



First Session - Thirty-Sixth Legislature

of the

Legislative Assembly of Manitoba

**DEBATES
and
PROCEEDINGS
(Hansard)**

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



MANTOBA LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
Thirty-Sixth Legislature

Members, Constituencies and Political Affiliation

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

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Friday, May 26, 1995

The House met at 10 a.m.

PRAYERS

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

READING AND RECEIVING PETITIONS

Funding Model—Public Education

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

An Honourable Member: Yes.

Madam Speaker: The Clerk will read.

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

WHEREAS funding for public schools by the provincial government has been cut twice in the past three years; and

WHEREAS provincial funding for the School District of Mystery Lake has dropped by nearly \$2 million over the same period, more than 10 percent; and

WHEREAS funding for private schools has increased by over 110 percent under the same provincial government; and

WHEREAS Thompson was faced with a 48 percent increase in the Education Support Levy tax as a result of reassessment in 1993 resulting in \$500,000 leaving our community; and

WHEREAS the Thompson School District is also now faced with a massive \$1.8-million deficit the equivalent to a 48 percent increase in local school taxes; and

WHEREAS unless the minister reviews this funding the Thompson School District will be forced to

consider both a \$500,000 tax increase and severe program cuts totalling over \$1.3 million.

WHEREFORE your petitioners humbly pray that the Legislative Assembly request the Minister of Education and Training (Mrs. McIntosh) to reconsider the funding model to ensure that Thompson and other communities in this province are able to maintain quality public education.

* (1005)

Introduction of Guests

Madam Speaker: Prior to Oral Questions, we have seated in the public gallery, from Crystal City School, eighteen Grade 6 students under the direction of Mr. Larry Hamilton. This school is situated in the constituency of the honourable member for Turtle Mountain (Mr. Tweed).

Also with us this morning, we have, seated in the public gallery to my right, from St. Alphonsus School, thirty Grade 5 students under the direction of Miss Jean Gilbert. This school is located in the constituency of the honourable member for Elmwood (Mr. Maloway).

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

ORAL QUESTION PERIOD

**Winnipeg Arena
Election Campaign Commitment**

Mr. Gary Doer (Leader of the Opposition): Madam Speaker, my question is to the First Minister.

A number of people have been calling us over the last couple of days who have recalled clearly the Premier's words in the election campaign on a number of debates and in a number of public presentations that he made, stating that he would be limited to a \$10-million contribution to deal with the Jets and the arena proposal in the city of Winnipeg.

They feel that the Premier, having said one thing in the election campaign, does not have a democratic mandate to proceed with something substantially more than his election commitment and his word in that campaign.

I would like to ask the Premier: What democratic mandate does he have to go way beyond his word in the election campaign after the election is over?

Hon. Gary Filmon (Premier): Madam Speaker, as I indicated previously this week on several occasions to the Leader of the Opposition in response to the same question, the proposal that had been put forth before the election campaign by the Manitoba Entertainment Complex people did not prove to be viable in terms of being able to maintain NHL hockey in Winnipeg.

A proposal was subsequently then reworked with the addition of substantial additional private sector funds so that there would be a matching concept of \$111 million to build a Manitoba Entertainment Complex facility by the public sector and a matching amount raised by the private sector to own and operate the team and cover ongoing losses.

The Jets' operations here and the construction of that arena result in \$10 million of direct tax revenue to the provincial government for the construction of the facility and \$6 million a year ongoing in the operation of the team.

On that basis, a decision was made by our government and other levels of government to provide the capital infrastructure for the ongoing enjoyment of the people of Manitoba.

Referendum

Mr. Gary Doer (Leader of the Opposition): Madam Speaker, the question was: What mandate do you have to break your word and your promise in the election campaign? The Premier has not answered that question.

On a number of occasions, people who have been calling us say they have heard that the Premier only limited the public contribution from the provincial

government in the election campaign for \$10 million. They wonder what mandate he has to break that promise.

I would like to ask the Premier today: In light of the fact that he only has a democratic mandate for \$10 million, will the Premier have a referendum on the extension and multiplication of the amount of public money in the provincial public sector to this project so that we can have a true democratic mandate for the decisions that are being made, rather than having promises broken after the election campaign?

Hon. Gary Filmon (Premier): In our parliamentary democratic system in this country, which all of us are elected under and which all of us participate in and support, Madam Speaker, the fact of the matter is that people elect governments on a whole series of issues: on a philosophy, on integrity, on leadership, on all sorts of issues.

Primarily, though, they elect people to make judgments on their behalf, judgments that are ultimately in the best interests of the province and its future.

We are in office with a mandate to exercise our judgment and to make decisions on a whole range of issues under new and changing circumstances that perhaps were unforeseen during an election campaign.

* (1010)

Mr. Doer: Madam Speaker, to say that this was unforeseen when the Premier was involved for years with this portfolio—

I would like to ask the Premier, why is he afraid to have a referendum on the decisions that his government is making, given the fact that you promised only \$10 million in the campaign.

You have broken your word, sir, and it is a time to allow your word to go before the public to test all across Manitoba whether this project makes sense at all for all the people of Manitoba rather than just some in the Premier's constituency of Tuxedo.

Mr. Filmon: Madam Speaker, of course the Leader of the Opposition has had the luxury of being on all sides of this issue. At one point, he said that the public sector would build the whole facility. At that time, he said that he and Mr. Axworthy at the time were trying to convince the City Council to build a facility. This was back in the mid-'80s, when he was Minister of Urban Affairs.

Point of Order

Madam Speaker: Order, please. The honourable Leader of the Opposition, on a point of order.

Mr. Doer: The Premier knows that I was never elected when Mr. Axworthy was a minister of the Crown. I would like him to be honest about this issue, please.

Madam Speaker: Order, please. The honourable Leader of the official opposition does not have a point of order. It is clearly a dispute over the facts.

The honourable First Minister, to complete his response.

* * *

Mr. Filmon: Madam Speaker, I will get the transcript from CJOB where the Leader of the Opposition said that when he was the Minister of Urban Affairs he was supportive of building the arena facility with public funds.

He then, of course, changed his position and said, no funds. Then he said that he would change his position again and that he would transfer the funds from the Kenaston underpass to build the facility, and then he changed his position again. He has the luxury of being able to say five different things on the same issue and never have to, of course, account for his actions or his words.

That is the kind of dishonesty that we get from him on a regular basis. That is why he is on that side of the House.

Mr. Doer: Madam Speaker, I would remind the Premier of what the Premier said in Estimates about the

NDP position dealing with the arena, saying that we would need substantial funding from the private sector. That is on page 4109 of Hansard. I would ask the Premier to refer to his own words.

At the same time, he said it was against his conscience to spend \$111 million on this arena. The Premier never answered the question.

Given the fact that he has a \$10-million mandate legitimately in the election campaign, which was his commitment, and I respect that, and given the fact that now that we are substantially over that commitment, why will the Premier not put the whole plan and all the public investment and all the potential benefits before the people of Manitoba in a referendum campaign?

We have a voters list, we have the ability to consult the public and get a true mandate as opposed to the mandate the Premier broke after the election campaign.

Mr. Filmon: Madam Speaker, the question is repetitive; my answer is the same.

Winnipeg Arena Development Costs

Mr. Tim Sale (Crescentwood): Madam Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Finance.

To date, the three levels of government have committed only \$94 million to the cost of a \$111-million arena, yet the Premier has stated that there is a fixed-price contract to build that arena for \$111 million.

My question then is: How are you going to build an \$111-million arena for \$94 million, Mr. Minister?

Hon. Eric Stefanson (Minister of Finance): Madam Speaker, first of all, the reference to a fixed-price contract is one component of the total package of \$111 million. That is the actual development of the facility itself.

There are many other aspects of developing an entertainment complex, from clocks to development for internal concessions and so on and so forth.

So the fixed-term contract is on the actual building of the facility, and that is about a \$65 million to \$70 million component of the \$111 million total figure. So that represents about two-thirds of the total cost of the potential development.

So there is the opportunity, and we do have \$94 million committed from three levels of government. That is 85 percent of the requirements. There is the opportunity to look at controlling costs. There is the opportunity to continue to have further discussions with the federal government about other contributions from the federal government.

There is the opportunity to look at revenue sources for the facility, to look at other mechanisms in terms of some financial assistance towards the development of the facility, and we are very confident the facility will be developed within that price range and the contributions from government will be held at the levels as currently committed by the city and by the provincial government.

* (1015)

Information Tabling Request

Mr. Tim Sale (Crescentwood): To the same minister, Madam Speaker: Will the Premier and the minister then table the letter of May 20 which accompanied the MEC offer committing to the \$111-million arena and accompanied apparently by a \$10-million deposit? Will you table that letter in this House?

Hon. Eric Stefanson (Minister of Finance): Madam Speaker, at the appropriate time I am sure all information will be made available to not only this House but to the citizens of Manitoba on this entire transaction.

The private sector right now is in very serious negotiations with the current owners of the Jets about taking over and getting involved in the operations of the organization, about taking over the losses effective immediately in terms of the operations of the hockey team here in Manitoba.

All information will be made available as deals are concluded.

Tender Process

Mr. Tim Sale (Crescentwood): Madam Speaker, to the same minister, will the minister explain to Manitobans how there can be a fixed price commitment to build a publicly funded \$111-million arena without working drawings, without a public tender? Is tendering no longer mandatory for hundred-million-dollar projects in this province?

Hon. Eric Stefanson (Minister of Finance): I think, as the members opposite know, this project has been worked on for many, many months.

The MEC organization has done a great deal of work in terms of detailed drawings of the facility, determining where the site would be, having discussions with contractors about tenders and costs and ensuring that, when they do come forward in terms of the development of a facility, they know with certainty what the facility can be developed for, what the costs of building the building will in fact be. That has been the basis on which all information has been provided.

School Boundaries Commission Recommendations

Ms. Jean Friesen (Wolseley): Madam Speaker, my questions are for the Minister of Education.

In yesterday's press release, the minister indicated that she is not committed to the three-year phase-in plan for the implementation of the Norrie report on school boundaries.

Would the minister make clear to the House today what the implications of this are for the timing and term of office for school board elections across Manitoba?

Hon. Linda McIntosh (Minister of Education and Training): Madam Speaker, the member indicates that I am not committed to a three-year phase-in. I do not know specifically what she is referencing, because what I said yesterday was that we would be sending out

the Norrie commission again, or asking them to receive written submissions from those who would be directly affected by any change in boundaries, to get that opinion, to analyze it, adjust if needed any of their recommendations, report back to us by September.

Our plan continues to be that that period in the next school board term would be a period of transition should any of the boundary lines be adjusted.

Ms. Friesen: Madam Speaker, can the minister tell the House what will be the economic impact on Manitoba education of her rapid implementation of school choice, exactly that of the Manness action plan, ahead of a defined timetable for boundary changes, given the existing wide disparity in assessment per pupil?

Mrs. McIntosh: Madam Speaker, I misheard her. I thought she said "not," and I understand she said "now" in her original question.

The member knows that what we are looking for now is feedback as to many of those items school divisions were expecting. Other interested parties will indicate to us how they see these recommendations impacting in a wide variety of areas.

We will receive that information. After we have received it, we will then be in a position to make a decision based upon reaction to the report in all arenas that are of interest to affected parties.

