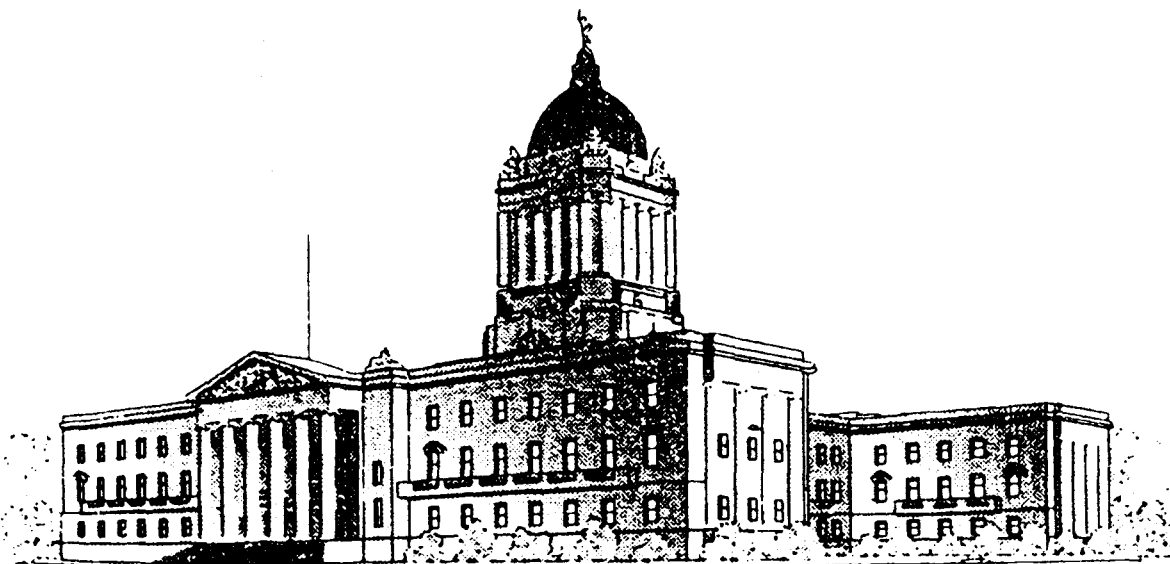
of the

Legislative Assembly of Manitoba

**DEBATES
and
PROCEEDINGS**

**Official Report
(Hansard)**

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The Honourable George Hickes
Speaker*



MANITOBA LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
Thirty-Seventh Legislature

Member	Constituency	Political Affiliation
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ALLAN, Nancy	St. Vital	N.D.P.
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ASPER, Linda	Riel	N.D.P.
BARRETT, Becky, Hon.	Inkster	N.D.P.
CALDWELL, Drew, Hon.	Brandon East	N.D.P.
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DACQUAY, Louise	Seine River	P.C.
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DOER, Gary, Hon.	Concordia	N.D.P.
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ENNS, Harry	Lakeside	P.C.
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GERRARD, Jon, Hon.	River Heights	Lib.
GILLESHAMMER, Harold	Minnedosa	P.C.
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HICKES, George	Point Douglas	N.D.P.
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LAURENDEAU, Marcel	St. Norbert	P.C.
LEMIEUX, Ron, Hon.	La Verendrye	N.D.P.
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WOWCHUK, Rosann, Hon.	Swan River	N.D.P.

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Friday, December 8, 2000

The House met at 10 a.m.

PRAYERS

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

PRESENTING PETITIONS

Health Centre

Mrs. Myrna Driedger (Charleswood): Mr. Speaker, I beg to present the petition of Michael Dean, Noelle Kiesman, Ronda Mann and others praying that the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba request that the Minister of Health (Mr. Chomiak) and the First Minister (Mr. Doer) instruct the Winnipeg Regional Health Authority to end its plans to remove the Health Centre at 108 Bond Street from Transcona and to consider finding existing space in downtown Transcona.

READING AND RECEIVING PETITIONS

Health Centre

Mr. Speaker: I have reviewed the petition of the honourable Member for Charleswood. It complies with the rules and practices of the House. Is it the will of the House to have the petition read? *[Agreed]*

Will the Clerk please read.

Madam Clerk (Patricia Chaychuk): The petition of the undersigned citizens of the province of Manitoba, humbly sheweth:

THAT the Health Centre, located in downtown Transcona at 108 Bond Street, is an important government service to the community of Transcona and surrounding areas; and

THAT the said Health Centre is centrally located, close to major bus routes, and therefore convenient to the people, with its community based services of Pre-natal and Post-natal care,

Public Nurse consultations, Immunizations, Vaccinations, and Mental Health services; and

THAT the said Health Centre also contains the administrative support for home care in the area, with home care workers reporting in and out of the centre; and

THAT the loss of the Health Centre would be a major economic set back to the commercial well being of downtown Transcona and the entire Transcona community; and

THAT the people of Transcona were not consulted prior to the Provincial Government making the decision to relocate the Health Centre and that the plan for its relocation to a 'strip mall district' runs contrary to all concepts of community development; and

THAT there is plenty of space in downtown Transcona for the construction of a permanent facility or for the leasing of new space or for the expansion and renovation of the existing facility.

WHEREFORE YOUR PETITIONERS HUMBLY PRAY THAT the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba request that the Minister of Health and the First Minister of Manitoba immediately instruct the Winnipeg Regional Health Authority to end its plans to remove the Health Centre at 108 Bond Street from Transcona and instead direct the WRHA to consider finding existing space in downtown Transcona, since much space exists, for both their short term and long term facility needs.

TABLING OF REPORTS

Hon. Gord Mackintosh (Minister of Justice and Attorney General): I am pleased to table the following reports, copies of which have been previously distributed: Annual Report of the Department of Justice 1999-2000; Law Enforcement Review Agency Annual Report 1999; the Public Trustee Annual Report 1999-2000; Legal Aid Manitoba Twenty-eighth

Annual Report; the Manitoba Human Rights Commission Annual Report 1999; Victims Services Annual Report 1999-2000, and, as well, Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to table under The Regulations Act a copy of each regulation registered with the Registrar of Regulations since the regulations were tabled in this House in November 1999.

* (10:05)

Introduction of Guests

Mr. Speaker: Prior to Oral Questions I would like to draw the attention of all honourable members to the gallery where we have with us this morning the law class from the H.O.P.E. Learning Centre. This class is located in the constituency of the honourable Member for St. Vital (Ms. Allan).

Also in the gallery we have seated, from General Vanier School, 43 Grade 5 students under the direction of Mrs. Lori Hildebrandt. This school is located in the constituency of the honourable Member for Radisson (Ms. Cerilli).

Also in the public gallery we have from Linden Christian School 51 Grade 5 students under the direction of Ms. Brenda Klassen and Mr. Manfred Glor. This school is located in the constituency of the honourable Member for Fort Whyte (Mr. Loewen).

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

ORAL QUESTION PERIOD

Flooding

Federal-Provincial Assistance Program

Mr. Stuart Murray (Leader of the Official Opposition): Good morning, Mr. Speaker. Recent statements by two federal MPs seemed to indicate the federal government was interested in participating in a 50-50 JERI-type program to cover losses incurred by farmers in the southwest due to the devastating high moisture levels of 1999.

Liberal MP John Harvard and Progressive Conservative MP Rick Borotsik appeared on the

November 9 edition of CBC Radio's "Questionnaire"—confirmed that Ottawa would have been willing to examine a 50-50 aid program to help our farmers.

Mr. Speaker, given that Mr. Harvard said there was some federal support for a 50-50 assistance program, could the Premier indicate if his Government has had any recent discussions with the federal government on this issue and whether the Province will be participating in a 50-50 JERI program to help our southwestern Manitoba farmers?

Hon. Gary Doer (Premier): Mr. Speaker, it is curious that the member opposite, who was a major player in the election campaign of 1999, was part of a decision to withhold a report dealing with the impacts on southwestern Manitoba. Let him not feign indignation here in this Chamber. At the recent AMM convention, where some of your members were attending and perhaps they had not briefed the member, it was confirmed by members of those communities that they were fully aware that the provincial contributions for disaster assistance were on the table.

Mr. Murray: Mr. Speaker, I am delighted to hear in the Chamber about the wonderful roles I have played in the province; however, I think that what we are really talking about here is we are talking about a serious issue which I know the other side has a difficulty with. The fact is that many farmers in the southwest are beginning to lose hope that they will ever see appropriate assistance for devastating effects in the weather of 1999.

The Premier promised—you should pay attention to this—in 1999 that he would have a better relationship in Ottawa with regard to agriculture, but that has not translated into any real dollars for our Manitoba farmers. In fact we have less, not more. His minister signed a safety net program that guarantees a smaller percentage, not a bigger one.

Given the statements from Mr. Harvard, will the Premier be approaching the federal government to attempt to put a cost-shared program together to assist the farmers of the southwest?

* (10:10)

Mr. Doer: Mr. Speaker, we did negotiate a \$100-million income support package with the federal government. Again, can we get a little—*[interjection]* You know, many members talked all the way through the Lieutenant-Governor's Speech from the Throne. Perhaps they could get a little control in this House.

Mr. Speaker: Order, please.

Mr. Doer: As I was saying, we negotiated a \$100-million income support program which was targeted at grain and oilseed producers. That was the right targeting, given the fact that the livestock industry in Manitoba has had about a 24% increase in income in the last period of time, probably an unprecedented increase. *[interjection]* Mr. Speaker, if they want to ask the questions, can they please allow us the courtesy of answering the questions in the Chamber?

We also took the inadequate Crop Insurance Program, which was left to us by members opposite, and, rather than having ad hoc emergency support programs as we saw in the pre-'99 period, we have negotiated an expansion for crops to deal not only with speciality crops but also to deal with unseeded acres due to moisture, excessive moisture.

Mr. Speaker, if that was in place prior to the '99 flooding, we would have had another \$50 an acre or so on top of the one-time-only provincial program. Again, we are looking at things not on an ad hoc basis like members opposite but in a long-term, comprehensive way.

Thirdly, Mr. Speaker, on the issue of disaster assistance, the last meeting I attended at Melita, and members opposite will know that, the community confirmed—*[interjection]* I will answer that when they are quiet. Thank you.

Mr. Murray: Well, it is wonderful to hear that there are some nice words again, Mr. Speaker, but again no plan.

It seems to me that what Manitoba farmers, particularly in southwestern Manitoba, are looking for is something that is targeted towards

them, not a whitewashed approach that enables the First Minister to stand up and say: Gee, we are really looking after this problem.

It seems that neither the federal government nor the provincial government is serious about any real help for our farmers. They talk about it, but no one seems to do anything about it. The reality is that neither level of government wants to do something.

I ask the Premier why he will not follow the example of the Progressive Conservative Party and support our farmers, specifically in the southwest.

Mr. Doer: Mr. Speaker, we would have followed the example of the Progressive Conservative Party and we would have followed the example of the member opposite. When he was the communications director, he chose to keep silent and secret the report dealing with the damages in southwestern Manitoba. When he had a chance to be honest with the people of southwest Manitoba, he chose to cover it up.

* (10:15)

Point of Order

Mr. Leonard Derkach (Russell): Mr. Speaker, on a point of order, this same issue was one that the Premier accused me of withholding prior to the last election. In my matter of privilege, it was acknowledged that indeed the Premier was mistaken. As a matter of fact, he acknowledged to me that he was mistaken, and now he brings that position to this House again.