Ms. Friesen: Madam Speaker, what safeguards will the minister be proposing to protect the stability of small schools, which in some areas will be vulnerable to the movement of quite small numbers of students?

* (1020)

Mrs. McIntosh: As you know, we have indicated that we do not wish to see any changes being made in the short term to items such as school closures, for example, that type of thing.

As well, as I have indicated in my first two responses, we will be looking for feedback on many of those items before we announce our final decision.

School Boundaries Commission Public Consultations

Ms. Becky Barrett (Wellington): Madam Speaker, the Minister of Education has just stated that the second round of consultations on the school boundaries commission report will be in the form of written submissions that will go back to the commission by September.

The residents of Brooklands, in my constituency of Wellington, face under the current proposed recommendations tax increases of \$27 per \$10,000 of assessed property value, which for residents of Brooklands is an unbelievable increase and far larger than any other community in the province of Manitoba.

Madam Speaker, I would like to ask the Minister of Education, why, given the fact that residents of the entire city of Winnipeg had only one opportunity to make public presentations before the first round of meetings, there is only written submission form and that the submissions have to be in by September? What is the hurry, Madam Minister?

Hon. Linda McIntosh (Minister of Education and Training): Madam Speaker, with all due respect to the philosophy behind what the member has just said, I recall other ministers in this government being criticized incessantly, repeatedly for having taken time to review reviews. So I find this a little inconsistent with earlier criticisms of other ministers who take the time to analyze the effect of recommendations on affected parties.

Brooklands people are invited, are most welcome to submit their perspectives to the commission.

We recognize and we have indicated in terms of the comments that were put out yesterday that inequities in terms of divisions of assets and liabilities will be one of the very factors that we will be considering when we look at any decision on school boundaries.

We do know there have been divisions that have been frugal with their dollars, managed their money well. We know other divisions have for whatever

reason not been able to be as thrifty with their dollars or as cost conscious.

We want to make sure that the division of assets and liabilities will make certain that those who have worked hard are not penalized. Witness the people in Brooklands' concern which will be invited to be presented to the commission.

Ms. Barrett: Madam Speaker, how can the Minister of Education say the public and interested stakeholders will be invited to participate in consultation when there are not public hearings, there will not be community-based hearings? There will only be written submissions over the summer months. How does that equate—

Madam Speaker: Order, please. The question has been put.

Mrs. McIntosh: Madam Speaker, the member may be unaware that they had public hearings already and that many, many people took the time, the trouble and the energy to present very well-researched, very in-depth commentary to the commission.

It took the commission a long period of time to analyze those presentations. Those presentations were very helpful to the commission, and we are now saying to the people now that the report has been compiled that we would invite their commentary on that compilation of recommendations to see if adjustments need to be made in light of the recommendations that have been put forward.

Ms. Barrett: Madam Speaker, I would like to ask the Minister of Education, again, how she compares the one opportunity that the residents of Brooklands and other areas of the city of Winnipeg in particular who have inequities in the current proposed boundary reviews and their tax increases have—how can she equate a written submission—

Madam Speaker: Order, please. The question has been put.

Mrs. McIntosh: Madam Speaker, I repeat again to the member three points that I have already made. One is

that the people of the Brooklands community would be most welcome, indeed, encouraged to submit any concerns they might have to the commission.

Two, I have indicated that as a government we have said for further government review we want to take a serious look at divisions of assets and liabilities should any consolidation occur as a result of decision making to ensure equity.

Thirdly, school divisions such as the one that Brooklands currently belongs to are also in the process, I understand, of making presentations to the commission and those factors identified by the member undoubtedly will be included with their current representatives' concerns to the commission. So all of those arenas are coming forward.

I have great faith in the ability of the commission members to be able to analyze a written submission as easily as a verbal submission. It does not preclude any member of the public from presenting information or ideas verbally or orally to me or any commission members.

* (1025)

Infrastructure Works Agreement Selkirk Project

Mr. Gregory Dewar (Selkirk): Madam Speaker, my questions are for the minister responsible for infrastructure here in the province of Manitoba.

As the minister is aware, there was an agreement signed in 1993 by all levels of government which would finally end Selkirk's reliance on the Red River as an emergency source of drinking water.

Phase one was the construction of a storage container and phase two was a well to fill it.

It now appears that phase two of that project may be in jeopardy due to lack of funding from the federal government. In fact, our M.P. has added to the confusion by stating that the funding was in place but is now being held up because of the Jets issue or the arena commitment.

Can the minister, as a partner to this agreement, clarify for the people of Selkirk the status of phase two of this much-needed project?

Hon. Eric Stefanson (Minister of Finance): Madam Speaker, first of all, I want to assure the honourable member that there are no traditional municipal projects that are being held up as a result of a potential entertainment complex here in Winnipeg.

I will remind the member in terms of how the infrastructure program has worked. There was a \$60-million allocation for traditional municipal projects here in Winnipeg, a \$60-million allocation for rural Manitoba and \$84 million within a strategic initiative.

I would have to get the details on the Selkirk application. I am assuming it has come out of the \$60-million rural allocation for traditional water and sewer projects and so on, and that process, Madam Speaker, was one in which we had a review committee of representatives from the Union of Manitoba Municipalities and the Manitoba Association of Urban Municipalities. They prioritized all of the projects in rural Manitoba, and we accepted each and every recommendation that they made for projects.

So I will check on the specifics and get back on the Selkirk project, but I am assuming it would come out of that \$60 million. It has absolutely no relationship to potential funding for an entertainment complex in Winnipeg.

* (1030)

Mr. Dewar: Madam Speaker, my question to the same minister is: Will the minister commit himself today to raising the issue the next time he meets with Minister Axworthy when they are discussing the millions of dollars that are going to the arena issue? Will he ensure the residents of the Selkirk community that he will raise this issue with Minister Axworthy?

Mr. Stefanson: Madam Speaker, I have already indicated I will check on the Selkirk projects that are being funded out of the infrastructure program. I have already indicated as well that I would anticipate that will come out of the \$60 million allocated.

There has been a very thorough review process. We have had the involvement of our municipal leaders from across this province. It has been a process that has been acknowledged by most people who have participated in it to be a very effective and efficient one and very inclusive. It is one that is being modelled right across Canada and always used whenever the Prime Minister and other people talk about the infrastructure program. They talk about what is being done here in Manitoba.

The specifics on the Selkirk project, I will follow up the status and get back to the member.

Mr. Dewar: Madam Speaker, it is unfortunate that there is money for—

Madam Speaker: Order, please.

Mr. Dewar: Madam Speaker, my final question is: Will the minister meet with the officials of the town of Selkirk as soon as possible so they can have a united front to solve this problem?

Mr. Stefanson: First of all, Madam Speaker, I do not necessarily accept that there is a problem, just from what the member here is outlining.

I have indicated I will find out what the status is of the Selkirk project. The municipal review committee distributed the \$60 million on a very equitable basis right across rural Manitoba. I am sure Selkirk received their fair share of the infrastructure dollars available here in Manitoba. The community of Selkirk would have prioritized their project. I will certainly check on what the status is of their projects moving forward.

I want to assure members opposite, although I know they are very much opposed to an entertainment complex in Manitoba, I know they are very much opposed to seeing the Winnipeg Jets remain in our province, but his link, the link that he makes, that is no surprise, Madam Speaker.

Point of Order

Mr. Steve Ashton (Opposition House Leader): On a point of order, Madam Speaker, our rules are quite

clear that answers should relate to the matter raised, which was very specific in terms of the concerns of the member for Selkirk (Mr. Dewar) to protect the project.

I believe the comments of the member, while they might be appropriate for another debate which we are glad to participate in, are not appropriate in answer to the member's question.

Madam Speaker: Order, please. The honourable member for Thompson indeed did have a point of order.

I would remind all honourable members that answers to questions should be as brief as possible, should deal with the matter related and should not provoke debate—Beauchesne's 408.(2).

* * *

Madam Speaker: The honourable Minister of Finance to quickly complete your response.

Mr. Stefanson: Madam Speaker, I will quickly complete my response.

I know the members are very sensitive to their nonvisionary views of our province, but I will follow up on the issue of the Selkirk project and, as I have indicated, I will report back to the member for Selkirk on the status of the projects that he has referred to.

Health Care System Eye Examinations—Deinsurance

Mr. Dave Chomiak (Kildonan): Madam Speaker, my question is to the Minister of Health.

Two years ago, this government rationed health care by eliminating eye examinations for Manitobans between the ages of 18 to 65. Now there is a proposal on the table to completely eliminate general eye examinations for Manitobans.

Can the minister today tell this House what the government's position is specifically on this issue of eliminating eye examinations from medicare coverage?

Hon. James McCrae (Minister of Health): Madam Speaker, I have not received such a proposal, so I am not able to tell the honourable member a position that I might take on a proposal I have not yet received.

Mr. Chomiak: Madam Speaker, will the minister today assure this House that this government's policy will be, no further deinsurance of medicare services?

Since the proposal is one of the proposals of the minister's own committee that he set up to determine under the MMA agreement, will he assure the House that they will not deinsure any more services?

Mr. McCrae: Madam Speaker, I am not able to assure the honourable member that I am wanting to substitute my judgment for the judgment of the people who sit around the table at the Manitoba Medical Services Council without having seen any proposal coming forward on the point the honourable member raises.

Mr. Chomiak: Madam Speaker, will the minister today assure this House that there will be no further deinsurance of any services, because what is going to be next after eye examinations? Will it be chiropractic services? Will it be others?

Mr. McCrae: Madam Speaker, one thing I will not do is abuse my fellow Manitobans as the honourable member and his colleagues would like to do.

Lake Manitoba Water Levels

Mr. Cliff Evans (Interlake): Madam Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Natural Resources.

Due to the unfortunate levels of water that we have in our province at this time, the flooding situation has also increased the levels of Lake Manitoba and has created problems downstream of Lake Manitoba.

The communities of Little Saskatchewan, Lake St. Martin and Fairford have been asked to take more water into their areas as a result of the high levels in Lake Manitoba, and, of course, upstream of that is creating quite a problem.

Yesterday, Madam Speaker, the minister's department met with the communities.

Can I ask the minister: What were the results, what were the discussions, and what were the outcomes of the meetings?

Hon. Albert Driedger (Minister of Natural Resources): Madam Speaker, the member is correct that my staff met with various leaders in the Fairford area, Lake St. Martin area, Little Saskatchewan area related to the potential flooding that is taking place there. There is some flooding taking place at the present time.

Based on the information that they brought back to myself this morning, the decision has been made that there will be no further water other than what is being released right now at the Fairford Dam. There will not be any further logs removed.

The situation is going to stabilize to some degree. We anticipate there is going to be possibly almost up to two feet of water that is going to increase at a certain level, but there will be no further logs removed to create a further problem.

Fairford Dam Alternatives

Mr. Clif Evans (Interlake): Madam Speaker, can the minister tell us if he has discussed any other alternatives to alleviate the problem, any other ways that we can go with the water from western Manitoba through Lake Manitoba instead of just through the Fairford Dam? Are there alternatives? Have you looked at the alternatives?

Hon. Albert Driedger (Minister of Natural Resources): Madam Speaker, I thank the member for that question.