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

Hon. Gord Mackintosh (Government House Leader): On the same point of order. Mr. Speaker, first of all, with regard to the matter raised, is the member taking the view that the members opposite did not nix a planned announcement about that report?

Second, and perhaps the member might want to speak to that, this is a dispute on the facts. It is not a point of order.

Mr. Speaker: Order. On the point of order raised by the honourable Member for Russell, he does not have a point of order. It is a dispute over the facts.

* * *

Mr. Doer: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Again, rather than having ad hoc programs dealing with crop insurance, no plan, we have a long-term Crop Insurance Program now that covers excessive moisture, a long-term plan that covers \$50 an acre for excessive moisture with the premiums paid for by the Government through the Department of Agriculture in the last announcement we made. We further have an announcement of reductions in crop insurance premiums that members opposite are going to vote against with their vote on the Speech from the Throne.

Point No. 2, "words," Mr. Speaker, a \$100-million program targeted particularly to grain and oilseed producers is not words, it is financial support that required us to find \$40 million additional money.

Thirdly, Mr. Speaker, we believe the people of southwest Manitoba were definitely prejudiced against with the decision of the federal Cabinet minister, not chatter from members of Parliament, but rather the federal Cabinet minister not once, not twice, but three times said no to a 90-10 program, said no to a 50-50 program, said no in a parliamentary committee. At every occasion, the provincial government's money is on the table for the people of southwest Manitoba.

We believe the people in Québec with the ice storm, the people of Ontario in the ice storm, the people of the Red River Valley with the flooding and the people of southwestern Manitoba should be treated equally, but equally for us is not to have a 100% provincial-funded disaster assistance program. We need a national disaster assistance program. Any member opposite who is claiming that they are so-called tax-and-spend friendly cannot be out spending ridiculously on disaster assistance programs. When it should be a national program, you have to have a national partner.

Agricultural Income Disaster Assistance Funding Delays

Mr. Jack Penner (Emerson): Mr. Speaker, I think the comments that we just heard from the Premier demonstrate clearly that this Government has no plan or no vision of the future for agriculture in this province.

For months now I have received dozens of calls from farmers who are encountering nothing but problems with the AIDA program. Farmers have spent thousands of dollars in accounting fees to ensure that the applications that they were putting forward were correct, yet most of the farmers today have received no response during the last months from the minister or from the AIDA program.

Can the Minister of Agriculture tell this House what direction she has personally given to the AIDA administration to ensure that there be immediate action taken to put money in the hands of the farmers that need it desperately before they are in fact called into accountability by the banks?

Hon. Rosann Wowchuk (Minister of Agriculture and Food): Mr. Speaker, I thank the member from the Opposition for finally raising this very important issue in the House here. The member does raise an issue that is on the minds of many producers, but I have to say for the member to say that there has not been a response from my office is an absolute untruth. We have been dealing with the AIDA issue, and I want to tell the member—

* (10:20)

Point of Order

Mr. Marcel Laurendeau (Opposition House Leader): Mr. Speaker, I wonder if you might bring to the attention of the minister that untruths should not be brought forward, as you recommended to myself the other day and I had to retract that same statement.

Mr. Speaker: On the point of order raised by the honourable Official Opposition House Leader, he does have a point of order. I would

ask the honourable Minister of Agriculture and Food to withdraw the words "absolute untruth."

Ms. Wowchuk: I will withdraw the word "untruth," Mr. Speaker, but I will tell you that the member is factually incorrect in his comments.

Point of Order

Mr. Marcel Laurendeau (Opposition House Leader): On a new point of order, let it not be said that one should be clarifying a withdrawal. When one withdraws their statement, they should make it clearly and take their seat, and it should be unqualified.

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

Hon. Gord Mackintosh (Government House Leader): I did hear from the honourable minister an unqualified withdrawal.

Mr. Speaker: On the point of order raised by the honourable Official Opposition House Leader, a withdrawal should be unequivocal. I would ask the honourable Minister of Agriculture and Food to unequivocally withdraw the word "untruth."

Ms. Wowchuk: Mr. Speaker, I unequivocally withdraw the word "untruth."

Mr. Speaker: I thank the honourable minister for the withdrawal.

* * *

Ms. Wowchuk: If I can continue with my answer, I would like to tell the member opposite that the comments he has put on the record are factually incorrect because in fact, although we have received many calls on the AIDA program, we have been addressing those issues and returning all calls. I can assure the member that my office has been returning all calls.

I can also tell the member, despite his press release that we are not doing anything, I wrote to the federal Minister of Agriculture early in November to express our concern with the way the AIDA funds were flowing. I have also taken

steps with my counterparts to look at whether we can find a better way to administer AIDA rather than have the federal government administer it because it is a very lengthy and very expensive process that we have in place right now.

Mr. Jack Penner: It is encouraging to hear that the minister has at least written a letter to Ottawa. I would like to ask the minister whether she can tell farmers when they can reasonably expect to have their AIDA applications processed. Can you give us some timelines?

Ms. Wowchuk: Mr. Speaker, not only have I written a letter to the federal Minister of Agriculture, I also spoke to him just a few days after the federal election asking that we have a meeting of ministers very quickly to discuss this very important issue because in fact the numbers that we are receiving from AIDA are very disturbing. In fact the payments are going out very slowly. The AIDA administration tells us that some farmers may not have their 1999 money until late into 2001, a very serious situation that I want to assure the member we are addressing.

Mr. Jack Penner: The fact of the matter is that most farmers are calling the AIDA program a disaster in itself.

Point of Order

Hon. Gord Mackintosh (Government House Leader): I reluctantly get up. We just got back after a break, but I just want to point out *Beauchesne's* 409(2): A supplementary question should need no preamble. I wonder if you could remind the honourable member of that requirement in Question Period.

Mr. Speaker: On the point of order raised by the honourable Government House Leader, he does have a point of order. *Beauchesne's* Citation 409(2) advises that a supplementary question should not require a preamble.

* * *

Mr. Speaker: I would ask the honourable Member for Emerson to please put his question.

Mr. Jack Penner: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would like to ask the minister, then, how much money the minister has spent on administration and whether it is true that 40 percent of the money that was allocated to AIDA will in fact go towards administration, and will she now assure this House that the farmers will be assured of in fact obtaining the amount of money that was actually allocated for assistance to farmers instead of paying 40 percent of it to administration?

* (10:25)

Ms. Wowchuk: Mr. Speaker, I just confirmed to the member that we are very frustrated with the way the applications are being processed. We are very frustrated with the high price tag on this processing and the length of time it is taking. That is why I have raised it with the federal Minister of Agriculture and that is why we are looking at whether we can administer the program through the Province rather than the federal government. But I would remind the member that it was his Government that negotiated the first AIDA and agreed to have the federal government negotiate the program. We are trying to fix that problem.

Minister of Conservation Meeting Requests

Mr. Harold Gilleshammer (Minnedosa): Mr. Speaker, during the recent AMM meeting held here in Winnipeg, many reeves and councils expressed an interest in meeting with the Minister of Conservation and in fact were promised from the stage of the bearpit session the reeve and council of the R.M. of Shellmouth would have a meeting immediately after the bearpit, then it was later that day and then it was next week.

This meeting did not take place after the bearpit; it did not take place later that day and in fact it did not take place this week. I would ask the Minister of Conservation why he is avoiding meeting with municipalities who have very important issues in conservation and natural resources. Many, many municipalities are expressing that same concern that he has refused to meet with them.

Hon. Oscar Lathlin (Minister of Conservation): Mr. Speaker, I do not accept the member's statement that I have refused to meet with municipalities. Indeed I have attended many meetings. I have even gone out to tour communities myself because when these people come in to talk about their issues, I want to make sure that I am familiar with what they are talking about. So on several occasions I have actually gone out to the communities and toured the communities myself. In addition to that, I have hosted many, many meetings with municipalities. I have met with the executive of AMM on at least three or four occasions in my office. So, contrary to the member's statement, I am not refusing to meet with the municipalities nor with any constituent in Manitoba.

Mr. Gilleshammer: Mr. Speaker, these municipalities are indicating the inability of the minister to meet with them. I would ask him why he has not met with the reeve and council of the R.M. of Shellmouth-Boulton. He had promised to meet with them. That meeting did not take place last week. It has not taken place this week. This is just an example of many municipalities who are expressing the same thoughts to us.

Mr. Lathlin: Mr. Speaker, indeed, in one of my tours, I have arranged meetings with municipalities, including the municipality that he is talking about, but I cannot come back to my office and rearrange my other commitments. The meeting is being arranged right now by my office, and I will be meeting with that particular municipality in due course.

Mr. Gilleshammer: Mr. Speaker, his commitment to the Reeve of Shellmouth-Boulton was unequivocal that he would meet with them that day after the bearpit, that he would meet with them later that day and then that he would meet with them this week. That meeting has not taken place. Can the minister explain that?

Mr. Lathlin: As a matter of fact, before I left the meeting, I did indicate to the people that the member is referring to that they contact my office and that a meeting date would be arranged.

* (10:30)

**Minister of Conservation
Cabinet Committees—Meeting Attendance**

Mr. Glen Cummings (Ste. Rose): My question is to the Premier. He indicated at the AMM conference that his ministers should be expected to be available for meetings and that they would attend at meetings. I would like to know if he also applies the same standard to senior committees of Cabinet.

Hon. Gary Doer (Premier): Mr. Speaker, the AMM convention, I believe at the accountability session or the bearpit session every single member of Cabinet was there, ready, willing and able to answer all the questions from the municipalities. An unprecedented number of ministers were there, albeit it was a smaller Cabinet than in the past. There were only 15 of us, unlike the Tories who talk about tax and spending but had a Cabinet much larger than ours.

I also want to point out, Mr. Speaker, that that very same afternoon the Minister of Conservation (Mr. Lathlin) and myself and the Minister responsible for Intergovernmental Affairs (Ms. Friesen) and the Minister responsible for Emergency Measures (Mr. Ashton) had a lengthy meeting with all the municipalities of southeastern Manitoba, in fact, dealing with the flooding and the culverts and that situation. We were informed by the members of southeast Manitoba it was the first time ever many of them had met with the Premier about issues of flooding.

Mr. Cummings: Mr. Speaker, the Premier chose not to answer the question when I asked him if he applied the same standard to senior committees of Cabinet.

Treasury Board, Mr. Speaker, is a senior committee. They set policy. They set Budget. They make decisions that are critical to the future of the people of this province. Does he consider it acceptable for the vice-chair of Treasury Board to miss more than 80 percent of his meetings?

Mr. Doer: I can assure the members opposite—in all the work we did moving into the Budget of last year, including the massive amount of reorganization that had to take place in his own department to reorganize two departments of government and two deputy ministers of government into one administrative structure—Mr. Speaker, the issue is, in Treasury Board, the effective use of taxpayers' money.

The member has demonstrated and worked very hard to take two departments, the Department of Natural Resources, the Department of Environment, and to work with the municipalities, which, of course, that is also something members opposite want. There is no question that through the Budget, the reduced taxes, increased investment in education, increased investment in health care, the minister has demonstrated beyond any member opposite that he is able to manage a department and combine a department. Members opposite needed two deputy ministers where this minister needed one.

**Minister of Conservation
Removal Request**

Mr. Glen Cummings (Ste. Rose): Again my question is to the Premier, and it speaks to his ability to direct his ministers and provide leadership in his Government. He chose not to answer the question, but he said perhaps this minister is overworked, I believe is what he said.

Is he overworked or is he not doing his job? Will he consider removing this minister from Cabinet?

Hon. Gary Doer (Premier): Mr. Speaker, just the other day we received a letter from the federal Minister of Environment describing the process that was going ahead in southeast Manitoba with the boreal forest as one of the most extensive and positive processes in Canada.

Mr. Speaker, members opposite wanted to expand the cut area for a proponent without understanding how much fibre was in the existing cut area. This member was intelligent enough, unlike members opposite, to look at the cut area—

Mr. Speaker: Order. The honourable Official Opposition House Leader, on a point of order.

* * *

Point of Order

Mr. Marcel Laurendeau (Opposition House Leader): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker, I regret to have to rise, seeing that we do have Premier's latitude for answering questions, but *Beauchesne's* 417: "Answers to questions should be as brief as possible, deal with the matter raised . . ."

Mr. Speaker, I can understand the latitude there, but provoking debate and not answering the question is another thing. We only wish that the First Minister could answer the question being put forward.

Mr. Speaker: The Honourable First Minister, on the same point of order.

Mr. Doer: Mr. Speaker, on the same point of order, the question was—and maybe the member opposite was not listening to the question of his own member. The question was dealing with the status of the minister on his whole—*[interjection]*

The question perhaps that members opposite did not hear was dealing with the total status of the Minister of Conservation (Mr. Lathlin). Surely to goodness, Mr. Speaker, therefore, the answer to that question dealing with the total performance of a minister, including the total performance to take two Tory departments and combine them into one new and futuristic department, is truly in order.

Mr. Speaker: The honourable Member for Ste. Rose, on the same point of order.

Mr. Cummings: On the same point of order, Mr. Speaker, the Premier, in answering the question, ignored the question. The question, if he wants it repeated, has to do with his management of government and whether or not his minister is performing his duties adequately.

Mr. Speaker: On the point of order raised by the honourable Opposition House Leader, the Manitoba practice has been leaders' latitude, and I will follow that unless I am directed by both House leaders.

Mr. Doer: As I was saying, Mr. Speaker, the process in the boreal forest in Manitoba, the old process, was to take that forest based on a proponent's request and extend the amount of allowable cut area in the boreal forest without analyzing the existing fibre in the cut area.

Mr. Speaker, this was one of the first decisions that this minister had to make. One of the first decisions this minister had to make was can we analyze how much fibre is in the existing boreal forest cut area to have—*[interjection]* Well, I know members opposite do not believe in controlling or ensuring that we are dealing with the management of our forest. A proponent puts a request in and they just approve it, but this is a different government with a different approach, and we are going to make sure that our—

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Speaker: Order. I would just like to advise all honourable members that according to *Beauchesne's* Citation 410(4): "In the view of the watching public, decorum is important."

Also, according to *Beauchesne's* Citation 410(3): "Time is scarce."

Honourable members, we are losing time, and I would kindly ask the co-operation of all honourable members.

Mr. Doer: I mentioned the analysis of the existing fibre and the existing cut area. I think we will find when the analysis is completed that the minister made the right decision not to extend the cut area because the existing forest resource had more fibre than what the former members appreciated. Therefore we could have more benefit for all Manitobans without jeopardizing the integrity of this wonderful boreal resource that we have and share and steward in government.

Secondly, Mr. Speaker, the Assiniboine River had been approved for extraction of water and treatment of water for years. The nutrient level in the Assiniboine River is a concern to us. This minister has initiated an Assiniboine River

examination to ensure that a nutrient level—and it affects the Shellmouth Dam; they are connected—to ensure that we are looking at the big picture on the Assiniboine River instead of, like members opposite, just putting "approved" on any proposal that comes forward. That is why we have a better Minister of Conservation.

* (10:40)

Mr. Speaker: Order. The honourable Official Opposition House Leader, on a point of order.

Point of Order

Mr. Marcel Laurendeau (Opposition House Leader): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. You are quite correct on *Beauchesne's* 410(3). The time in Question Period is important to us, and it is important that we get answers to our questions. It is not time for this Premier to stand up and make ministerial statements. This is not the time for him to be putting forward his views for the Throne Speech. This is the time for Question Period. We are well allocated over the three minutes now that this First Minister has been bringing forward his views on the boreal forest.

That is not where we are going, and we would like an opportunity to put forward questions and get some answers.

Mr. Speaker: The honourable First Minister, on the same point of order.

Mr. Doer: Mr. Speaker, on the same point of order. The members opposite asked a general question about the status of the minister in the portfolio, and I am answering where he has improved the situation dealing with the combination of departments, where he has improved Manitoba's situation with the boreal forest, where he is now improving an analysis of the Assiniboine River. Those are totally specific to the questions raised and absolutely in order.

Mr. Speaker: The honourable Member for Ste. Rose, on the same point of order.

Mr. Cummings: Mr. Speaker, the Premier is avoiding answering the question. Now he is trying to burn up Question Period because he does not want to hear the next question. Call him to order, please.

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

Hon. Gord Mackintosh (Government House Leader): On the same point of order, Mr. Speaker. There is a practice, a recognized practice, a very live one of leaders' latitude in this House. The Leader of the Opposition—

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Mr. Mackintosh: Mr. Speaker, in this House, from time to time, there are certainly calls from members' seats, people feel strongly about issues. What we are hearing today is a continuation of what began in an unprecedented way on the first day during the Address from His Honour and that is a lack, obviously, of cohesion and leadership opposite. This is no new era on the other side. It is regrettable.

Specifically to the point of order. *Beauchesne's* clearly says that a member may put a question but has no right to insist on a particular answer. I refer to *Beauchesne's* 416. But, Mr. Speaker, members opposite cannot enjoy leaders' latitude and not make sure and ensure that that right is extended to the leader of the Government. That is the practice in this House.

Mr. Speaker: On the point of order raised by the honourable Official Opposition House Leader, Manitoba practice is to allow leaders latitude. I would ask the co-operation of both leaders to sort of limit their time spent asking questions and answering questions because we only have 40 minutes for Question Period and time is scarce. The more questions and answers we can get, I think the viewing public would appreciate it.

* * *

Mr. Speaker: The honourable Member for Ste. Rose, with a new question.

**Minister of Conservation
Cabinet Committees—Meeting Attendance**

Mr. Glen Cummings (Ste. Rose): On a new question. Mr. Speaker, the Premier is indicating that the Minister of Conservation (Mr. Lathlin) was out doing forestry work when he was not attending at his highly important committee meetings.

My question to the Premier is: Does he impose a standard of attendance on his Cabinet? He brags about a small Cabinet. Perhaps it speaks to his management if he cannot direct his Cabinet so that they get the work done properly.

Hon. Gary Doer (Premier): Mr. Speaker, I attended a number of meetings that the Minister of Conservation was involved in on Budget preparations last year moving into the 2000 budget year. Not only was the Minister of Conservation involved in the Budget process in terms of the priorities of government, he was part of a Budget that reduced the dependency from the Fiscal Stabilization Fund from \$185 million under the former government down to \$90 million and hopefully less as we proceed. He was part of a government that came in with a tax reduction of \$102 million. He was part of an investment in health care that is more sustainable than some of the unbudgeted situations we have seen from members opposite.

He was part of an education strategy that reduced tuition fees for Manitoba students by 10 percent. We have a 10% increase in enrolment in first-year university right now. He also demonstrated his leadership by being part and leading the former Department of Environment and the former Department of Natural Resources to be combined into one department. He was spending a tremendous amount of time going from two personnel administrations to one, going from two accounting functions to one, going from two policy branches to one, going from two deputy ministers under the Tories to one deputy minister. You know Treasury Board includes being more cost effective. This minister has shown he can lead two departments as

opposed to requiring two ministers in the past under the Tories.

Mr. Cummings: Mr. Speaker, The Premier speaks to the management of those departments. Can he assure us then that the amalgamation is now complete? Perhaps he would like to address the real question.

Secondly, my question is to the Premier. Does he consider 80% attendance at major committees acceptable?

Mr. Doer: The members opposite will know that there is no such thing as ever completing work on behalf of the people in a department like Conservation or Natural Resources. For example, if we can save more money on the bureaucrats that were in the senior positions of the two departments that members opposite were responsible for and therefore have more resources available for the cutbacks made by members opposite, confirmed by the Member for Emerson (Mr. Jack Penner), on the drainage situation in Manitoba—less bureaucrats, more support for drainage. They are the priorities of Manitobans. The Tories better get with it.

Mr. Cummings: Mr. Speaker, the question to the Premier is simple. Is 80% absence at major Treasury Board bench committee meetings acceptable to his administration or is he going to do something about it?

Hon. Greg Selinger (Minister of Finance): I would like to thank the member for his continuing interest in Treasury Board. It is indeed one of the more important subcommittees of Cabinet. On that committee we have a good diversity of representation from the North, from the rural areas, across many ministries, and the contributions that the members make to that board help us to make the balanced decisions that we bring forward to this Legislature.

**United General Contracting
Certificate of Performance**

Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights): For the last two days I have asked the Minister of Conservation about the Government's procurement policies which have been late. The minister has indicated that the contractor who produced

the contract for the Knapp Dam was indeed qualified, yet I was told yesterday by Mr. John Hull [*phonetic*] for the Ontario Ready-Mixed Concrete Association that United general contracting of Thunder Bay, which produced the concrete and built the dam, did not even have the Ontario certification through the Ontario Ready-Mixed Concrete Association.

Will the minister today acknowledge that United general contracting does not have either the Ontario or the Manitoba certification for his plant and facilities?

Hon. Oscar Lathlin (Minister of Conservation): I thank the member for the question. Again, my information tells me that the mechanical equipment and the building components were purchased through Government Services, the material procurement policy '99-2000. A contract was awarded in June of 2000 to the lowest bidder under existing guidelines. Therefore the new proposed procurement guidelines that we are working on, currently being examined by the Manitoba round table, would not have applied to that particular project when the contract was awarded.

Incidentally, Mr. Speaker, this project was not a new project when I became Conservation Minister in November of last year. The project indeed had been moved along by the previous government, so when I came along we awarded the contract ourselves.

* (10:50)

Mr. Gerrard: Mr. Speaker, the specifications for the tender on the contract showed that there needed to be certification of the plant and equipment used.

I ask the minister: What certification did United general contracting have if it did not have either the Manitoba or the Ontario certification?

Mr. Lathlin: Once again, I would like to advise the member that the licence for the manufacture of concrete, as you referenced yesterday, is not required; however a Canadian Standards Association certification is desirable. The consultant called for Canadian Standards certification in the contract specifications for that

project in The Pas, however there may not be a CSA certified concrete plant at The Pas, but I am also advised further that the structure is not a problem. There have been some minor problems. problems that can be easily corrected.

Mr. Gerrard: My follow-up question for the Minister of Conservation: This certificate, which I table—there was indeed a certified plant in The Pas ready to produce this. I would ask the minister to take back his remarks and re-examine this issue. Thank you.

Mr. Lathlin: Mr. Speaker, the concrete companies that I am aware of currently operating in The Pas, there are two of them, and, yes, I understand one of them might be certified. I was just not 100% certain.

The Wildlife Act Amendments—Consultations

Mr. Larry Maguire (Arthur-Virden): Mr. Speaker, on April 26 the Minister of Conservation promised to consult on changes to The Wildlife Act. He cancelled the meetings after it became clear that Manitobans' concerns were not in sync with his agenda. Recently this Government held public consultations, after the fact, on the regulatory changes that will accompany the revised Wildlife Act.