Based on the meeting that we had this morning, as of tomorrow morning the diversion at Portage is going to be cut by half of the water that is going into Lake Manitoba. By next week, Wednesday, it is our hope

and anticipation that we will take and cut the flow out of the Shellmouth Dam to less than 1,600 cfs. It is these kinds of actions that we think are ultimately going to help stabilize the increase of the water level in Lake Manitoba.

Madam Speaker, it is a problem right now. We are looking at a matter of, I think the water is increased by about .5 percent of a foot, half a foot I guess in Lake Manitoba, and it is creating some flooding problems for farmers around the general area of Lake Manitoba. We are hoping by these actions that this is going to sort of control it and help level it off.

Mr. Clif Evans: Madam Speaker, due to the conditions that we have now in the area, the—

Madam Speaker: Order, please. Will the member please pose his supplementary question.

Disaster Assistance Flooding Compensation

Mr. Clif Evans (Interlake): Will the minister tell this House if there is any compensation due to the communities for the actions that have occurred? Will the government and will the minister compensate and assist these communities?

Hon. Brian Pallister (Minister of Government Services): I thank the member for the question.

The disaster assistance organization is working diligently with municipal governments and various levels of government in adjudicating claims that have been received.

I would urge the member opposite to encourage his constituents to use that process. There have been over a hundred claims submitted to date, and I understand the organization is working very diligently on those.

In answer to the member's question, yes, we will look at using the same process for his constituents that we use for the constituents of all other members of this House.

Gasoline Pricing Increase

Mr. Jim Maloway (Elmwood): Madam Speaker, my question is to the Minister of Consumer and Corporate Affairs.

Manitoba motorists know they are being ripped off by the oil companies when gas prices soar 4 cents a litre just prior to a long weekend. I would like to know: Is it a coincidence that prices rose the day after the election?

Hon. Jim Ernst (Minister of Consumer and Corporate Affairs): Madam Speaker, the question of gasoline prices in this province and elsewhere in this country for that matter has been under discussion by myself, our government and governments right across this country.

It has been apparent that increases in gasoline prices to the consumer do not always reflect, in fact, quite often do not just reflect the question of increases in crude oil prices but reflect either increased profit taking or increased revenues at least to the major retailers of gasoline products in this country.

After having had some detailed discussion with the oil industry last year, Madam Speaker, I raised the question with my colleagues the ministers of Consumer Affairs from across Canada and as a matter of fact have written to the Minister of Consumer Affairs Canada on four separate occasions demanding a meeting of all Consumer ministers from across the country, because this is a national problem, not a Manitoba problem.

* (1040)

Mr. Maloway: Madam Speaker, I would like to know how large a price increase it will take for this minister to finally do something concrete.

Mr. Ernst: Madam Speaker, if the member for Elmwood is suggesting that the Province of Manitoba should put the gasoline prices under the purview of the Public Utilities Board, then I think he is sadly mistaken and he is going to hurt the consumer in this province a lot more than he ever anticipated. That has been tried.

It is being done in Prince Edward Island and they have the highest price in the country. It was tried in Nova Scotia and disbanded because of the very fact that they had amongst the highest prices in this country.

The question is a national problem, Madam Speaker, and that has to be addressed on a national basis. Minister Manley from Ottawa referred it to his department of Competition Policy and they came back and said, there is no problem. Tell the consumer to shop around.

Well, that is not acceptable to me and not acceptable to this government. We have said time and time again it is time we dealt with this matter on a national basis and not on a piecemeal one.

Mr. Maloway: Madam Speaker, once again the minister passes the buck.

Madam Speaker, to the same minister: Does he have any studies that his department has conducted during its monitoring process over the last few years that he can release to this House?

Mr. Ernst: Madam Speaker, as I have tried to explain to the House and to the member for Elmwood, we have been looking at this issue not only in a Manitoba context but in a national context in conjunction with our colleagues from across the country.

The fact of the matter is that the federal government has, up to this point at least, refused to acknowledge there is a problem on a national basis and has refused to deal with it on a national basis.

We are continuing, along with my colleagues from Saskatchewan, British Columbia, Alberta and Ontario, to press the federal government to deal with the issue, to bring together Consumer Affairs ministers from across Canada in order to address the issue of gasoline prices in this country.

Vulnerable Persons Act Proclamation

Mr. Doug Martindale (Burrows): Madam Speaker, in 1993, when there were three parties in this House, all

three parties approved The Vulnerable Persons Act, an excellent piece of legislation.

Unfortunately, since then there has been no public education campaign, there has been no announcement by the minister of hiring a Vulnerable Persons Commissioner and no proclamation of the act.

I would like to ask the Minister of Family Services: What is she doing to implement this important piece of legislation?

Hon. Bonnie Mitchelson (Minister of Family Services): Madam Speaker, I thank my honourable friend for that question, because when that legislation was passed all members of this House recognized and realized that it was leading-edge legislation that would provide support for those living with mental disabilities in our community.

We have been working hard to try to get things up to speed. It is, as I said, leading-edge legislation. There is a lot of preparatory work to do before the legislation is proclaimed.

The competition has been held for the Vulnerable Persons Commissioner, and we are in the final stages of making the decision on the Vulnerable Persons Commissioner.

After that commissioner is in place and once the appeal panels are set and those members of the appeal panel are oriented as to their roles and responsibilities, we will be proclaiming the act.

Mr. Martindale: Can the Minister of Family Services tell the House if she has a timetable or a goal in mind of proclaiming the act? We have been waiting for almost two years, and it is long overdue.

Mrs. Mitchelson: Madam Speaker, as a result of the type of legislation—and you know I have heard the member opposite comment about legislation that was 75 years old. We have new legislation.

I believe it is incumbent and very important for the people of Manitoba that this government and this Legislature take the time necessary to ensure that when

the act is proclaimed, it will be a piece of legislation that we can all be proud of.

Taking Charge! Program Implementation

Mr. Doug Martindale (Burrows): Can the Minister of Family Services tell the House if anything is going to happen in terms of the Taking Charge! program, which was announced in September of last year with the federal minister and herself? We have no office. We have none of the 4,000 people that are supposed to go through this program taking advantage of it. When is it going to open?

Hon. Bonnie Mitchelson (Minister of Family Services): Madam Speaker, again I thank my honourable friend for that question on Taking Charge!, because it is an innovative program that is not happening anywhere else across the country.

An Honourable Member: It is not happening here either.

Mrs. Mitchelson: It is indeed happening.

The board of directors has been appointed by both levels of government. They are in the process now of searching for an executive director. That bulletin has been placed already. They are in the process of negotiating a lease for a storefront operation.

As soon as those things are done the office will be up and running and single parents on social assistance will have the ability to change their lives.

Winnipeg Police Service Additional Officers

Mr. Gary Kowalski (The Maples): Madam Speaker, my question is for the First Minister.

Recent news of an increase in the rate of muggings in the city of Winnipeg underlines concerns of all Manitobans about safety on our streets.

Given that the government was willing to respond to public outcry and commit more than three times the

amount of money promised in the election campaign for the construction of a new arena, when can we expect a similar increase and commitment to put 40 additional police officers on the streets of Winnipeg?

Hon. Gary Filmon (Premier): Madam Speaker, I thank the member for the question.

During the election campaign we did make a commitment of \$2 million to put 40 additional police officers onto the beat in the city of Winnipeg to deal with issues of crime.

We have, through the Secretariat Treasury Board, asked the City of Winnipeg for their plan for the deployment of the forces because we wanted to be assured that this would lead to officers on the beat as opposed to administration being beefed up.

That plan is being awaited and I understand that there will be further discussions very, very shortly to deal with the plan and to give authorization to the city to proceed with the hiring of those 40 additional officers.

Justice System Hearing Officers—Layoffs

Mr. Gary Kowalski (The Maples): A supplementary question for the Minister of Justice: Now that the government has issued layoff notices to hearing officers, will the minister explain how she plans to deal with the administrative problems associated with the hearing officer system in order to ensure that police officers spend less time transporting suspects from place to place?

Hon. Gary Filmon (Premier): Madam Speaker, I will take that question as notice on behalf of the Minister of Justice and have her respond as soon as she returns to the House.

Throne Speech Crime Reduction Initiatives

Mr. Gary Kowalski (The Maples): Can the minister explain, with the increase in the rate of crime in the province of Manitoba and the obvious concern of Manitobans over the issues, why there was no

commitment to take action in the recent Speech from the Throne?

Hon. Gary Filmon (Premier): Madam Speaker, as the throne speech indicates, the government remains committed to all of the issues that are in the December throne speech, which was passed by this House, as well as any other statements that were in the very, very short throne speech that was introduced earlier this week.

I can assure the member for The Maples that the minister will indeed be putting forth an extensive program of matters to do with justice, safety in our communities and all of those issues that are of concern to him.

Madam Speaker: Time for Oral Questions has expired.

* (1050)

ORDERS OF THE DAY

THRONE SPEECH DEBATE (Fourth Day of Debate)

Madam Speaker: To resume debate on the proposed motion of the honourable member for Riel (Mr. Newman) for an address to His Honour the Lieutenant-Governor in answer to his speech at the opening of the session and on the proposed motion of the honourable Leader of the official opposition (Mr. Doer) in amendment thereto.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Inkster): Madam Speaker, I would like to end my comments with respect to health care by commenting very briefly in terms of what I perceive was during the election where we saw a lot of criticism of the government, and a good deal of it was substantiated.

I was also concerned in terms of the amount of information that was being put out and the scare tactics that were being used from at least one political party during the campaign, where they attempted to give the impression that if in fact there was no change in government that the health care system would fall apart as we know it today. I recall very vividly a number of conversations that I had at the doors of people.

The Minister of Health (Mr. McCrae) makes reference to elder abuse. Many of those elders whom I had talked to during the election were very fearful in terms that they believed everything they saw about health care, the five fundamental principles of health care, was falling apart and it was not going to be there in the next few years.

I took the time with these seniors to explain to them that really and truly health care does not have to be as political as one political party might choose to make it for their own political benefit, their own political gain.

If we look across this country, we will see that health care reform is needed. Health care reform can be justified quite easily. It does not matter what political party one is from; it depends on the political will of the government of the day, and if the will is there to see positive reform and do the changes that are necessary. In fact, health care as we see it today albeit will change somewhat. Seniors should not have to be worried that they are not going to be able to go into a hospital if they require that sort of assistance. No political party owns an issue of health care.

I do not believe there is a member inside the Chamber, Madam Speaker, who has the same strong convictions about universality of our health care system and those five fundamental principles than I. That is just to conclude on the health care.

Dealing with education, Madam Speaker, it is good to see the government has in fact started to listen to what the Liberal opposition party was saying even prior to the election in dealing with education.

When The Action Plan came out, when the blueprint came out, we indicated to this government that they are going too far in education in terms of excluding people from participating, in particular the teachers. We felt it was irresponsible to say that teachers do not have a role in terms of participating in an active way on parent councils.

Madam Speaker, we expressed concern about this government choosing to allow teachers to suspend kids from the schools. During the election we saw the government change its mind. We were pleased to see

that. I look at it and I see the action plan is still there. The new Minister of Education (Mrs. McIntosh), in whom I have trust and confidence, will look very carefully over the action plan and do a number of changes, because there are a number of changes that are in fact needed.

Another one that was very hotly debated and discussed inside this Chamber was with respect to the curriculum on physical education in which the government did backtrack somewhat by allowing it to be compulsory, including Grades 9 and 10. There is a very strong case to be made that it could be compulsory for Grades 11 and 12.