Mr. Speaker, it is unfortunate that the Treasury Board does not need the Minister of Conservation's attendance, but could the Minister of Conservation explain to this House why he would not honour his original commitment to consult with Manitobans before these Wildlife Act changes took place?

Hon. Oscar Lathlin (Minister of Conservation): Mr. Speaker, again I thank the member for the question. I think the member is aware that during the last provincial elections all three parties campaigned on a commitment to ban panned hunting. The previous leader of the Conservative Party and I know the leader of the Liberal Party campaigned to ban panned hunting. So, after we were sworn into office, we proceeded to fulfil our election commitment.

Mr. Maguire: Well, Mr. Speaker, could the Minister of Conservation explain why he did not

contact a member of the elk producers association, a very important part of the whole issue of the changes to The Wildlife Act, why he did not contact that member of the elk producers association who contacted his office four times trying to seek clarification of this legislation?

Mr. Lathlin: Mr. Speaker, before the bill was passed last summer, the public had the opportunity to raise their concerns regarding the legislation during the public hearing process. We did hear from a number of people who raised some very important points. During the hearing process, I made a commitment to the people that we would in fact be coming around to consult as to the development of the regulation, and that is what we are doing right now.

Mr. Maguire: Mr. Speaker, could the Minister of Conservation just explain why the panel that conducted these after-the-fact public consultations said that they have received no instructions as to a date when the regulatory changes are to be completed?

Mr. Lathlin: Mr. Speaker, the consultation meetings are over. I am awaiting the report of the chairperson. I will be reviewing the results of those hearings, consultation meetings, after which we will be returning to those people to discuss the text of the regulation for further consultation.

Mr. Speaker: Time for Oral Questions has expired.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

Carberry Health Centre

Mr. Mervin Tweed (Turtle Mountain): Mr. Speaker, on Tuesday of this week I had the privilege of going to Carberry to take part in the official opening of their new health care facility. It was a great day for the people, and the people of the surrounding area, in the sense of the numbers that turned out and the support that was shown for this type of development in rural Manitoba.

In talking to many people in the community, I was made aware of the disappointment of the people of that area that the Minister of Health

(Mr. Chomiak) could not find the time or the energy to attend such a prestigious event. It showed up clearly in the comments they made to me and to the public that day. They were disappointed that a Minister of Health could not take the time and the effort to go out and visit one of his communities and see the development and the enthusiasm and the commitment of people in rural Manitoba to health care.

The large crowd was attended by the mayors and the reeves of the surrounding areas and all made personal comments.

The one thing I do want to acknowledge, Mr. Speaker, was the work of the former M.L.A. for that area, now the Member for Carman, Mr. Rocan, who worked very, very hard on behalf of the people of Carberry. I was fortunate to be a part of the official ceremonies, but certainly do not want to take any or all of the credit for the accomplishments of the Member for Carman.

It was a great day for rural Manitoba. It was a great day for health in Manitoba. Unfortunately, the Minister of Health chose not to participate in that type of event. Thank you.

The Old St. Vital BIZ

Ms. Nancy Allan (St. Vital): Mr. Speaker, it is an honour for me today to rise in the House to congratulate and recognize a committee and group of businesswomen and businesspeople in my community, the Old St. Vital BIZ.

On November 19, I attended the Old St. Vital BIZ' Tree Lighting Festival organized for the community of St. Vital and open to the general public. This event hosted for the community a historical display sponsored by the St. Vital Historical Society, a group of hard-working volunteers who are committed to preserving the history of a very unique area in my constituency.

There were free hot dogs and drinks for participants, a children's area, including face painting and balloons, musical entertainment, horse-drawn wagon rides, a singalong and the grand finale, the lighting of the tree recognizing

the start of the holiday season and symbolizing the true spirit of peace and goodwill.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank all of the hard work that the volunteers of the Old St. Vital BIZ put into organizing this community-wide event in St. Vital. I know that the St. Vital BIZ members are committed to participating in initiatives that nurture and foster healthy communities.

Leadership in Government

Mr. Glen Cummings (Ste. Rose): I would like to take my opportunity in making a statement to talk about leadership and direction in government. It seems to me that when parties take over government in a province, as the current government has just done, they have an opportunity to set an agenda and demonstrate some leadership and assign responsibilities within the parameters of managing government for the people of this province.

* (11:00)

It seems to me that what we have seen in the area of resources is where, with fairness, the Premier (Mr. Doer) has overloaded the plate of the responsible individuals because while he wants to brag about having reduced the number of ministers, he, in effect, has not been able to reduce the administrative and the policy and research and directors that are required to manage this vast side of the responsibility in our province.

When we have examples such as you just saw today in Question Period where the responsible minister is unable to deal face to face with people who are most affected by his policies, his programs, unable to deal with the reorganization that is required, unable to deal with the responsibilities that go with what I consider to be one of the most important committees in Government, that of Treasury Board—it sets the major policy direction. It sets the budgets for the departments. It deals with individual dollars that need to be tied up for specific programs, some of which may or may not go beyond budgetary planning. This is absolutely the engine room of Government, unless this Premier has a much different

arrangement that he has not shared with the public of Manitoba. It is time for this Premier to turn to his ministers and say: I think I made a mistake. I am going to have to reorganize.

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Habitat for Humanity—Brandon

Mr. Scott Smith (Brandon West): It is always nice to rise in the House and get a standing ovation from the members opposite. I realize that they always like to hear my comments—

Mr. Speaker: Order. It is very difficult to hear the honourable member. I would ask the co-operation of all honourable members.

Mr. Smith: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It is always great to get a standing ovation by the members opposite. I realize that they like to get my comments and hear my comments. It is especially great that they like to hear about the area that I come from in Brandon West and Brandon.

It is a privilege to rise here today and bring to the attention of the House some incredible members of my community, some members that put a great deal of time into the community, the members for Habitat for Humanity in Brandon.

Over the last number of months, under the leadership of Mr. Arnold Grambo in Brandon, the members from the Habitat for Humanity have been doing incredible work. They have had a lot of fund drives. Every time you go to the mall or you hit any event in the city of Brandon you see the same folks out there, Mr. Grambo continually acting on behalf of some of the working poor and the underprivileged in Brandon.

They have had a number of drives raising funds. They have built some small playhouses and some structures that they raffled off. They have made a great deal of money on their efforts, and they continue to build houses for low-income people in the city of Brandon. They have built five houses over the last six years for folks in Brandon, and they have an incredible project that they are working on right now. They are working on 28 lots with the partnership of the

City of Brandon to try to up their advantage for the underprivileged in Brandon. I would like to commend them on the great work that they do in the city of Brandon. They continue to work for all citizens of the community to create an environment in the city for some of the folks that are unfortunate in the community and giving them a hand up in their livelihoods.

It is great to bring attention to the positives that many of these folks do in our community, and I would just like to commend them on the great work that they do. Thanks, Mr. Speaker.

Dr. Chris Burnett

Mr. Larry Maguire (Arthur-Virden): Mr. Speaker, it pleases me to rise this afternoon to offer congratulations to Dr. Chris Burnett for receiving the Summit Award for the Customer Focused Physician of the Year 2000 at the Health Care Service Excellence Conference in Calgary. This award presented by Custom Learning Systems is the only one of its kind awarded in North America this year.

Doctor Burnett has a family practice in Boissevain. He is also the chief medical staff for the South Westman Regional Health Authority.

The Service Excellence Summit Awards celebrate exceptional customer service achievement in health care, especially service quality to patients and customers. The mission of the Summit Awards is to celebrate and showcase best practices in service excellence in the health care sector and to inspire world-class patient satisfaction.

Doctor Burnett was initially trained in the United Kingdom and worked in Zaire and Albania for the Baptist Missionary Society before coming to rural Manitoba to practise in 1997. He resides in Boissevain with his wife Mairi, who is also a physician, and their three sons.

I would like to congratulate Doctor Burnett on being the recipient of this award and for his contributions to health care in southwestern Manitoba. It is encouraging to see the dedication individuals such as Doctor Burnett have demonstrated toward their communities. We

look forward to having Doctor Burnett and his family with us for many years to come. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Committee Changes

Mr. Peter Dyck (Pembina): I move, seconded by the honourable Member for Tuxedo (Mrs. Stefanson), that the composition of the Standing Committee on Law Amendments be amended as follows: Kirkfield Park (Mr. Murray) for Fort Garry (Mrs. Smith); Morris (Mr. Pitura) for Emerson (Mr. Jack Penner); and Lac du Bonnet (Mr. Praznik) for Portage la Prairie (Mr. Faurshou).

Motion agreed to.

Mr. Dyck: One more. I move, seconded by the honourable Member for Emerson, that the composition of the Standing Committee on Industrial Relations be amended as follows: Turtle Mountain (Mr. Tweed) for Fort Garry (Mrs. Smith); and Tuxedo (Mrs. Stefanson) for Emerson (Mr. Jack Penner).

Motion agreed to.

Mr. Gregory Dewar (Selkirk): Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the Member for Wellington (Mr. Santos), that the composition of the Standing Committee on Industrial Relations be amended as follows: Lord Roberts (Ms. McGifford) for La Verendrye (Mr. Lemieux); Radisson (Ms. Cerilli) for Brandon West (Mr. Smith).

Motion agreed to.

Mr. Dewar : Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the Member for Wellington, that the composition of the Standing Committee on Law Amendments be amended as follows: Wolesey (Ms. Friesen) for Brandon East (Mr. Caldwell); Rupertsland (Mr. Robinson) for Fort Rouge (Mr. Sale); St. Johns (Mr. Mackintosh) for Transcona (Mr. Reid).

Motion agreed to.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

**THRONE SPEECH DEBATE
(Third Day of Debate)**

Mr. Speaker: On the proposed motion of the honourable Member for Dauphin-Roblin (Mr. Struthers) and the proposed motion of the Leader

of the Official Opposition (Mr. Murray) in amendment thereto, standing in the name of the honourable Member for Emerson who has eight minutes remaining.

Mr. Jack Penner (Emerson): Mr. Speaker, when one considers the events of this last week, some of the major conferences that have gone on, such as the Grazing School in Brandon which had some 420 registrants in it, the Seed Growers' annual meeting in Brandon over this last week and, indeed, the Poultry and Hog Conference and the dairy meeting—our milk producers' annual meeting is going on right now—one must reflect I think on the absolute significance of the livestock industry in this province and the vast changes that have been brought about by the changes in the Crow benefit and, indeed, changes made in the trade agreement.

The one outstanding issue that is constant in this whole debate on agriculture and the relevance of the importance of our grain and oilseed sector remains that the minister of this province has, in my view, not been very active in promoting the sustainability of the grain and oilseed industry in this province. I think, Mr. Speaker, that she should have been to Ottawa time and time and time again enforcing the view of most of the grain and oilseed producers in this province, that they indeed need to be treated equitably in the trade agreement. Therefore there should be a parity program developed immediately between the Province of Manitoba and Ottawa to ensure the protection of the grain producers that will indeed be the feeders of the livestock industry that will grow whether we like it or not in this province, unless the minister is holding back the report on the inquiry that she initiated this fall.

We were told that the Livestock Stewardship program report would be tabled with this Government by the end of October. Yet it is now the middle of December, and we have not yet seen hide nor hair of it. Speaking to members of the committee that toured the province, they tell me that they have been trying to get meetings with the Minister of Conservation (Mr. Lathlin). They have requested ministers four times, I understand, and they have yet to receive an

audience with the minister, so that they could, in fact, table the report.

Now, the reason I raise this is the importance of then initiating—if we cannot ensure the livestock industry that they will, in fact, have reasonable belief and reason to believe that they will be able to expand—

Point of Order

Mr. Speaker: Order. The honourable Minister of Agriculture and Food, on a point of order.

Hon. Rosann Wowchuk (Minister of Agriculture and Food): Mr. Speaker, the member in his comments just said that the Livestock Stewardship Initiative committee has requested a meeting with me four times and has been denied a meeting. That is factually incorrect, and I can assure him that when that report is complete, it will be available. It will not be held like reports that the previous government held; for example, the Rose report.

Mr. Speaker: Order. The honourable Member for Emerson, on the same point of order.

Mr. Jack Penner: On the same point of order, I think I made it very clear that the request had been made of the Minister of Conservation (Mr. Lathlin), and I would stand by that statement because that is the information that I have received. Unless somebody contradicts that from the committee, I would stand by that statement.

I think what this demonstrates, Mr. Speaker, is clearly the sensitivity around this whole area. That is the reason I raised it in my comments. I think this House will at some point in time have to deal with the matter of whether we do promote or encourage livestock production, because, if we do not, our whole agricultural industry will collapse, Sir.

Mr. Speaker: On the point of order raised by the honourable Minister of Agriculture and Food (Ms. Wowchuk), the honourable minister does not have a point of order. It is a dispute over the facts.

Point of Order

Mr. Larry Maguire (Arthur-Virden): On the point of order, Mr. Speaker, the honourable

Minister of Agriculture (Ms. Wowchuk) just referred to the Rose report as if it had been squelched by this Government. I just have to rise in the House because, for clarity of facts, Mr. Rose worked very, very hard on that whole project. I bumped into him many times when I was campaigning. The report was not done until after the election was called. It was clearly a government report. It was clearly not squelched by this Government. It was clearly in their hands. It was not an MLA report. Thank you.

Mr. Speaker: Prior to ruling on the point of order, I would just like to remind all honourable members the purpose of points of order. A point of order is to be used to draw to the Speaker's attention any departure from the rules or practices of the House or to raise concerns about unparliamentary language. A point of order should not be used to ask a question, to dispute the accuracy of facts, to clarify remarks which have been misquoted or misunderstood, or to move a motion, to raise a point of order on a point of order.

I would ask all honourable members to keep this in mind when raising points of order, and I would ask the co-operation of all honourable members.

The point of order raised by the honourable Member for Arthur-Virden is not a point of order. It is a dispute over the facts.

* * *

Mr. Speaker: The honourable Member for Emerson, to continue debate.

Mr. Jack Penner: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. We appreciate your counsel on this matter. However, I think it is important to realize that this Government has so far failed to initiate any kind of meaningful program that is directed at agriculture.

I was just informed this week as well that there were last week three beef herd disbursal sales at Grunthal. I am not sure whether that is related to the flooding that went on or is currently going on in southeast Manitoba or what the reasons for the disbursal sales are, but I

think it is an indication of the young people in agriculture getting out.

I think we addressed the whole issue of crop insurance. I asked this Minister of Agriculture (Ms. Wowchuk) during the Estimates debates last year in May whether she could table for us in this House the crop insurance policies of all the other provinces. I have received eight of the provinces. I have still yet to receive the report from Ontario or from Québec. I think there is a reason why the minister is hiding it, because we are very competitive in many areas with Ontario, in grains production, in corn production, in bean production, and indeed many of the pulse crops production, and yet I have not been able to assure myself of the comparative values that are established in that Crop Insurance Program. I find it very interesting that the minister is either hiding those two programs from us and not willing to share them with us or that we cannot get copies of the programs in Ontario.

Also, I find it interesting that the minister is now saying she will reduce crop insurance premiums. Do you know why she is going to reduce premiums? Because it is part of the act. The coverages will be reduced because of the reduction in commodity prices. So the coverage levels will be reduced and therefore the premiums will be reduced. Farmers will get a lot less coverage next year than they will this year. Nobody on that side of the House is trying to remedy it, Sir.

I think, Mr. Speaker, it is imperative that this Government, which has no interest in agriculture, demonstrates the involvement of farm producers and people who understand agriculture to help them develop policies and programs that will indeed facilitate the retention of our farm sector.

If we lose the grain and oilseed sector in this province, as we are in jeopardy of, then we will indeed be dependent on the importation of feed stuffs for our livestock industry because that is the only thing we are going to have left in this province, and if the minister thinks she is going to stop the change in the aroma in rural Manitoba by her Livestock Stewardship Initiative, she is wrong. The aroma in agriculture will change. It cannot but change because it was

directed and the process was set in motion by the Crow benefit changes, and Ottawa should be directly held responsible for it. Therefore, we need to go to Ottawa in a much more meaningful way and tell Ottawa that they need to put us at a parity level with programs until the trade war is over.

* (11:20)

Hon. Steve Ashton (Minister of Highways and Government Services): Mr. Speaker, I am very pleased to be able to speak again. I have spoken on a number of throne speeches in the past, but I am always honoured to be able to stand in this Legislature and particularly honoured to once again be able to speak out on behalf of my constituents, the people of the Thompson constituency, the eight communities of Thompson, Wabowden, Nelson House, Split Lake, York Landing, Ilford, Thicket Portage and Pikwitonei who have shown their confidence in me in allowing me the great honour to represent them in the Manitoba Legislature.

As much as I have had the opportunity to debate on a few throne speeches in the past, I know how much of a special opportunity it is, and I want to welcome the two new members of the Legislature, the Member for Kirkfield Park (Mr. Murray) and the Member for Tuxedo (Mrs. Stefanson) as well. I know it is not an easy transition. As much as the challenges of elections and getting elected are fairly significant, there is nothing quite like standing here for the first time in the Manitoba Legislature and actually giving a speech, putting your comments on the record and becoming part of this great process of parliamentary democracy. So I wish both of them good luck in their careers, and I say once again from some of the words that new members have put on the record, that indeed this is a great honour. Any of us here is really in a very lucky position.

I must admit and I address this to the new Leader of the Opposition (Mr. Murray), I am looking forward to this new style that he is planning on bringing in. I may just have mentioned at the AMM Convention that actually given his background with Domo Gas, I thought we were going to get two-litre bottles of Coke

and crystal glasses in the Legislature, perhaps bringing in some of his marketing sense but—

An Honourable Member: You did not get yours?

Mr. Ashton: He says I did not get mine, but I do think it will be quite interesting to watch the challenges that the new Leader of the Opposition will be facing, going not only into this Legislature as a member of the Legislature but as the Leader of the Opposition.

I want to remark, by the way, too, when I read the speech, the written text of the speech of the Leader of the Opposition—and I would not necessarily have mentioned this if the Leader of the Opposition had not given a fairly lengthy biographical exposé about his background in the past, and I appreciate that, particularly his role as a tour manager for a rock band. It struck me when I was listening to this about what the fundamental argument of the Leader of the Opposition really is, and I want to make this very clear, by the way, when I use this analogy because I am not suggesting that Blood, Sweat and Tears would ever have done this on any of their tours, but I do recall various incidents being reported of rock bands in the past that would go on tour and they would cause certain damage to hotel facilities, fairly significant damage.

I am not suggesting, again, that this has anything to do with any historical background with the Leader of the Opposition, but if you really think about what he is saying on issues like health care, just consider this for a moment. This is like that rock band that has trashed the hotel room and then phones up room service the next day and demands that it be cleaned up immediately.

Mr. Conrad Santos, Deputy Speaker, in the Chair

For 11 years the Conservatives were in power. I think they pretty well clearly trashed health care. For 11 years they trashed education. For 11 years many parts of this province were totally isolated from Government. And the main thing the Leader of the Opposition does is get up day after day and say you have not cleaned it up quickly enough. Well, I say to the member

opposite, I am using this as an analogy again, in the analogy of that rock band I would suggest that rock band, the PC rock band there that trashed the hotel rooms for 11 years should perhaps consider the damage it caused and consider its record for 11 years before it stands up in the House and lectures us on health care and education.

As I read the Leader of the Opposition's speech, and I suggest we want to get back into this in the House a bit more, I think it is important to have debate in this House that reflects some of the actual debate that took place in the House. I am not reading from a written text. What I plan on doing is referring to some of the comments in the debate. What really struck me as well about the view of the Conservative Party, one of the first things I said is that they want us to clean up the mess they created in 11 years and they are criticizing us for not doing it quickly enough.

The second thing that struck me, by the way, is how completely they have missed the message they got from the public of Manitoba. The first thing the Leader of the Opposition did in his campaign running for leadership of the party, the first thing he has really done when he was anointed, acclaimed in that position, he said: Well, our aim is to get back into Government in three years. That is a laudable goal. Political leaders, obviously they have to have goals and whatnot. But you know, I would have expected a Leader of the Opposition that had some sense of the last election would have said: Boy, we had a message. Boy did we get the message.

You think about this for a moment, by the way, because I read the speech from the Leader of the Opposition. I can talk about this with some new expertise. I have been Minister of Highways for over a year. He said that in the last election—what did he say? Did he say that the Conservative Party suffered a significant defeat? In fact our caucus elected more MLAs than Gary Filmon elected in any of his election pictures, the largest number of MLAs on the Government side since 1981. Now you read his speech and how did he describe the 1999 election? [*interjection*] Well, not as a setback. He said as a detour.

Now, this is where I can address this as Minister of Highways. There are times when we have to have a detour. If the road gets washed out, sometimes you need a detour. I might suggest that might be a better analogy, that the road was kind of washed out from under the Conservatives. Now, sometimes when you do work on a bridge you have to do a detour around that bridge. But I have news for the Leader of the Opposition. The decision of the people of Manitoba in 1999 was not a detour. What they voted for was a brand-new four-lane paved RTAC rated superhighway under the NDP.

So I say to the Leader of the Opposition good luck. I think you will need it. I do suggest one thing. If there is one thing I have learned in politics over the years it is that a little bit of humility goes a long way, particularly for a political party. I want to say this on the record, having gone through 1988. You know, in 1988 I do not think I got in the House, or any of our caucus that was here at the time, and said, well, that was a minor detour. We knew that.

The one thing about the democratic process, the people when they send you a message you either get it or you do not. We got the message in 1988. We rebuilt in 1990. We rebuilt in 1995, and I look at our caucus. I am proud of each and every one of the MLAs we have elected at various different times who were part of that rebuilding process. But, you know, we recognized in 1988 that we got a message from the public, and we rebuilt ourselves in the eyes of the public of Manitoba. We built that confidence.

I say to the members opposite that they should be very careful because I have noticed this over the years. Somewhere along the line Conservatives seem to have this idea that they have a divine right to govern in this province. When they are defeated—and I notice, by the way, what even scared me about the speech here, too, is—you want to talk about somebody else who got a message; it was Sterling Lyon, the only premier in this province to be defeated after one term. Now the Leader of the Opposition (Mr. Murray) described him in his speech as a great visionary. You know, I had a lot of respect for Sterling Lyon, but I am wondering—and, by the way, he sort of pulled Sterling Lyon out. He

did not call Gary Filmon a great visionary or Duff Roblin. He called Sterling Lyon a visionary.