If we take a look at Canadian history in Grade 11, again we see the professionals that are out there. The parents, I believe, and other partners in education or individuals that are interested in education realize the importance of Canadian history at that grade level. Hopefully, Madam Speaker, we will see this minister reflect on the action plan and make some of those changes that are in fact very badly needed.

On other issues such as crime, my colleague from The Maples today brought up a very good point. He talked about the commitment that this government made with respect to the 40 police officers that were going to be put into the city of Winnipeg. We want to see those police officers out on the streets. In fact, I really believe that what we need to start doing is to move more towards community-based policing.

I have seen the benefits of the work in particular that the member for The Maples (Mr. Kowalski) has done in the area that he represents by working very hard and in co-operation with Michael O'Shaughnessy, the local councillor from the area, to get a community police office located in that area.

I, too, would like to have a community-based police officer working out of the Garden Grove-Tyndall Park area, servicing the Meadows West, Burrows, Shaughnessy area also. I hope and I trust that the government will be doing what it can to ensure that the idea or the concept of community-based policing does materialize, that the dollars that are being allocated are not necessarily going to be lost into administration.

Citizens that we all represent want to feel safe in their communities.

Madam Speaker, I am prepared as the local representative to co-operate and to do what is necessary in order to facilitate a community police office located in my area, even if it means approaching the local businessmen, business people I should say, to solicit donations for an office and so forth, because it is a very important issue. It is a very important platform that the Liberal Party took in terms of, let us not only get tough on crime, let us get tough on the causes of crime. One of the ways that you do that is to bring the community police office into it, starting to provide programs and initiatives for our young people.

We sat in caucus the other day and we talked about the importance of the north end Y and how important it is that this government do what it can to ensure that the north Y is going to be there in the future, Madam Speaker. Again, if we want to get tough on crime, let us ensure that these activities, these capital structures are in fact being utilized by our young people. If they are being utilized by young people, you will find that there is going to be less youth that are out on the streets doing who knows what, and that can be applied to the local schools, community clubs and so forth.

Another issue in which I believe that the Leader of the Liberal Party was extremely successful in getting across to all Manitobans is the whole issue of child poverty. It has been interesting. Really for the first time I have heard so many people inside this Chamber talk about child poverty over the last couple of days. It is good to see that this is an issue that has been raised. I look forward to see over the next while what sort of concrete action this government is going to be taking to deal with the whole issue of child poverty. Again I remind all members of this Chamber that no one owns the issue of child poverty, that in fact we should all be addressing it in a very progressive fashion to try to deal with a very serious issue in the province.

Madam Speaker, I would ask how much time I have left. All I would ask is you give me one minute warning, because I do have a subamendment. So I would ask that you give me a one-minute warning. Thank you.

Madam Speaker: The honourable member for Inkster has approximately 18 minutes remaining.

Mr. Lamoureux: Thank you, Madam Speaker. As I say, if you could give me that one-minute warning so I can move the subamendment, I would appreciate it—or two-minute warning.

There are other things that have occurred. The gambling issue was a very important issue to the Liberal Party, because we see the social costs that have been caused by this government's policy on gambling. We were glad to see that they have a commission that is out there headed by Larry Desjardins, Madam Speaker. We wait with anticipation to hear what sorts of public meetings there are going to be. Are there going to be vehicles in which the public will have direct input to this commission? When will we see this commission reporting back to the House? There are a lot of questions that need to be answered with this particular issue.

* (1100)

Other issues during the election, Madam Speaker, I found were very much federal issues which the government of the day and the current official opposition brought up time and time again.

The member that represents the area of Steinbach makes reference to gun registration. You know, Madam Speaker, I recall the Pedlar report where I believe it is suggested in there that we have gun registration. I believe all political parties supported the Pedlar report, and that was one of the recommendations. I believe there was a very strong letter that was sent from the member for Wellington, as the Status for Women's critic, in terms of saying how we need to take strong action. I believe there was even an inference to registration.

It is interesting in a sense that the gun registration is an issue that is federal. As I told so many of my constituents, we inside this Chamber will never have the opportunity to vote on the federal package, but I respect the fact that it is important to them. This is the reason why I was prepared to ensure that in fact this is something I would articulate to my federal colleagues

and so forth. It was one of those issues that the government of the day, in particular, tried to pump up and the misinformation that was out there was phenomenal. I had people at the door who were saying, it is going to cost me \$100 to register one gun and I have six guns; that means \$600. I am going to have to register on an annual basis.

Where did they get all this misinformation from? Where did they get all this information that has absolutely no foundation on facts whatsoever? The government used the same sort of tactics on gun registration as the NDP used with health care in order to try to scare, to provide that misinformation.

Then we had the whole issue of immigration, Madam Speaker, and in the north end the New Democrats were labelling—you know, saying, well, geez, this bad fellow; you cannot vote for the provincial Liberals because the federal Liberals are doing this and this with respect to the immigration. Well, the real issue in the province, as a provincial legislator, is the bilateral agreement. Why were they not talking about the bilateral agreement? That is the thing that we should be talking about.

You know, the New Democrats know what the provincial Liberal party's position is with respect to the \$975 landing fee and the \$500 processing fee. I never saw the NDP representatives out at many meetings advocating on behalf of immigration matters. These are the types of tactics that were used, and I guess one has to appreciate it because you have to live by those sorts of tactics.

One of the last ones was, of course, the Winnipeg Jets. The Winnipeg Jets, as has been pointed out with respect to the \$10 million, was a commitment in which, at least I had thought at the time, all three political parties supported that. Then, after the election, the government basically indicated within days that we have lost the Winnipeg Jets.

Then there were all sorts of protests, even that the Premier (Mr. Filmon) was not doing all that well in terms of these protests started to rally against the government, and the government came up with an additional \$27 million, and we will wait and we will

see in terms of what is actually going to be happening on this particular agreement.

Madam Speaker, we do believe that the government has to be straightforward with this Chamber and tell us exactly what it is that they are doing with the Winnipeg Jets, what sorts of financial commitments are actually made and what other financial commitments that this government might even be contemplating.

These are all important issues and there is no doubt about that. Even though over the next four years the government is going to come up with a number of additional throne speeches and budget debates and there is going to be many questions inside this Chamber and a lot of those questions and thrones and budgets, a lot of that attention is going to be given to what is happening in Ottawa.

Madam Speaker, I do believe, if the national government does do something that is not in the best interests of the province of Manitoba that, yes, it is important for us to correspond and let our concerns be known. I will do that, whether it is through Dr. Rey Pagtakhan from Winnipeg North or Lloyd Axworthy from Winnipeg South Centre or Reg Alcock from Winnipeg South. Having the ability to be able to sit down with these individuals and to express what I feel or we feel as a provincial party is right and correct for the province of Manitoba is something that we take very seriously and we will do the best job that we can.

But, Madam Speaker, we have found that both the government and the opposition will take and do whatever is necessary in order to slam the federal government. It is difficult to understand how, for example, let us say the Minister of Justice (Mrs. Vodrey) can be so vocal and critical of the national government and then expect that the national government is going to respond instantly 100 percent of the time in her favour or in this government's favour, because the Government of Canada also listens and has to act on what they believe is in fact in the best interests of all citizens of Canada and Manitobans are first and foremost, I would argue, Canadians, but being very proud of our heritage in the province of Manitoba and that is why we are celebrating the 125th anniversary.

Madam Speaker, it is very important that when the federal government does something and individuals inside this Chamber suggest that we want the unanimous consent of all individuals inside this Chamber to lobby the government, it would be courteous and preferable that they actually approach us as independents. If they are feeling frustrated, maybe there might be something that we can do in terms of setting up meetings. If we can do that, we will do that.

Ultimately, the bottom line is that Manitoba has done a lot better under the Jean Chretien government than it ever did under the Brian Mulroney government. I have a lot more faith in Lloyd Axworthy. I think Lloyd Axworthy has done more for the province of Manitoba than any other federal minister that I am aware of.

I would challenge any member to stand up and to indicate otherwise, to tell me what other federal minister has done so well in the province of Manitoba in terms of ensuring that we have our fair share.

Madam Speaker, I do believe that ultimately in the long run, under a federal Liberal administration, the province of Manitoba will do quite well. We will in fact get our fair share. That is not to say that we are going to agree with everything the federal Liberals do. There are going to be times, as in the past, when we disagree with the federal Liberals. That will continue if there are some things that we disagree with.

The member for Burrows (Mr. Martindale) brings up—and again I allude to the north end candidates—as he did during the election, well, what about the immigration policy. He asked if I support it. We have been very clear on it. We never supported the \$975 landing fee. Let us be honest with Manitobans. It was the federal Liberals that opened up Canada to immigration. We are the ones that ensured these same immigrants that the member for Burrows is criticizing the Liberal Party for are the ones who opened the doors.

Ultimately, what we should be talking about is the bilateral agreement. I do not think any member of the New Democratic caucus—

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Madam Speaker: Order, please. I am experiencing great difficulty hearing the honourable member for Inkster.

Mr. Lamoureux: Madam Speaker, the provincial Liberal Party at times will not necessarily be in full concurrence with our national party on some issues, and there are areas, some of which we have already pointed out.

Ultimately, as I have indicated, I have a lot more faith in the federal Liberals than I do with respect to the Conservatives or the New Democrats or the Reform. This is why I am prepared to give the benefit of the doubt until facts have been put forward that give us reason to believe that what the federal government is doing is wrong.

* (1110)

I listened to the member for St. James (Ms. Mihychuk) talk about the Air Command base being closed or being relocated— [applause] and the New Democrats applaud.

Madam Speaker, there is so much hypocrisy in the New Democratic caucus. These are the ones who say, pull out of NATO. They want to see defence spending cut back in the past. What was the former great leader Ed Broadbent saying about the military? What do you expect if you are going to be reducing the size of the Canadian forces? Do you think that is going to have no impact on the province of Manitoba? Get your head out of the sand. Obviously, things of this nature are going to have an impact.

Do you want to see the Canadian forces expanded? Do you want to see us increase the number of people who are in the military? Madam Speaker, every other province also got hit hard by the federal budget. Then you might say, well, jeez, the federal Liberals, they cut, right? So, because they cut, Manitoba was hurt but so were other regions. The bottom line is Manitoba was hurt. Well, again, if they open their eyes they will see all political parties of all stripes across Canada are making significant cuts, even the holy Bob Rae in Ontario who is coming to an election, I believe, on June 8.

It is one thing to preach from your seat on how wonderful things can be if we are in government. I have always believed and will argue today that many New Democrats argue there are two types of New Democrats. There are the New Democrats who are in government and there are the New Democrats who are in opposition. The New Democrats who are in opposition are the individuals who will say and do anything and everything in order to get a vote—nothing else, nothing more. [interjection]

The Leader from the New Democrats (Mr. Doer) says, abolish the GST. Ed Schreyer said that he would abolish the PST and NDP governments raise the PST. Jean Chretien did not say he was going to abolish the GST; Jean Chretien said he was going to replace the GST. I believe that there is a difference between the two.

What will the opposition and what will this government, more importantly, this government do with respect to the GST? Will they try to co-operate with the government in trying to replace this GST, or will this government do whatever it possibly can to put up roadblocks so that it is harder for the government to replace the GST? In essence, when we talk about federal and provincial relations, this is what we should be talking about: How can we ensure through federal and provincial co-operation that the taxpayer will be better served, that the social programs that are out there can in fact be enhanced.

Madam Speaker, I see that I have two minutes left, so on that note I would like to move, seconded by the member for The Maples (Mr. Kowalski),

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

And further regrets:

1. that Manitoba's labour force shrank by 4,000 over the past year, the largest decline of any Canadian province; and,

2. that thousands of Manitobans continue to leave this province to seek greater opportunities elsewhere; and,

3. that this government still has no solid vision for economic growth, relying increasingly on gambling revenue to pay for its programs; and,

4. that this government has failed to recognize that competitive advantage in the global economy is a product of one's ability to acquire and apply knowledge and that this is fostered by an effective and modern education system; and,

5. that this government has spent years talking about new directions for Manitoba's education system but has failed to implement any constructive changes; and,

6. that this government has jeopardized Manitoba's health care system by failing to find innovative ways of meeting the challenges facing it.

Motion presented.

Madam Speaker: The amendment to the amendment is in order.

Mr. Gerard Jennissen (Flin Flon): Thank you for granting me the time and the privilege to address this new Assembly.

I congratulate you, Madam Speaker, on your appointment as Speaker of this House. Although I confess to being biased in favour of an elected Speaker rather than an appointed Speaker, I am confident that your tenure as Speaker will show the same wisdom, common sense, good humour and impartiality that so graced the previous Speaker of this House.

As I salute the previous Speaker of the House on a job well done, I now salute you for accepting your new and challenging role, and I look forward to working with you.

Indeed, I look forward to working with all the members of this Assembly. I congratulate all the members on their recent election or re-election, and I congratulate the First Minister (Mr. Filmon) and his cabinet.

I pay special tribute to the 11 newly-elected members. They will not be hard to recognize. They

are the ones that listen to all the speeches, and they are the ones that have that dazed look, that look a fish has when out of water, and I think, Madam Speaker, that is entirely due to information overload.

Fortunately, the information overload has been much reduced, short-circuited so to speak, because of two important factors: No. 1, the tremendous help given to us by the capable staff working for this Assembly, particular the table of procedural staff, and more particularly, the Clerk, Mr. Remnant; secondly, the universal, although unfounded, belief of all rookies that they can leap tall buildings and walk on water. I am one of those rookies myself and I know that soon we will all be chastened by reality.

I wish to thank the Pages that work in this House. May your experiences here be rewarding and not disillusioning.

One reason I am here today, Madam Speaker, is because of the collective will of the voters of Flin Flon. With sincerity and humility, I thank my constituents for their support. I thank them for the confidence and trust they have placed in me, and—

Madam Speaker: Order, please.

I am wondering if I might request that the members that are carrying on meetings do so in a more orderly and quiet manner or remove themselves from the Chamber or the loge, to be fair particularly to a new member in his maiden speech.

Mr. Jennissen: On their behalf then, my constituents, I will work ceaselessly.

Professor Paul Thomas, a gentleman for whom I have great respect, said a few days ago: In politics there are only two kinds of horses—workhorses and showhorses.

Madam Speaker, I hope that I am a workhorse who will serve all his constituents well, but who knows, perhaps there lurk in me showhorse qualities and I will gallop into political theatre along with other showhorses, saddled with responsibilities, bridled at the mouth as behoves us.

* (1120)

The other reason then why I am here today is because I chose to get into politics. I actually chose public service. There might have been a nudge or two along the way to get me started I admit. I well remember a few years ago, my wife Lisa looking me straight in the eye and saying, Gerard, there is room for only one prima donna per family. I took that as a strong hint for a career change on my part.

In all seriousness, I owe a great deal to my family. Without my wife Lisa's strong love and support, I would not be here today. My daughter Tracy's unfailing good humour was always there for me also. My son John worked tirelessly during the election campaign, and my youngest son Andrew, who is only 14, knocked on doors and delivered pamphlets. Thank you all.

There are numerous individuals and workers I should thank, Madam Speaker, but I will mention only a few. Time constraints allow me to pay tribute to only a few.

One of those people is Tom Barrow. In 1969, Tom Barrow was elected in the Flin Flon constituency, and he represented that constituency until 1981. His style was direct, no-nonsense, forthright, honest. He was a miner. He never backed down from a fight. I loved working with Tom. He was the perfect representative for working-class people, the people who are the backbone of this province and this country. Alas, Tom is no longer with us. His wife Hazel still lives in the North though. She has been one of my most ardent supporters and worked tirelessly during the last election campaign.

As well, Madam Speaker, I would like to pay tribute to Jerry Storie who served the Flin Flon constituency from 1981 to 1994 and who served with distinction. As my Leader has aptly pointed out, Jerry Storie's tiny perfect shoes will be hard to fill. Jerry and his hard-working wife Betty have done so much for the North. Jerry Storie, the former member for Flin Flon, in his various capacities over the years, has been a tremendous asset to his political party, this Assembly and the entire province. He is sorely missed. He is a hard act to follow.

Still, Madam Speaker, if you will continue to indulge me by allowing metaphorical expression, although Jerry Storie is as a silk purse to my sow's ear, we do have similarities. Jerry Storie and I are both teachers. We are both northerners by deliberate choice. We both live in Cranberry Portage, and it is even rumoured, Madam Speaker, rumoured, that we are both married to near perfect spouses. But I will not comment on that because I am not certain as to the source of that rumour.

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

Of course, both Jerry and I are vertically challenged, but then I take comfort in the fact that Tommy Douglas, too, was vertically challenged. Besides in these difficult economic times where downsizing is all the rage, smaller economy size politicians are sending an important message to the public—doing more with less.

There are three additional people who I would like to thank, Nestor and Vicky Dolinsky of Flin Flon for their untiring efforts not only in supporting me but also keeping alive and strong that vision which shaped the CCF. I suspect that as this decade takes on more and more, the desperate and mean-spirited characteristics of the 1930s, the CCF vision of 1933 refocused perhaps, also will be in demand more and more. If the pendulum swings only to the right, then the clock is broken.

The last person I would like to thank is Mrs. Margaret Head. She is a respected elder from Cranberry Portage. She is almost 80 years old. She has never wavered in her loyalty to me. She has campaigned with me in isolated remote areas. She has knocked on doors. She has slept on floors. It was her quiet dignity, her perseverance and inner strength that made my own journey so much easier. In Metis communities, in aboriginal communities, her presence opened many doors for me. She showed me how to walk that difficult path between the white community and the aboriginal community, how to respect the strengths of each community, how to address the weaknesses of each community. Her spirituality shone like a bright star. Her words will always haunt me.

She said, you should not avoid the path the Creator chooses for you and if you have the courage to walk that path, then in your life there will be no coincidences.

Perhaps those words have meaning only in the North where the sun, the rocks, the trees, the waters look exactly as they did 10,000 years ago. Perhaps those words are for the spirit only and are easily drowned out in the South, drowned out by the noise of traffic, the shouts of the money lenders, the speeches of the politicians. The ancient truths of an ancient land are easily overlooked in a world where speed, technology, money and image are paramount.

The wilderness speaks to the people of the North. What speaks to the people of the South? What do they worship, and where do they worship? What will be worshipped in this proposed new temple, this proposed new hockey arena?

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I would be remiss if I did not pay tribute to my Leader and to the caucus of which I now am a member. My Leader is a three-time winner. He has increased the popular vote of our party in each election, and he has done it in a world blinded by the neo-Conservative agenda. He has done it without backing down on principles and values. I respect that.

The throne speech mentioned strong and balanced representation. Where are the government's northern members? Where are the government's aboriginal members?

In my party's caucus there are six women, four members of aboriginal descent, four members born outside of Canada. Our caucus includes rural members. Our caucus includes city members. Truly, the caucus of which I am proud to be a member is the only one to represent all of Manitoba.

In the absence of an official second opposition party in Manitoba, our party and our Leader have become the de facto voice of 57 percent of the electorate of this province.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I now would like to speak briefly about the constituency of Flin Flon. The Flin

Flin constituency is huge and sprawling and covers approximately the northwest quadrant of this province. The major urban centre is Flin Flon which is located roughly 800 kilometres northwest of Winnipeg via road. Some communities can be reached by road or rail but many can only be reached by water, winter road or airplane.

The communities in the Flin Flon constituency can be divided roughly into two groups, mining communities and communities based on tourism, and the traditional lifestyles of hunting, trapping, fishing and gathering, that is, the mining communities, the more traditional tourism and traditional lifestyle communities.

The mining communities are Flin Flon, Snow Lake, Leaf Rapids and Lynn Lake. The smaller communities are Cranberry Portage, Cold Lake-Sherridon, Pukatawagan, Granville Lake, South Indian Lake, Brochet, Lac Brochet and Tadoule Lake.

Many of the smaller aboriginal communities exist in isolated splendour. The splendour refers to the breathtaking scenery of the North. Many of the inhabitants in those isolated communities live in the grinding poverty so characteristic of Third World countries.

It has always mystified me, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that this harsh and beautiful northern land with its generous and open-hearted people should be so ravaged by lack of opportunity and unemployment. Many of its people, especially young people, are driven to drugs, alcohol and violence. In the remote communities, suicide is the No. 1 cause of death among young people.

I would like to talk about that a little bit. I am a teacher and I have taught for 23 years at Frontier Collegiate Institute at Cranberry Portage. I have taught literally hundreds and hundreds and hundreds of northern students, because Frontier Collegiate is a residential high school for northern students. I have 23 yearbooks. I can pick up any yearbook and randomly select a page of student pictures and invariably on that page there will be pictures of one, two or three students who are now dead. These yearbooks for me have become books of the dead. Dozens and dozens of

young people that I once taught, admired and cherished are dead—suicide, violence, drowning, fire.

* (1130)

And who will mourn my dead? The provincial cabinet goes through collective agony over the possibility of a professional hockey team leaving the city. The Premier (Mr. Filmon) breaks his election promise and gives over four times as much as he stated was his final offer. The Premier is willing to sign blank cheques with no conditions known. We are talking about just a game, the game of hockey—tears for the Jets but no tears for the tragedies and the wasted human potential in the North.

It is easier to blame the victim, and although northerners are often ignored or marginalized, the wealth of the North is easily exploited, is eagerly exploited and accepted by the south. Hydro, minerals, lumber, pulp, paper, fur, fish—they all go south. They all flow south. Little or no money for roads, hospitals, schools, crisis centres, water, sewage—no wonder, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that northern people are angry and cynical. Some serious structural changes are needed, but even minor positive changes will be welcome.

Just what is needed? Allow me to chronicle community by community what is needed and to discuss some of the issues relevant to each community.

Let us start with the northernmost community in the Flin Flon constituency, Tadoule Lake. The Sayisi Dene First Nation of Tadoule Lake was moved at gunpoint, so the elders tell me, in the early 1950s. They have moved three times since then. The people want a new school. They are concerned about the new parks that were created unilaterally by a stroke of the pen. They fear those parks are on traditional hunting areas and that treaty land entitlement will be affected.

The people have other concerns. One man told me that when forest fires surrounded Tadoule a few years ago water bombers were sent after much pleading but only to protect a lodge owned by a white man.

Lac Brochet, a Dene-speaking community, desperately needs jobs for its young people. They need

a drop-in centre where counselling can be provided. The federal government is building a new school for which there is obvious need but equally obvious is the need for more and better housing.