I have news for members opposite, and that is in this province we have a thriving system in which people do have choices. I want to remind them that in 1969, 1973, 1981, 1986, and in 1999, the people of Manitoba chose the New Democratic Party. It is not a historical accident. It is because we expressed their aspirations, and in 1999 when we won the massive support that we did it was because we as a party reflected the vision and the aspirations of Manitobans. I want to go one step further because they just do not get it.

*(11:30)

By the way, I was at the AMM, and I had the opportunity to speak right after the Leader of the Opposition. What struck me—and it is kind of ironic in here—the Leader of the Opposition, of all people, talks about Perimeteritis. What surprised me is he got up and he talked about how it is important to speak for all Manitobans. Now what did that include? Well, urban, he referenced; rural, he referenced.

There is about three quarters of the province he did not make a single reference to, not one mention to northern Manitoba. Read his speech in the Manitoba Legislature again. I can tell the Leader of the Opposition that you can have Perimeteritis in this province, too. You can also have other forms of itis, too, and in this case if it is north of 53 it is the same kind of lack of vision. I note for the record again that we are the only party, the only party in the last 30 years in this province that has consistently represented urban Manitoba, rural Manitoba, and northern Manitoba, the entire province.

I want to say to members opposite, because I am prepared to take on once again the other smug assumption of that party, that they somehow speak for rural Manitoba. It is right in this speech here again, by the way. Let us deal with that, because I thought if there was ever an example of the lip service that the Conservative Party pays to rural Manitoba, it is on the equalization of hydro rates. Now I know a little bit about this. I tell you, I have been fighting for

this for 15 years as a member of the Legislature. I remember raising it with Don Orchard when he was minister. He was here yesterday visiting us. They actually committed to equalizing hydro rates. I believe it was in 1994, going into the '95 election. Now did they do that? Not even close. We got in in 1999 and in this Throne Speech we announced we are going to correct a historic injustice, I believe, in terms of hydro rates. I tell you, we are equalizing hydro rates, and that includes everybody in rural Manitoba they paid lip service to for decades. I am advised by members on my side they will be effectively voting against that if they vote against the Throne Speech.

Let us talk about the record in rural Manitoba as well because let us deal with it. I notice they talked about rural infrastructure. I can tell you, by the way, with the federal government we have worked hard. We have pressured them on issues related to national highways, et cetera. You know what is interesting is that, for the first time now going back for at least five years, we are going to see money from the federal government into Manitoba because of the work of our Government working with our colleagues and provinces, the grain roads program.

Not only that—and I mention this on the record—we are partnering with AMM, and 50 percent of those funds will go to the rural municipalities. I say to members opposite you paid lip service on this issue for long enough. We have delivered to rural Manitoba.

I just say, by the way, to members opposite—I should not really give you this advice because keep staying smug—and I give you some more examples of lip service. I look to my colleague, the Minister of Consumer and Corporate Affairs (Mr. Lemieux), his constituents, how many times were they promised the twinning of 59? Once? Twice? Three times? Do you know what? Election time rolls around, the announcement comes up, they even put a sign up. We got elected. We put it in the Budget. We have started construction. We are going to finish construction. We have started to do what the people in the Minister of Consumer and Corporate Affairs' constituency pushed for. The Conservative government, they had a

Conservative MLA there, they could not do it. We are delivering for that part of rural Manitoba again.

I could give other examples: 433. I was approached early on by the reeve of Lac du Bonnet who said, "There are real problems with 433." That was interesting because 433 was in the former Minister of Highways' constituency. She said, "Well, we got a promise or a commitment." I said, "What kind of promise? I have got the Highways capital program here. It is not in the Budget. Do you know what I undertook? I want to give credit by the way to Mike Hameluck who ran for active office in there and still continues to raise issues on that. He asked me to take a look at it. He said, "You know, the reeve is right, and I want to give the reeve credit. I went out and I looked at it. It was unacceptable." We added it to the capital program this year, and we have started construction. We will have it finished this spring. We delivered for rural Manitoba.

I am glad that the member representing the area is here as well because the Conservatives like to get up with their hyperbole. I think the Member for Emerson (Mr. Penner) got up and said how we had cancelled all the projects in southern Manitoba. Well, what nonsense. Not only is that not true, I asked members that talked to the member who represents Winkler because I went out and we announced a project that will be funded next year on the Winkler main street. Once again we are delivering to rural Manitoba including all parts of this province. I say that is something that the previous government never did.

Let us go on to agriculture. First of all, I would like to put on the record, by the way, I find it rather strange that the Leader of the Opposition (Mr. Murray) promised a new approach on disasters. I thought it would apply to that at least a new approach, a co-operative approach. We saw again today that that was really meaningless rhetoric on his part because he has listened to his colleagues in the caucus who have taken the approach, which is a unique departure for this province, by the way, when it comes to disaster. We used to speak with one voice with Ottawa. When I was in Opposition we supported the efforts of the Premier, and we

supported the efforts to go down to Ottawa each and every time. But, you know, this time around—talk about lip service again—their resolution references the '99 disaster, even the 2000 disaster was put in place.

When the Member for Emerson (Mr. Jack Penner) quoted a phone-in radio show with Rick Borotsik and John Harvard—I was talking about the position of the federal government—I will put this on the record. First of all, John Harvard is not part of the Cabinet. He was not part of the meeting that we have had with three ministers where we were told very clearly no to 90-10 and no to 50-50. As for Rick Borotsik, Rick is about as far away as you can get from the Cabinet and the federal House of Commons. He was not at the meetings where the federal government said what they said on the record. Art Eggleton who said on the record—I mean, Rick Borotsik should know; he asked the question. The response was, from the federal government, no to 90-10, no to 50-50.

But we have said, and our Premier (Mr. Doer) has said again, once again, we are not paying the lip service that Conservatives have paid. When they appoint a new minister of disaster assistance we will raise it again because the Province of Manitoba has put in \$70 million, \$20 million stand alone. It has got its share of the \$14 million in its disaster financial assistance program. We are there at the table. We have taken an approach of supporting our efforts jointly as a province. We did in opposition. I call on the members opposite to stop playing those kinds of political games. Support rural Manitoba, but take a united stance with the federal government. That is the tradition in this Province.

So, Mr. Deputy Speaker, once again I get back to the question of paying lip service. You know what really offended me in the speech were some of the comments in here from the Leader of the Opposition, who completely ignored northern Manitoba, but there is some reference about Aboriginal people, even about Aboriginal casinos.

Next there were comments about working people. This was the one that really struck. On behalf of the Aboriginal communities in

Manitoba, we will hold this Government accountable to ensure real jobs and real opportunities to reach the people who need it most.

I want to give you an example of how strong their commitment really was. Well, not vote rigging, but we can get into that though.

In 1992 they signed a Northern Flood Agreement with South Indian Lake, and as the member that represents that constituency, they signed it eight years later. With an agreement that had a ten-year time frame, they had done nothing. Absolutely nothing. You know what we did? The Member for Flin Flon (Mr. Jennissen) raised this in the first week or two we were in office. We got the plan in place and we announced under the Northern Flood Agreement that we will be constructing all-weather road access into South Indian Lake. That is commitment, not lip service like we saw from members opposite.

* (11:40)

Let us talk about other examples of that. I was extremely proud as the MLA representing Split Lake when our government took the historic step of signing a partnership with First Nations, a partnership that will bring Split Lake in as a level of government working with us to construct on the Gull Rapids ahead a number of years.

I noticed in this speech the Leader of the Opposition talking about the sort of accomplishments of the Conservative government. I got one question for him, by the way, and this is a hydro question. It is a good trivia question, by the way. You might want to try this out on people. Name me one hydro dam constructed by Conservative governments since 1969. It is a trick question. The answer is zero.

This is the party, we pushed through in terms of development in the 1970s, and in 1977 they got elected, and they cancelled Limestone. We constructed it in the 1980s, they said, actually the Liberal leader called it lemonstone. They said it was going to be a financial disaster. We went ahead and we built it. Now it is the

main reason behind the fact that we are facing major surpluses at Manitoba Hydro.

We also negotiated an agreement with Ontario Hydro, and we were going to trigger the start-up of Conawapa. Guess what the Conservatives did when they got elected in 1988? You know, I felt really badly, by the way, about this, because I had people in 1998 who were saying: You know, those darn Tories, if they get in, they are going to cancel Conawapa. And I actually did say to somebody: Well, I do not know that for sure. You know what they did? They cancelled Conawapa. I say now history is repeating itself again.

This Government is recognizing that one of our strategic assets in this Province, our huge strategic asset is our ability to develop hydroelectric potential. I think it could be done in an environmentally friendly way. I say when we are looking at nuclear plants and other forms of energy production, now is the time for pushing ahead. We are working with Split Lake. We are working with Nelson House. I can say to members opposite, when it comes to hydro development, we did it in the '70s, we did it in the '80s. Just watch us now in the 21st century. We will have a vision for hydro development that will benefit all of Manitobans, something you never had.

I mention Aboriginal communities, and I could mention the numerous partnerships we have taken. I really commend our Minister of Northern and Aboriginal Affairs (Mr. Robinson). He has done more in a year and three months to work with Aboriginal people than the previous government did in 11 years. I keep using these analogies again about the only year that we ever saw from the members opposite was reversed. I mean, they never moved forward on significant Aboriginal issues ranging from Aboriginal casinos to family service issues to economic development issues to transportation issues.

I want to note proudly that we have taken the freeze off the construction of new transportation access, and we are taking on the challenge of the federal government, particularly when it comes to the 37 communities, primarily First Nations communities, that do not have all-weather road access. We are going to be working

with the federal government, that in the 21st century it is time to extend that access.

Now this one, this is probably the ultimate, really. The Leader of the Opposition, right, the Leader of the Progressive Conservative Party, and we will not get into how they voted federally. We are not quite sure how the Leader of the Opposition voted federally—

An Honourable Member: What about their caucus?

Mr. Ashton:—or their caucus, but accepting this is the Progressive—I tell you, this has got to make you worried, whenever a Conservative leader gets up and says "on behalf of the workers of Manitoba." Oh, I can just see it next. The Leader of the Opposition at the next MFL convention, singing "Solidarity Forever."

I have news for the Leader of the Opposition. The working people of this province know better. The working people of this province know that the Conservative Party has never supported workers' rights in this province. The working people in this province know that the Conservative Party is stuck back decades in terms of that. There are still members in this House who get up, and they view it—I remind them of their speeches. Their view is that if you have a unionized workforce in your workplace somehow you failed as an employer.

I have news for people opposite. There are many people in this province who believe—by the way, it is a fundamental human right to collective organization, collective bargaining. They believe that a union is a positive thing. That is why they choose unions. I say to members opposite their real agenda was espoused when we saw that. They still cannot bring themselves to believe, and this, I think, is one of their fundamental failures as a government. For 11 years their idea of partnership was two-sided: business and government.