Brochet residents are unhappy with the communication system that links them to the rest of the world. The Canadian TV channels available to them are from Vancouver and Montreal. They never hear about the Jets. They never hear about Winnipeg. Some residents are angry with the food mail program with which the federal government has tampered. Food prices are already astronomical in the North but according to one resident a two-kilogram bag of powdered milk now costs \$39 air freight.

South Indian Lake has just finished what Granville Lake is about to experience, namely, becoming a political football between provincial and federal governments over social assistance. Freight subsidies for fresh water fish have been severely curtailed by both levels of government, forcing those who fish for a living away from self-reliance toward social assistance.

The South Bay Road that leads to a ferry which connects South Indian Lake with the rest of the province needs major upgrading. Treaty land entitlement and the proposed parks are also an issue.

Regarding the parks, Mr. Deputy Speaker, there have been no meaningful consultations between the provincial government and northern and aboriginal people regarding those proposed new parks.

Lynn Lake, formerly a prosperous mining town, is fighting back from the economic despair that a few years ago had reduced that once proud town to almost a ghost town. Still, drugs, alcohol and inadequate police protection continue to be a problem. However, the greatest need is for a decent road. The road connecting Lynn Lake to Leaf Rapids was paved decades ago, and the surface has now broken and crumbled. One highway sign warns of a 74-kilometre stretch of bumps. That must be a world record.

Lynn Lake could be connected to Flin Flon if a 100-kilometre section of new road were to be built. Such a

new road would shorten the journey from Lynn Lake to Flin Flon by almost 600 kilometres, and it would also allow road access to Pukatawagan and Granville Lake. Think of the tourist potential if the North had decent new and upgraded roads. We, as northerners, will create the jobs, but help us with the infrastructure.

Cutting the provincial Highways budget allocation for the North, which historically has been at 15 percent to 20 percent of the entire budget, to only 5 percent and 6 percent is simply not good enough. It is an insult to northerners. It is an extension of that Perimeter Highway vision that assumes nothing of value exists north of Winnipeg.

As the federal government is abdicating its responsibility towards maintaining northern airports, the provincial government is abdicating its responsibility by underfunding the maintenance and construction of northern roads. Our lifelines are being cut and we are being strangled.

Leaf Rapids has three major concerns: the condition of Highway 391, doctor shortages and mine safety. I need not chronicle all of the horrors connected with Highway 391. That road is virtually impassable in the spring. Ambulances from Leaf Rapids to Thompson sometimes need police escorts, and if you should get stuck on 391, do not walk to the nearest telecommunications tower for an emergency telephone. The emergency telephones have been removed. [interjection] Yes.

Leaf Rapids, like Lynn Lake, is concerned about doctor shortages. Regulations which restrict immigrant doctors to half a year or a one-year stay in the North need to be changed. I am heartened by the fact that the honourable Minister of Health (Mr. McCrae) is meeting today with a delegation from Leaf Rapids and Lynn Lake. Such a meeting was long overdue.

Leaf Rapids is a mining town and the workers and their families are concerned with mine safety. A few weeks ago, a geologist was seriously hurt in the Ruttan mine. Had there not been ambulance service, had there not been a local doctor present, that man could have lost his life. Other workers in Leaf Rapids complain of poor ventilation in the mine.

The health and safety of workers is of concern to all of us, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I know it personally. My own father was an underground coal miner and he worked there for 24 years. I know what silicosis is, what black lung is, and I know what it does to a person's health.

Pukatawagan is an isolated community that can be reached by sporadic rail service or by air. The water and sewage issue has not yet been fully resolved in Pukatawagan. The nurses recommend the boiling of all drinking water. The unemployment rate is very high in Pukatawagan although the band works hard at diversification and the creation of jobs in logging and fishing. Treaty land entitlement is an issue.

I am happy to report, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that Snow Lake has bounced back to near boom status as part of that boom-bust cycle that plagues one-industry mining towns.

TVX is carrying on profitable gold mining and other mining ventures such as Photo Lake are on the horizon.

Still, many of the new jobs in Snow Lake have been contracted out to workers from outside of Manitoba. This is of concern to local workers who still remain unemployed.

Cranberry Portage's population has shrunk from 1,200 a few years ago to 800 today. More and more businesses are closing down. The largest generators of jobs are the residential school, Frontier Collegiate Institute, tourism and logging. Few young people can find jobs in Cranberry Portage. That is a pity. It is such a beautiful scenic community with such a rich and colourful history. It is also my own home town.

Cold Lake-Sherridon suffered a serious economic setback with the closing of the Puffy Lake gold mine a few years ago. Despite the traditional activities such as trapping, hunting and fishing and despite some tourism and logging, there is still inadequate employment. As always in the North, roads are a problem. The Sherridon road is narrow and winding. Many serious accidents have occurred on that road. That road should be changed to a designated provincial highway and maintained accordingly.

This brings me, Mr. Deputy Speaker, to the last and largest of the communities in the Flin Flon constituency, namely Flin Flon itself. It is a beautiful community, a one-of-a-kind community that must be seen and experienced in order to be properly appreciated.

Accordingly, I invite the honourable members to participate in the Flin Flon Trout Festival in early July and experience great fishing, good food, wonderful scenery and traditional warm northern hospitality.

Flin Flon is a mining town, and the main employer is Hudson Bay Mining and Smelting. Economically all is not as it should be for this beautiful little city perched on the bedrock of the Canadian Shield. Hundreds of jobs have been lost in the mining sector. Furthermore, a suburb of Flin Flon, Channing, is still without running water, is still not hooked up to the city sewage system. The city's own water and sewage systems need major upgrading. It is imperative that all levels of government and Hudson Bay Mining and Smelting sit down and hammer out an agreement soon that will lead to upgrading and modernizing of the water and sewage facilities for Flin Flon-Channing. The status quo is no longer acceptable. Even on environmental grounds alone, major changes to the sewage system of Flin Flon are needed.

The citizens of Flin Flon and especially the very young and very old will be negatively affected if the proposed cutbacks to the Flin Flon General Hospital take effect. Not only Flin Flon will suffer but the entire catchment area—Creighton, Denare Beach, Cranberry Portage and other small centres surrounding Flin Flon.

For example, the Peter Ballantyne Cree Nation of northern Saskatchewan uses the facility extensively. Approximately one-third of the patients in the Flin Flon General Hospital have been from the Peter Ballantyne Band.

The band has on previous occasions considered taking their sick people to Prince Albert, thus bypassing Flin Flon. The band's concern was quality health care. How can quality be improved or maintained if the proposed cutbacks are implemented? How can you chop \$1.57 million from a hospital

budget, eliminate 29 nursing salary units and lay off 17 support workers without severely mutilating the system? Do northerners not deserve decent health care?

* (1140)

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I lived in Saskatchewan when medicare was born, and I will not be a willing participant at its burial. We have lost enough in Flin Flon. Both the Flin Flon/Creighton Crisis Centre and the Friendship Centre had their funding slashed in 1993. Poverty and domestic violence are on the increase. In the early '70s Flin Flon residents had the highest per capita disposable income in Canada when compared to communities of similar size. This no longer the case. Now I see many empty houses. One of the largest growth industries in Flin Flon has become the Lord's Bounty food bank and the soup kitchen. I know because I have worked there as a volunteer.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, our young people do not have jobs. Small businesses are suffering. Senior citizens are worried about health care, drugs that are delisted, the \$50 user fee when they travel south for medical appointments. Teachers and nurses are stressed out over possible layoffs. Miners are hurt or killed in situations that could have been prevented. Taxpayers cannot make ends meet. The city's tax base is shrinking. How do we overcome these problems? For one thing you cannot cut and slash your way to prosperity.

I am encouraged by the throne speech's reference to "... public-private partnerships as proven instruments for developing new economic opportunities . . .", in other words those very partnerships for which Jerry Storie fought so hard in Leaf Rapids and also Trout Lake mine and Callinan mine. Those are the very same joint ventures of which the government sold its share of the assets—talk about being ideologically hidebound.

What about Manitoba Mineral Resources and the Mining Reserve Fund, the very things that could help the mining sector or cushion the blow to smaller mining communities in tough times the government sells off or uses for purposes other than for which they were intended.

Let us have a northern economic strategy. Let us not spend two or three years and a million bucks drafting a Northern Economic Development Commission report, then dust off the report before the election and stick it back on the shelf after the election.

I will close, Mr. Deputy Speaker, by saying that the hallmark of a civilized society is not how it treats its rich and powerful but how it treats its poor and marginalized. The rich have plenty of voices, and their media speaks for them day after day, hour after hour. Ordinary working-class people know this, they tell us all the time. The rich get richer; the poor get poorer. We in this Chamber do not have to be willing accomplices to that kind of agenda.

I for one will strive to walk in that light painstakingly kindled by Tommy Douglas, Woodrow Lloyd and Allan Blakeney. Yes, and all three of them balance their budgets, really balance them. I prefer to walk in that light which liberates the human soul rather than join that huge and sorry procession that marches deliberately in the sinister shadows cast by Margaret Thatcher, Ronald Reagan and Brian Mulroney.

For your patience, I thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Mr. Eric Robinson (Rupertstland): Mr. Deputy Speaker, it is an honour to again rise to add my words in addressing the Speech from the Throne opening this First Session of the Thirty-sixth Legislature of the Province of Manitoba.

I would like to first and foremost thank my constituents in Rupertstland for giving me the responsibility of representing them in this House. In my opinion, that is indeed the ultimate privilege, to be given that opportunity.

I would also like to talk about the tremendous support that I received from my own family—my wife, Kathy, and my daughter, Shaneen for their kind understanding and their support throughout our struggles. I am sure that all of us here, as MLAs, treasure the support we receive in our own home fires.

I too would like to welcome to this House the new honourable members from Rossmere (Mr. Toews), Riel

(Mr. Newman), Pembina (Mr. Dyck), Turtle Mountain (Mr. Tweed), Morris (Mr. Pitura) and River Heights (Mr. Radcliffe). I have not had the opportunity to meet all of them and extend my hand in friendship to those members, so I hope my words here today will express that sentiment, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

I would also like to express my words of welcome to my new colleagues from our caucus: the honourable members from St. James (Ms. Mihychuk), Osborne (Ms. McGifford), Crescentwood (Mr. Sale), Dauphin (Mr. Struthers) and Flin Flon (Mr. Jennissen).

Also I think it is very important for me to mention the Pages. I do apologize; I do not have their last names here: Karen, Ivan, Corinne, Jeff, Jaime and Davyd, I believe. I would like to thank them, and I hope that their learning experience here will carry them throughout their life.

Also it is most important in my mind as well to thank the previous Speaker of this House, the honourable member for Gladstone (Mr. Rocan), for the integrity and the honesty and his demonstration for fairness that he has shown in the job that he previously held.

At the same time, my congratulations go to the newly elected Speaker (Mrs. Dacquay), who I am sure brings the same high qualities to the job of Speaker of this House.

As well to you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I want to wish you the very best of luck in the work that lies ahead of you.

Also I would like to congratulate the members who have been named to serve in Cabinet and especially to the new members of Cabinet: the members for Rossmere (Mr. Toews), Portage la Prairie (Mr. Pallister) and Niakwa (Mr. Reimer).

All of us in this House, I believe, take the responsibility of being elected MLAs, representatives for people in Manitoba, and we should always be mindful of why we are here. I think that purpose is to serve all of Manitoba and all Manitobans.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I was born and raised in Norway House. I am a member of the Cross Lake First Nation. I grew up in many different communities throughout northern Manitoba, Grand Rapids, Churchill and trapline communities that do not have a name. I have had an opportunity to experience life in a remote northern community. I have also had the opportunity to experience life in an urban community. I have had also the experience of facing the ravages of alcoholism and what that can do to an individual. I personally experienced that. I also know what it is like to line up in soup lines. I also know what it is like to be in a situation of homelessness, and many of my people are faced with that reality every day throughout this country and in this city.

The communities that I represent in Rupertsland, of course, I think it is widely known that Rupertsland is the largest provincial constituency in this country starting from Sagkeeng all the way up to Churchill. We have roughly 28 communities throughout Rupertsland, and each of these communities experience their own problems in their own communities. To get around Rupertsland one needs to fly around. The diversity is such that on the north end of the constituency we have Churchill and the Port of Churchill, which I would like to talk about briefly. We have Gillam which is a one-industry town primarily, hydro. We have Bissett and we have also 17 First Nations communities in Rupertsland. As the elected representative of Rupertsland, I am here to represent the views of all those constituents regardless of the colour of their skin.

In many of our communities, it is sad to say, we have upwards of 90 percent, 95 percent unemployment rates in some of the communities. We have a lack of employment and training opportunities in many of our communities, and just like the member for Flin Flon (Mr. Jennissen) spoke on earlier, what we need is an economic or job strategy to restore some pride in many of these northern communities. Perhaps we can address many of the social problems that we hear about while we are in southern Manitoba. We need a strategy that will work with First Nations communities in developing the communities' needs.

As many members know in this House, there are four aboriginals, and we are very proud of that in our caucus. We have a member of the Metis Nation. We have a member of the Inuit Nation, and there are two of us, the member for The Pas (Mr. Lathlin) and I are members of the Cree Nation, Treaty No. 5, and also the member for Gladstone (Mr. Rocan), of course, is a member of the Metis Nation.

* (1150)

As First Nations people the member for The Pas and I are aware of the difficulties that our people have experienced in years gone by. It was not until 1952 that we were considered worthy of the vote in provincial politics, and we were given that right to vote in 1952. In 1960 we were given the opportunity to vote in federal politics. So our participation in the mainstream Canadian society has not been that long for us as First Nation's people, but we are catching up.

I want to talk about a few issues that are very important, in my opinion, Mr. Deputy Speaker. We have a government that has not acted on a very good report that was produced. As Manitobans, we should all be proud of the Aboriginal Justice Inquiry. It contained 293 recommendations, 101 of which directly relate to the province and gave the province a great opportunity to do something meaningful for aboriginal people in relation to a justice system in this province. It is unfortunate that this government has not seen fit to act upon the major recommendations of the Aboriginal Justice Inquiry.

With respect to aboriginal health, as I raised in this House during the last session, Manitoba was the only province or territory that did not attend or take part in an aboriginal health conference hosted by the province of Ontario last April.

Now, Manitoba's absence from this important conference happened in spite of the fact that First Nations people die on average 10 years sooner than the rest of the population. Further, native children die at twice the rate of other children in this country. We know diseases are rare in the general population, such as meningitis and tuberculosis. These diseases flourish

in many of our native communities, the reserves, the First Nations communities.

The community of Shamattawa, which gained a lot of attention in the years gone by for the problems that they were having there with respect to solvent abuse, recently have been experiencing many health-related problems due to a lack of good clean water. Children there have many stomach ailments and other diseases and illnesses relating to the quality of the water that they drink in that community.

Social problems on reserves are also high in part due to the high rate of unemployment, as I said earlier. Examples of these problems include solvent abuse, and I want to get in to some of the other problems that are experienced a little later on.

Another example that I do not like talking about but is an everyday reality for Indian people in this province, the rate of suicide among First Nations people and, unfortunately, among our youth. The rate of suicide among First Nations people is a rate that is 1.5 times as high as that of other Canadians. Those numbers may have changed, because figures that I speak from are figures that we received from the Department of Indian Affairs in 1988.

Making matters worse is that this government has not seen fit to lower the number of maintenance dollars and infrastructure dollars for northern Manitoba as well as the many First Nations communities that both the member for Flin Flon (Mr. Jennissen) and I have been talking about.

We have raised in this House matters relating to northern roads. I believe that my colleague the member for The Pas (Mr. Lathlin) related them as northern trails. Highway 391, Highway 280 and Highway 373 need immediate attention, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I do not stand here today to make cheap political shots at this government. Simply what I am talking about is fairness for all of Manitoba.

Many of our northern communities rely on a winter road system as well to bring down the cost of living just a little bit, to ease that pain in the winter months.

It was this government that cut that budget by 50 percent last year as well.

Northern airports are in need of repair as well in many northern communities. During the election we saw the Island Lake airport at Garden Hill shut down. Garden Hill is the third busiest airport in Manitoba, closed due to the runway being too soft and a lack of maintenance on that runway. This airport closure was the first for many years. It not only happened in Garden Hill but also in Red Sucker Lake, which had no air service for a period of one week. At Gods River and at Gods Lake Narrows they had to shut down their airstrips because of the condition they were in.

Added to the community's misfortune was they had to hire a helicopter to be on stand-by for medivacs, and they had to medivac people to Norway House and then from Norway House on to Winnipeg. Norway House is one of the larger centres in northern Manitoba, a population of over 5,000 people. I believe that it was mentioned earlier in Question Period that for a community with a population that high there is no doctor in that community.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, what we need in northern Manitoba is infrastructure dollars and fairness. We have, in the Berens River community, an arena that sits partially completed.

Last September the honourable members for Radisson (Ms. Cerilli), Point Douglas (Mr. Hickers), as well as the member for Selkirk (Mr. Dewar) and I and the member for Interlake (Mr. Clif Evans) had an opportunity to travel to some of these communities in Rupertsland.

These members and I spoke with community leaders about some of their needs. The best way I can describe the conditions of these communities is Third World. This is in our own backyard, Mr. Deputy Speaker, and we have to have a government that gets serious to start working on some of these outstanding problems if we are indeed going to make northern Manitoba feel a part of this province entirely.

I believe that in Berens River if the arena was completed kids could have a place to spend meaningful

community time. This community's arena could possibly help develop wholesome lifestyles in that community.

The Port of Churchill is also a necessary part of this province's farming community and indeed all of Canada. We must develop this port so we can ensure not only for the future of our agricultural community, we must see to it that goods are brought into Canada through this port.

I look forward to the support of all members of this House for the Port of Churchill and also the spaceport project which will employ many northern Manitobans and Manitobans in general. I believe this deserves all of our support.

Further to matters relating to Churchill, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I believe we should in this House, all members in this House have to rally around to protect the rail line into Churchill.

I would like to talk about the reality of everyday life on an Indian reserve today. We have the reality of alcoholism, drug abuse, solvent abuse, family violence in these communities that I talked about a little while ago. When you have that kind of situation you have a sense of hopelessness, a feeling of hopelessness. Aboriginal people feel that hopelessness every day. When there are no opportunities for jobs in their own communities in the foreseeable future, that leads in my opinion to those problems, family violence.

* (1200)

We need to address that with the First Nations communities, the aboriginal communities, but we need to do it in a different way than what has been done in years gone by. We have to do it with these First Nations communities. We have to treat chiefs and councils as governments, equal governments, equal partners in decision-making processes for the good of all people in northern Manitoba.

We find many of our young aboriginal people, because of that hopelessness, they talk about committing suicide and other unfortunate situations. Because of the lack of training and employment

opportunities in these communities, we need a strategy, as my colleague from Flin Flon talked about, with respect to dealing with the many outstanding issues that we have in northern communities.

It is very easy to say that because of the federal government's offloading to provinces, we could lay the blame on the federal government and that is why we are not doing these things for the North. That to me is not an excuse. We have to come up with something more innovative. We have to have fresher ideas in how we work with First Nations communities in addressing these issues together with all levels of government, but First Nations communities' chiefs and councils have to be dealt with with respect and fairness, and they have to be dealt with on a government-to-government basis. So we cannot simply point the finger and say it is because of the federal government and its offloading practices that Indians are finding themselves in this predicament in northern Manitoba.

I am a strong believer in the portability of treaty and aboriginal rights, but I do not believe in many of the offloading practices that have been implemented by the federal government. I think that we have to work with First Nations governments.

I would recommend highly to this governing party in this province, Mr. Deputy Speaker, to begin working with chiefs and councils in addressing these long-standing issues that exist in northern communities. First Nations communities must be treated with respect, and First Nations should not have to be a jurisdictional soccer ball or football, whatever the term may be, the federal government claiming that certain aspects of our lives or for First Nations people's lives are provincial responsibilities and the province claiming that Indians are a federal responsibility.

We have to work and begin a new process in addressing many of these issues that are of great concern to northern Manitoba. This I believe is entirely possible through dialogue with First Nations and innovative approaches in dealing with the many long-standing problems that we have had.

A little while ago, I talked about the Aboriginal Justice Inquiry, and I think that what we need in this

province is a northern justice initiative that will involve the major recommendations of the Aboriginal Justice Inquiry to deal with such things as court delays. We have court delays in some of our northern communities of up to 18 months, two years, and a community-based justice approach to deal with crime in some of these northern communities.

We have a great opportunity in Berens River and in Gods River and St. Theresa Point. They have initiated, for example, in St. Theresa Point, the aboriginal youth justice program which has worked tremendously, but because of bureaucratic wrangling by this government's bureaucracy, we are unable to finalize an agreement for that community. We need to work with First Nations people in their aspirations and their own thoughts on how they can better develop their own communities. Gods River has an innovative plan in place, and we have to work with the Gods River people. I strongly encourage this government to work with the communities like Gods River, Gods Narrows in addressing the problems that they have and some of the problems that I have described here briefly in their dealings.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, as I come to the conclusion of my remarks this morning, I am here to represent the views of all my constituents in northern Manitoba. I also stand here to support the amendment that was proposed by my Leader (Mr. Doer) and seconded by the member for Wolseley (Ms. Friesen), particularly in addressing child poverty.

(Madam Speaker in the Chair)

It is fine to talk about the arena. It is fine to talk about the Winnipeg Jets, but we have real serious situations in northern communities that cannot go unnoticed, Madam Speaker. We have to address these issues with the communities that are involved. We have to address the whole issue of child poverty, and I will be again asking for the support of all members in this House for the ongoing life of the Port of Churchill and some of the issues that I have talked about briefly here this morning.

To announce such important things like provincial parks without consulting the First Nations community

is strictly an insult, a slap in the face for Indian people. Indian people have been kicked around long enough in this country, Madam Speaker.

I think we have to have fresh approaches in how we deal with aboriginal people. That applies to aboriginal people in this city, in this urban environment of Winnipeg. For many years, I have heard about an urban aboriginal strategy. I have seen no action on that yet.

Madam Speaker, I would like to conclude my remarks by saying that I will carry myself to the best of my ability with dignity and honesty and without showing disrespect to any member of this House.