I say to members opposite that, if we want to prosper in this province, it has to include three sides: business, government, and labour. So long as you do not get the message from the working people in this province that you do not represent

their interests, so long as you will continue to resist any type of system that will move towards a more sane and rational labour relations system in this province, I say to you—and, by the way, I assume and I know a lot of the members opposite supported the Alliance Party. Stockwell Day sort of believes that men walked along at the same time as dinosaurs. I tell you, their position on labour relations is the same thing. They have a dinosaur approach to labour relations. This is the 21st century. Get over it. The fact is that, if we are going to succeed as a province, labour should be part of the partnership with business and government. It was never under your government. It will be under ours.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I could go on at length. The members opposite, the Leader of the Opposition, I note, by the way, for the record, not one reference to MTS. I find it amazing that now, and I want to put this on the record, almost as bad as the Conservatives trying to position themselves as friends of working people in this province is their concern about revenues from Crown corporations. Give me a break. If the Conservatives had been re-elected, we would not have to worry about revenues from Manitoba Hydro; they would sell it off like they did with Manitoba Hydro.

MPIC, if you look at the supposed accomplishments of the Conservative government in this province, and it says nothing about MPIC in there, another thing brought to the people of Manitoba by the NDP. They opposed it, by the way, in the early 1970s. Do not let anyone kid yourself. If they can sell off MTS with no mandate from the public and no referendum, you can be darn sure that Autopac and Hydro are next on the list. That is why our Government is going to bring in protection to make sure that can never happen again.

They are even hypocritical. It just amazes me when it comes to proceeds from Crown corporations. In government, money was spent before by Crown corporations on public purposes. I will be the first one to admit that in terms of MPI we got the message. We got the message from the people of Manitoba, but they still do not have the message.

When they were in government, they repeatedly used the resources of Crown

corporations, and not only that, the former premier in the election talked about a dividend from Manitoba Hydro for northern development. I have got a little bit of advice for members opposite. I mentioned this on Headingley. When you are in opposition—I will be up front here—you do not always have to take a position. I appreciate that.

You know what? That may be the role of oppositions. I notice on the casinos, for example, I think their critic and their leader at the time said: We do not have to have a position on this; we are the opposition. I do not know if the public will accept that. You cannot have two totally different positions on every issue. That is what we see time after time after time with the members opposite. When they were in government they did one thing, now they are in Opposition, and they do another. Their leader says one thing on casino votes; their critic says another.

I say to members opposite, the other thing, you have got to learn from the results of 1999, not only that you made a number of serious mistakes in terms of government, but if you want to get the confidence of the people back, you have got to have some consistency. You cannot have it both ways, and you will never get back into government if you think you can have it both ways on critical issues.

* (11:50)

I listened to the Leader of the Opposition at the AMM. What struck me as well too is that he basically did not have a position on anything. I believe elections, I believe politics, I believe democracy is about choices. I look forward to the days ahead when the Leader of the Opposition and the Conservative Party start to put on their record their real stand, their real agenda on issues. We are not afraid to put our agenda forward, and we have done it in the Throne Speech.

I want to stress what it is. I want to stress where our vision is, by the way. We are a government that is proud to represent every region of the province of Manitoba, urban, rural and northern. We are proud, as a party, to represent the ethnocultural diversity of this

province, not only in terms of those who vote for us and support us, but in terms of our caucus. We are proud of the representation in terms of women in our Cabinet, the gender representation. I say that goes to our vision of a diverse province that stands from the 49th parallel to the 60th parallel that will only tap into its potential when it includes all Manitobans. That is our agenda. That is why we brought an initiative, to benefit urban Manitoba and rural Manitoba. Not lip service, but real initiatives that are going to make a difference in rural Manitoba. That is why we are bringing in initiatives in northern Manitoba.

To members opposite, I say you may pay lip service to the northern and Aboriginal interests, working people, rural Manitoba and urban Manitoba; we are bringing in real concrete policies. We are taking a stand. I say to you and your leader we look forward to when you take a real and consistent stand, and then we will really get into the debate.

Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights): I rise today to talk about the Throne Speech and, of course, about the amendment. As I begin speaking, many Manitobans have been making observations about the late NDP government. The NDP were late in beginning the session last spring. April 25, when it started, was far later than usual. The excuse then was that the NDP could not put together a budget in less than seven months. Compare that to, for example, the Chrétien government elected October 25 in '93, which had a budget for the whole country by February, in four months. The excuse of the NDP that they cannot do it for a single province in less than seven months is totally vacuous. It is empty. It is just an example of a government which is slow and late.

After a lot of excuses last spring, we have a fall sitting, which once again starts late. Once again, the NDP starting a session halfway through December is full of excuses. I do not intend to go down the list of all of these extensive excuses for lateness and slowness by the NDP, but I do make the observation. Of course, one of the best ones is to blame it on the Tories. The real reason for being late was that Gary Filmon and Eric Stefanson waited so long to resign, that they could have resigned much

faster. My colleagues, even with the delayed resignations, there still could have been a by-election held and called by October and the session starting in early November. Some Premier (Mr. Doer), some excuses. More and more excuses for being late and for being slow. We wonder sometimes why there may be lots of promises, but not all that much gets done.

With the presentation of the Throne Speech on Tuesday of this week, we can also see another reason for delaying the session. Clearly, the NDP wanted to back up the Throne Speech as close to Christmas as possible, partly so they could get out quickly without having extensive questions for more than a couple of weeks here in Question Period. I think that the other reason is that they designed the Throne Speech really to appear for lots and lots of promises, sort of like a Santa Claus speech. They wanted to appear that they were really Santa Claus, and they had all these promises. People could think they were coming in time for Christmas, and people could go home happy, because there were lots of promises. Even if the promises did not materialize, they would still get some presents under the Christmas tree, and people would get the impression that maybe the NDP was doing something.

One of the problems, of course, with the Throne Speech is, though it was full of promises, that there was really no measure of accountability, no emphasis on responsible government where activities are provided in a cost-effective way, in a high-performance government way, done well as opposed to just putting one program and one promise after another.

In this speech and on this occasion, I will support neither the Throne Speech, because I think that the Government could have done much better, nor will I support the Tory amendment, because I believe that it only tackles a little bit of the problem. I believe there is a third way, a Liberal approach, which is badly needed in this province.

Let me begin with some discussion of health care. In last year's Throne Speech—let us begin with last year because that was last year's promises. If we can see what happened with last

year's promises, we may have some measure of what will happen with this year's promises. The NDP last year said we must end the indignity of receiving treatment in a hospital corridor. The NDP last year said we must reduce the agonizing wait that Manitobans and their families have endured between the diagnosis of cancer and the start of treatment.

As we review the change during the year, we can see that the indignity of Manitobans receiving treatment in a hospital corridor has not ended. We should give the NDP some credit. The situation has improved. Let us acknowledge that. There is some progress, but let me just quote a recent e-mail that I received on October 3 of this year.

Mr. Speaker in the Chair

In this e-mail the quote is as follows: "On Saturday, at 3 a.m., my 23-year-old niece was transferred in serious condition from the hospital in Selkirk to St. Boniface Hospital. Now, two and a half days later, she still is lying in a crowded, noisy emergency room because she cannot get a room.

"She cannot rest, and there is so much noise day and night that you cannot even carry on a conversation. The corridors are lined with patients, and signs of stress and fatigue show on the faces of most of the staff. With my own eyes"—the e-mail continues—"I have seen better conditions in the Third World. What I have seen recently in St. Boniface Hospital is appalling. Please help inform Manitobans about the deplorable state of their health care before they get sick and find out the shocking truth for themselves. Thank you."

I put this forward as part of my effort to inform Manitobans of the sort of correspondence I am receiving. I think it should be acknowledged that there are others who have had better experiences and that there are many health professionals who are trying very hard under very difficult circumstances to provide the highest possible standards of care.

* (12:00)

I want to indicate in bringing forward this letter that I am urging the Government and the

Minister of Health (Mr. Chomiak) to do better, to complete the job he has begun, not to let up part way. It was disappointing that the Throne Speech this time did not contain a clear commitment to continue the job until it is finished. The Throne Speech this time forgot this promise of last year and failed to continue the commitment to deliver even what was promised last year.

I now want to move on to the second point, and that is the waiting time between the diagnosis of cancer and the treatment. I want to discuss in this context the recent report on waiting times from the Manitoba Centre for Health Policy and Evaluation. What this report shows is that the waiting lists for surgery for breast cancer are now longer rather than shorter. I regard these statistics in relationship to breast cancer as particularly important. Breast cancer is one of the major cancers of our time. Breast cancer, in terms of its effect on the productive lives of our citizens, has a huge impact, perhaps more impact than any other single form of cancer. To have a report from the Manitoba Centre for Health Policy and Evaluation which shows that waiting lists are getting longer is very disturbing. The Manitoba Centre for Health Policy and Evaluation is not some two-bit research group. Their scientific research is of high calibre. Their findings mean a great deal in terms of scientific approach and scientific validity, for the researchers of the centre have taken a great deal of effort to have accurate measures and to improve them on a continual basis.

With that being said, I took some time myself to have some additional validation of the Manitoba Centre for Health Policy and Evaluation results. I searched for confirmatory information and contacted Dr. Virginia Fraser of the Abbott Clinic. After some assessment of the recent waiting times, she provided me with the following: In October of this year, after a suspicious mammogram, it took an average of 44.5 days, that is more than six weeks, for patients to have a biopsy. It took an average of 53.4 days to get into surgery to remove a suspicious lump. That is considerably longer than the six weeks. It is longer than seven weeks. It is almost eight weeks. Further, it took an average of 40.5 days to have a mastectomy.

From August to October, the shortest average wait for breast cancer surgery in all the months was 30 days. That average wait is more than four weeks.

These numbers confirm that long waiting times for breast cancer surgery persist. I think it is important to ask the question: Why is this so important? Breast cancer is an important and unfortunately all too common cause of cancer. Statistics related to breast cancer are therefore a very key and important indicator of the operation of a health care system, I suppose a bit like a canary in a mine, a key measure of performance, a key performance standard.

Secondly, the indicator also gives us some understanding of how cost-effectively the health care system is being operated. Where there are delays in the treatment of cancer, the cancer, as we know, continues to grow. The result of the progression of disease is that it is more difficult and more expensive to treat, and the cost of treatment rises with each delay. We have a choice. We have a choice of a high-quality, lower-cost system, or, as the minister and the Government are operating today, a lower-quality, higher-cost system.

We know the statistics for Manitoba. Over the last number of years, we have the highest cost per capita system in the country. We spend \$250 per Manitoban per year more than the average of Alberta, B.C., Saskatchewan, Ontario and Québec on health care in public funds. We do this without obvious improved quality of health in Manitoba compared to other provinces. So we need to move away from a lower-quality, higher-cost system and toward a higher-quality, lower-cost system where the health is looked after earlier so the health is better. We need to then spend less on treating the illness because the health of people is better.

A third reason that this waiting time for breast cancer is important is that there is a quality standard or a benchmark set for the surgical treatment of breast cancer by the British Association of Surgical Oncology. The quality standard is that the surgery should take place in two weeks. We will call this high quality, a good quality. The British Association of Surgical Oncology say that a three-week wait is,

however, acceptable. I would say that a three-week wait in this context means that the system is operating at a reasonable quality standard.

Under the guidelines of the British Association of Surgical Oncology, a four-week wait is the absolute maximum that is accepted. So waits between three weeks and four weeks indicated that the health care system is operating at a low quality. Waits of four weeks, as I have said, are unacceptable, are an indicator of bad or unacceptable quality of health care.

The incredible fact, as I have pointed out, is that we have average delays of more than four weeks in recent months. This is the marker that the health care system being run by the NDP government and the Health Minister is not performing at the kind of high-quality, lower-cost standards that we would expect.

A fourth reason that this indicator is important comes from the report of the Pediatric Cardiac Surgery review, which was released recently. The review discusses in some detail, indeed makes a central point about the importance of quality assurance. I think it is sufficient to look at the report and see on the executive summary, to begin with, first page: The Health Sciences Centre did not provide the standard of health care that it was mandated to provide. The third page: There was a failure of quality assurance and monitoring.

What is quality assurance and why is it so important to the health care system? I would go to later in the report and again in quoting from the report: Quality assurance programs seek to improve quality and stress the need to identify problems, develop and implement solutions and monitor results to ensure that solutions work. They also need to ensure that they do not introduce new problems through a comprehensive method which involves working from the solution back to the original problem, sometimes referred to as closing the loop.

Continuing on in the next paragraph, it is pointed out that measurement of outcome, however, particularly mortality, may not be sensitive enough to show that there is a systemic dysfunction. I suggest that one of the key measures of this systemic dysfunction is the

waiting time for breast cancer surgery. When we compare it to what is a quality standard we see that we are not there.

Let me continue with the report on the Pediatric Cardiac Surgery review: In the period under consideration, funding cutbacks led to a decrease in computerized record keeping of the department of anaesthesia's data collection program. This should not be allowed to happen. When quality assurance processes are eliminated or suspended because of financial considerations, there cannot be any assurance that health care may not also be compromised.

* (12:10)

It is important to note that this particular problem occurred under the watch of the Official Opposition, under the government of the Conservative Party, that there was not then a focus on quality assurance, there was not the support for the quality assurance or the research base to make sure that things were going well, and that when this support was taken away, the system ran into problems in this area of cardiac surgery.

We have continuing under the present government a comparative deficiency still in the support of research, and we have not yet heard anything in the Throne Speech about a commitment to quality assurance, a commitment to make sure that the research base evaluation base is there to ensure that we indeed have the kind of system that Manitobans expect.

There is a parallel in a sense between the cardiac surgery and breast cancer. Once you define what you need in terms of a quality assurance program, it is quite clear from this report that one of the major problems is that the physician in pediatric cardiology was left alone without the team when two members departed. Clearly, when we look at breast cancer and surgery waiting times, we need to look at all the components of the health care system which are needed to make sure that breast cancer surgery is available and is delivered in a timely fashion in Manitoba meeting the quality that we would expect, meeting the quality that is good quality, as defined in various guidelines and indicators as

they have developed through solid research in various parts of the world.

So we need not the approach of the Tories, which was deficient in forgetting to fund or omitting or throwing out the funding of the quality assurance, not the approach of the new NDP government, which is more promises and promises but not to follow through, not the quality assurance that we should expect.

What is needed, I suggest, Mr. Speaker, is the Liberal approach, which, in fact, is able to provide for Manitobans the quality assurance that they need that we have a health care system which provides the kind of quality that we should have. In doing so, we do have some critical decisions and some critical focus that we have to look at. We cannot, as the NDP government seems to be doing, try to do everything for everyone. We have to focus, and we have to make sure, that not only do we look at the quality of what is being done, but we have to look at what we are doing that in fact there is no evidence of health benefit and that we should not be supporting under a health care system.

I want to move now on to a discussion of the new economy and high technology industries, where we are going in Manitoba, and I was pleased to see that the Government has listened to my criticism of last year and has paid more attention in the present Throne Speech to the new economy, has shown an understanding of the central role of learning, has mentioned research a couple of times, but the result in this Throne Speech is far from a full package, far from a real overall plan. Even though it is a step up, it is better than last year. We need to recognize in this province that we are not Alberta. We do not have oil revenues; we cannot just promise everything to everyone. We must be smarter than Alberta. We must be able to do more with less. The Liberal Party is a good model for this, I suggest, in the province here, doing a lot with not a great deal of resources, but we need in the new economy to provide the kind of climate for new-economy businesses to start in Manitoba as well as traditional businesses. We need to create that climate for businesses to grow in Manitoba, and we need to create that climate for businesses to stay in Manitoba.

I suggest that we need a better plan and a more future-thinking plan, a more comprehensive plan than the NDP has provided, and, clearly in this area, the Conservatives are still learning. What we need, I suggest, is a Liberal approach, a dynamic approach driving forward in these new areas.

Let me say a few words now about the farm situation in Manitoba. The situation, on the one hand, is troubling. There are many farmers who are concerned about whether they will still be farming next year and the year after. On the other hand, there are lots of opportunities in livestock and new, emerging higher-value crops, expansion of potatoes, all sorts of things coming from areas like biotechnology, which may make a difference in not only the quality of the food but the environmental approach that we take. Some producers see the excitement of these new opportunities. There are opportunities for people to work together in new ways.

Clearly what is needed is a government which has a vision, emphasizing all these opportunities, and yet what we saw in the Throne Speech was a vision which talked just about saving the family farm—yes, very, very important—but we also should have had a vision for the exciting opportunities which were there and how the Government was indeed going to help farmers in this province to benefit from those opportunities and benefit as farmers and in that way improve the family farm.

The floods of '97 and '99, some flooding of course also this year, frankly, all of us need to admit that there could be improvements in the way that compensation programs have worked. To get all working together to solve this important issue in Manitoba I suggest that there needs to be an all-party task force to look into how the compensation programs worked in '97 and '99 and what can be done to provide improvements, to provide better fairness, better consistency.

I have had many calls about outstanding concerns, problems from '97, when the Conservatives were in government. I have had many concerns and calls about 1999, and still there are many in southwestern Manitoba who feel that they were unfairly or poorly dealt with.

I think we would all agree that there is still a hurt in southwestern Manitoba. The hurt is still there and continuing because of the delayed effects of the problems with the floods and wet weather in 1999. The hurt is still there because many in southwestern Manitoba feel that they were not helped as much as those in the Red River Valley.

* (12:20)

An all-party task force to look at the comparisons to make some suggestions that could be brought forward is badly needed. It is not enough, as the Minister of Highways (Mr. Ashton) was doing, to blame Ottawa and say that the Province cannot do any more. Yes, the Province can do a lot more. It is not enough to say that the federal government turned us down. There must be a continuing presence and push in organization and understanding of what we can, in fact, do better. Whether we are looking at the different type of JERI program, transition conservation reserve program, programs help.

So clearly one of the things which is needed is a better look at how in the future we do not end up in the same situation where people in southwestern Manitoba, in one part of the province, feel that they were treated unfairly. I charge the Premier (Mr. Doer) in the weeks and days and months ahead to mount the effort to have a look at how you can make the programs fairer so that people in one part of the province do not feel that they have been left out.

The second thing that is needed, even in the last few days the Premier (Mr. Doer) has been standing up and talking about a planning program for the Red River Valley and the Red River Corridor in terms of future flood prevention, a future planning program. But why has the Premier not put forward a planning program for people in southwestern Manitoba? Why is there no investment in future vision and thinking about drainage and irrigation and making sure that farmers in southwestern Manitoba are better prepared for future events, whether they be floods or droughts? There is an opportunity, but there is not even a task force. There is not even a committee now to set up to study, to look and provide some advice on what

should be the future infrastructure for southwestern Manitoba.

I want to say a few words about the environment and sustainable development. On a positive note, I would like to congratulate the Minister of Conservation (Mr. Lathlin), because there was a lot more on the environment and sustainable development in this year's Throne Speech than last year's Throne Speech. I noted that, for one, and I would like to compliment the Government and the minister on a greater emphasis on this area. However, in saying that there clearly have been some shortcomings in some things which need to be addressed, the Government cannot be pleased with terminating the Manitoba Environmental Council with its strong record over many years. The Government cannot be happy about not having produced its sustainable development procurement policy by the legal deadline of July 1, and the COSDI report and implementing that, that is important. I say to the minister I think that you are taking a good step, but at the same time looking after sustainable development in this province is much more than planning for the east side of Lake Winnipeg. It is much more than the COSDI report. I would hope and expect that we will have much more in terms of this area in the days to come.

I also think that the important areas for the future are more than just some research on a hydrogen economy which was referred to in the Throne Speech. I would refer to the specific comments that Manitoba has the opportunity to become a leader in the production of hydrogen fuel. What I noted was that this was an observation, that the Government made no commitment to make Manitoba a leader. I look forward to the Premier's (Mr. Doer) response when he talks about the Throne Speech because I think it is important to have more than an observation, that what is needed is a commitment and not just a short-term promise that will not appear in next year's Throne Speech but a real commitment and a plan and a vision of how we are going to go step by step to position Manitoba right at the forefront if that is where his Government is indeed going.

The NDP are to be applauded for recognizing the importance of creating an

optimum learning environment in Manitoba for the 21st century, but the plan as we have it in the Throne Speech still has some real shortcomings. We have seen a long decade, 11 years under the Tories, of ad hoc planning rather than overall planning, and we are now seeing with the NDP, although some positive movement in supporting the infrastructure for the new downtown campus of the Red River College and the support of new infrastructure at the University of Manitoba, that this has come without a real long-run plan for maintaining the buildings and the infrastructure. We have a new campus for Red River College, but we do not have an overall plan for the college to make sure that there is adequate space on the existing campus.

The Minister of Education (Mr. Caldwell) has talked about bringing forward such a plan, but so far we do not have it. As he is all too aware, there are several post-secondary education institutions which have been left out and the end run using MPIC funds was clearly not appropriate or acceptable. We wait for a larger view and a larger plan.

I would hope that in this larger plan there is mention of the importance of libraries. In an information society, why were libraries not in the Throne Speech? I would hope that there is more discussion and a more comprehensive plan in the area of research. I think that the Government needs to learn more in terms of linking. They talk about education experiences in the school to education experiences outside of the school. But I thought it was rather interesting that, in listing educational experiences outside of school, education experiences in businesses were not mentioned.

You know, when people were growing up on the farm, young people learned about farm business as well as learning about farming in school. We need to rebuild those links from school and businesses so that children have a better understanding of the world of work opportunities as a normal part of their education.

There is here a role in terms of infrastructure, and that role of government in infrastructure was not much touched upon in the Throne Speech. Under the Conservatives, we had a plan for southern Manitoba, but not much

as the NDP have pointed out in the North, and now under the NDP government we have lots of plans in terms of infrastructure in the North, but I heard from many reeves and councillors in southern Manitoba that they felt that they were being left out and neglected.

In terms of children, I think it is an important signal that children were emphasized in the Throne Speech. I will support the Government's efforts to increase parental leave, support the Government's efforts to improve circumstances for children. I believe that there is still some way to go to demonstrate the effectiveness of the Government's approach. Killing the Child and Youth Secretariat which worked across departments, whether that was a good move or not we still wait to see.

There is a lot of work to do in areas like procurement policy, as I have been pointing out, that this is fundamental to the way that Government works and helps businesses and jobs in Manitoba. It is pretty darn important that we get this right. To be late is not acceptable and to have problems with government procurement is not acceptable. This is an area where I will continue to admonish the Government and to emphasize that there is a lot of room for improvement.

I will close, Mr. Speaker, in saying that there is a Liberal view which is different from either the Tories or the NDP, and in the long run I think it is a Liberal perspective that Manitobans should be looking for because it is a central perspective, a future-thinking perspective for the good of all Manitobans. Thank you.

Mr. Mervin Tweed (Turtle Mountain): I, too, am pleased to rise to make some comments about the Throne Speech that we heard the other day.

Mr. Speaker: Order. When this matter is again before the House, the honourable Member for Turtle Mountain will have 39 minutes remaining.

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

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

December 8, 2000

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