I believe in what was told to me by my elders and traditional teachings that my old people have passed on to me. My parents are now gone and my grandparents are gone, but the old people who are still around who provide guidance to me, aunts and uncles, who say that I have to hold myself in a respectful way.

I am here to speak for my constituents of Rupertsland, the nonaboriginal, the aboriginal, all of them. I want to wish you good health and God's blessings for you in your job, as your job is not an easy one.

With that, Madam Speaker, thank you for allowing me to address the throne speech. Thank you.

Ms. Marianne Cerilli (Radisson): Madam Speaker, I am pleased to resume debate in this Legislature. I want to begin my comments on the Speech from the Throne by giving my sincere thanks and appreciation to the residents of Radisson for again endorsing me with their confidence and their trust to represent them in the Legislature.

It is truly an honour and is something that I feel very privileged to have. Radisson is a community that is a very diverse community, and I appreciate that I now have the endorsement of more than 50 percent of the residents in that constituency to represent them here. I take that very seriously. I will do my best to represent the interests of that community.

* (1210)

I am going to talk a little bit later on about the challenges of the diverse neighbourhoods that I represent.

I also want to take a moment to thank my party, the New Democratic Party of Manitoba for again nominating me and working with me to successfully win the election. It is important to me to thank them, because I really feel honoured to be chosen as a leader for the party, as one of the 23 leaders who are in the House here.

I think we are all looked to as being leaders and carrying the message of our party, the social justice values that are represented by the policies that are passed by our party. It is a democratic party that develops policy at conventions involving the entire party. I am very proud of that. We also nominate candidates in a way, I think, that also shows that we are a party that is a grassroots party. I appreciate very much to again have the endorsement of the constituency represented in our party.

I also want to thank very much the many volunteers who worked on the campaign and have worked with me tirelessly over the last five years. They are a group of people who are of good humour and of strong spirit. The members of the Radisson constituency who form the NDP are a very hard-working group of people. I want to congratulate them on their hard work and give them thanks as well for endorsing me to represent them and our party.

I also want to give congratulations to Gary Doer, our Leader, and recognize the many talents and skills that he brings to the position of Leader of the New Democratic Party. I know there were comments in the paper the day after the election. I was very disappointed that we did not form government this time, that we will be spending a few more years in opposition here, but I know we will once again be in a very good position. We are in a very good position right now to form government. I look forward to the next election, and I think this government on the other side of the House is running out of steam.

I also want to congratulate you, Madam Speaker, on taking the Chair as the head of this House. It is going to be interesting. I think you can tell that we were all going through the process of getting used to a new Speaker, a Speaker of the feminine gender. We will endeavour to call you Madam Speaker. I wish you well in your duties as the Chairperson for this Chamber.

I also want to take a moment to congratulate the former Speaker, the member for Gladstone (Mr. Rocan), on the good leadership that he afforded this House over the previous years of my tenancy here. I want to recognize the fairness that he showed to all members of the House and congratulate him on that.

I want to also make a few comments before I begin talking more specifically about the challenges in the Radisson constituency about the election that we just went through.

It is really a concern for me, believing passionately as I do in democracy, to hear the kind of cynicism and discouragement about our political process and about our democracy in this country.

I am very concerned that we are actually losing our democracy. I think this is partially by design, with proposals such as the North American Free Trade Agreement and the Free Trade Agreement, which are stripping away duly elected governments from protecting citizens and communities in our country and our province. That is by design, Madam Speaker.

It is the same for the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trades, the GATT agreement that was also recently signed. It is by design that it is giving more and more power to unelected corporations. It is unfortunate that we have governments, as I have often said before, that do not believe in governments. That is what it seems like this government is also part of by their support of these disastrous international trade agreements.

The kind of world that we are now facing is the kind of world that the moneylenders and the marketeers and the large transnational corporations have been pushing for and wanting for a long time. This kind of world is very hard on the working people of constituencies like Radisson.

I think that these kinds of trade policies and economic policies are part of the problem in our losing our democracy. I also think it is partially the advance of media and technology. I think it is also partially the kind of approach to politics that is often witnessed, as was this election, where it became more of an issue to discuss the funding of a professional hockey team and arena than it was to discuss issues of public education and public health care and job creation, real job creation for secure jobs, for full-time jobs, for jobs that are going to recognize the need for a decent wage and also then to deal with poverty.

I was very concerned when I would come to voters and they would say to me: I do not pay much attention to politics; I do not know very much about what happens in politics or in the economy; I am going to vote for the party that is going to save the hockey team and build an arena.

Madam Speaker, I know that issue was stirred up and was used by the members opposite. I think that is disgraceful. It is an affront to our democracy when issues of professional hockey take precedence over poverty and over public health care and over public education.

I would spend time, Madam Speaker, with these voters. I would spend time with them to ask them if that was really a vote-determining issue for them. After taking a little time, a number of them would say, no, that is not going to determine my vote. It took some time to explain to them the importance.

I want to know where are all those Conservative members that are in groups like the Taxpayers' Association and other groups that represent the same ideology as the members opposite when we are spending over \$111 million with untendered contracts, no business plan on a hockey arena for a professional hockey team where these people earn more money than members in my constituency will earn in their lifetime. Where are all these people speaking out about the responsibility for us to protect the public purse and spend public dollars wisely? It is inexcusable that this issue has been manipulated by the Premier (Mr. Filmon) and by members opposite in the past election. A number of people do not believe that this

government was fairly elected, that they were not honest with the people of this province in again forming government.

I believe all of these things are contributing to the loss of our democracy, the cynicism that people are looking at, our democracy and our political system, and the apathy that it is creating. That is what I am very concerned about.

People feel powerless to influence the decision makers in our governments. They feel powerless to be listened to and to be heard. That is a travesty in a country and a province like ours, because we are elected here to listen to the people in our communities and to hear all of the people in our constituencies, but we must do that I think being grounded in a set of values of fairness and equality and justice.

I can honestly say, Madam Speaker, I do not believe that the members opposite have those values in mind. I believe the values represented opposite are more to do with profit. They are more to do with the bottom line and efficient management than with dealing with the reality of people's lives. They are not even efficient managers, as we can see over and over how they have squandered public money. We know there are a number of deals that are being made where taxpayers' dollars are going to corporate ventures, a number of them as shown through the Workforce 2000 program.

* (1220)

There is a program, Madam Speaker, that has to go down in history as one of the most foolish, wasteful programs, where they were cutting money for public education through community colleges and giving it to profitable corporations that should be spending their own profits to train and invest in their workers.

It was a pleasure to go door to door in Radisson and explain that to the people of Radisson, and they rejected this government for those kind of reasons. The residents of Radisson spoke loud and clear on April 25 when they rejected the Tory agenda, the Filmon agenda, the Progressive Conservative agenda, whatever you choose to call it on your signs in this particular election. They rejected it outright and loudly.

The people who live in Radisson are divided by 59 highway. This is a constituency that very clearly shows the problems that we have had with urban development in Winnipeg. Issues of urban sprawl and land use and urban development, transportation are critical to the constituency of Radisson. Issues of land use because it does butt on to rural communities that are using the area around the constituency for their industrialization, the conflicts that are arising because of that kind of industrialized development in a rural municipal region close to the city of Winnipeg and our urban suburb and communities are really significant for my constituency.

It is exemplified with issues like General Scrap and Car Shredder where communities, housing developments are being developed on land very close to polluting industrial operations with no regard for the impact on the residents who live in those communities.

Those are the kind of issues that I really want to see addressed by this government in the Capital Region study, and it is a challenge. The fact that certain neighbourhoods are being built, houses are being built with no regard for infrastructure either hard infrastructure like streets, adequate streets being put through or soft infrastructure like schools and community clubs.

So what is happening because of the way the urban sprawl has gone in our city is there are certain regions of my constituency that have no bussing, maybe some emergency or rush-hour bussing in the morning. They have no school buses any more. They have no stores or retail. They have no community clubs. There a little clump of houses off in the prairie and then you will get another little clump of houses over here with the same problems, no urban services. It is the kind of situation which shows that at our civic level decisions have been made not with citizens in mind but with developers in mind and these are serious problems for the constituents of Radisson.

Some of the other problems are highlighted by an industry that is threatened in Transcona that has been the backbone of Transcona. The privatization of CN is a real threat to the constituencies of both Transcona and Radisson and many others.

Again, when I look at the kind of hoopla that was raised over the loss of the Jets and the hoopla that was made of the effect that is going to have in our community, and then I hear the deafening silence of the effects of the loss of CN and the potential loss of the Transcona Yards and the effect that is going to have not only on Transcona but on the entire Manitoba economy, I cannot believe it.

I cannot believe the partisan politics that this government will play with issues, where they will ignore an issue because I believe they want to union bust. They do not want those good secure union jobs in those shops. They want to downsize. They want to get rid of the kind of organization that has been there providing stability to those communities for decades, for generations.

They want to, I think, and this is part of NAFTA, this is the next phase of NAFTA, to attack organizations like CN and to privatize them. This is going to have a profound effect on Manitoba, on our economy.

I would like to start seeing some attention paid by this government to the effects of the loss of our transportation sector, the rail sector in particular, and how that is going to affect our community. Let us put as much attention on that as we have to the Jets. It is going to have a greater effect on our communities than the loss of the Jets I would suggest.

Madam Speaker, one of the other communities that I represent that has been hard hit, and I think again this ties in with the theme I was talking about earlier about people being apathetic and cynical is about the ability for governments to act on their behalf. That is the situation for south Transcona. Again, this is one of those little clumps of houses I was talking about that is off on the prairie. They have a few trees around them, more than some of the other areas I represent.

South Transcona has been flooded repeatedly, and it is going to be my challenge now to work with the Liberal government federally in Ottawa and to work with this government to ensure that that community is going to receive the infrastructure that it deserves. That community, although they have been paying taxes in Winnipeg for decades, has no underground sewage

treatment. They do not have paved roads. They have ditches that are improperly maintained, and they deserve the same kind of infrastructure as everyone else in Winnipeg who has been paying taxes. I hope the government opposite will work to ensure that happens because some commitments were made just prior to the election when yet again in spring this community was flooded.

Over the election, I also heard, from my communities in East Kildonan to Transcona, a great concern for education. Some of the most foolish decisions this government is making are on education issues. The kind of proposals they were making in their Blueprint for Action education are going to really hurt young people in this province when the policies of this government force learning centres to be eliminated.

These are the kind of programs that have helped the most challenged students in our education system, helped them learn to read and write and do mathematics and get caught up to their peers in a few short weeks.

It is because of the restraint on education funding from this government that school divisions like the River East School Division have lost their learning centre. I have a petition about the loss of the audiology and speech and hearing programs from a parent council in my constituency. Again, the shortsightedness when we can have a government that will talk about literacy and then prevent children with speech and hearing problems from learning to read by eliminating the support programs that they need to do that.

Madam Speaker, the time for this session is running out. I know that I will have a few moments on Monday to conclude my remarks, so for now I just want to say that this government, I think, does not represent the entire province, and their slogan during the election was Manitoba Strong.

I can tell you that may be true for some of the people who live in areas like Tuxedo and Charleswood. The lines have been drawn on the map very clearly, and I can tell you that the constituents in my constituency are telling me that there are serious problems which this government is ignoring. Thank you.

Madam Speaker: Order, please. When this matter is again before the House, the honourable member for Radisson will have 18 minutes remaining.

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

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Friday, May 26, 1995

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