



Fourth Session - Thirty-Sixth Legislature

of the

**Legislative Assembly of Manitoba**

**DEBATES  
and  
PROCEEDINGS**

**Official Report  
(Hansard)**

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**MANITOBA LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY**  
**Thirty-Sixth Legislature**

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BARRETT, Becky	Wellington	N.D.P.
CERILLI, Marianne	Radisson	N.D.P.
CHOMIAK, Dave	Kildonan	N.D.P.
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EVANS, Leonard S.	Brandon East	N.D.P.
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LAMOUREUX, Kevin	Inkster	Lib.
LATHLIN, Oscar	The Pas	N.D.P.
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## LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Tuesday, December 2, 1997

The House met at 1:30 p.m.

### PRAYERS

### ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

### MINISTERIAL STATEMENTS

#### Maple Leaf Foods Pork Processing Plant—Brandon

**Hon. Harry Enns (Minister of Agriculture):** Madam Speaker, I have a statement for the House.

Madam Speaker, it is with pride I rise today to bring some tremendous news to the House and to the people of Manitoba. This morning, my Premier (Mr. Filmon), the honourable Minister of Industry, Trade and Tourism (Mr. Downey) and officials of Maple Leaf Foods announced a major economic development project for Brandon and all of Manitoba.

Maple Leaf has committed to building a state-of-the-art pork processing plant in Brandon, which will put Brandon and Manitoba in the forefront of the pork industry in Canada, and around the world it will make Manitoba the centre of pork production in Canada.

Maple Leaf has announced the new plant will be of world-class standing and provide competition for processors all over the world. This project will provide thousands of jobs. The plant alone will employ over a thousand people in its initial phase. Construction jobs, jobs in the production of hogs and spin-off service and related agri-food industry jobs will all come as a result of this announcement. Brandon was the successful community after an exhaustive search by Maple Leaf which included 42 communities in both Canada and the United States.

Madam Speaker, on behalf of my government and the people of Manitoba, I offer my congratulations to Mayor Reg Atkinson and the people of Brandon for their diligent work in making this dream become a reality. Brandon, and all of western Manitoba, can look

forward to expansion and growth as a result of this initiative. To quote from this morning's announcement, this is probably the most significant event in the hog industry in Canada and will make Maple Leaf the single largest employer in western Manitoba.

This is truly great news for Manitoba, and it is a major illustration of what can be accomplished when we all work together. My ministry and my government set an ambitious goal not so very long ago, a goal to take something Manitoba did well and expand on it to become the best in the field. That is exactly what has happened here. By providing the investment climate, the marketing options and working in partnership with producers and processors, my government has set the stage for a promising future. This announcement would not have occurred without introducing marketing options for Manitoba hog producers. Let me say that again, Madam Speaker. The decision we made to introduce flexible marketing to the Manitoba pork industry played a key role in the decision to locate this plant in Manitoba.

\* (1335)

Madam Speaker, I want to pay a special tribute to Mr. Gerry Moore, Professor Clay Gilson and Dr. Dave Donaghy who studied the issue and reported Manitoba could turn expansion of the industry into a major expansion of our economy. They showed how Manitoba could take advantage of the elimination of the Crow rate and turn it into an opportunity as part of an overall strategy for the success of the agricultural industry in this province. As a result of that change, Manitoba offers the lowest cost of livestock production, and therefore it is extremely attractive for investments of the sort we are speaking today.

I also want to say this announcement is not just good news for those involved in the agricultural industry in Manitoba. It is good news for all the citizens because of the jobs it creates and because of the increase in our tax base which will support my government's efforts to provide the very best health, education and social services possible for Manitoba.

Maple Leaf's proposal to pay U.S. equivalency for hogs in Manitoba will significantly increase the return producers receive on their investment. A major part of this announcement means over one million hogs, which have been shipped to the United States for finishing and processing, will now be processed in Manitoba.

We have participated in trade missions around the world where it seems everyone is eager to learn more about the Manitoba Pork Advantage. At a recent trade show in the Netherlands, our Manitoba booth was the busiest as investors looked at what we had to offer. Manitoba pork is sought after in markets in Asia and throughout North America. This industry works well with our strengths and other initiatives underway in Manitoba such as Winnport and the mid-continent trade corridor. Not only do we have a world-class product, but we have ways of getting it to the world.

Madam Speaker, I have always known that my farmers produced world-class products. Today's announcement is a recognition of the fact that we can all take pride in that. It is also a testimonial to all Manitobans who helped create a world-class province where companies such as Maple Leaf feel comfortable investing, knowing their investment is a good one.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

**Mr. Leonard Evans (Brandon East):** Madam Speaker, I want to thank the Minister of Agriculture (Mr. Enns) for this very important announcement and would take this opportunity to congratulate the company and everyone concerned in helping to make this project become a reality and indeed welcome Maple Leaf Foods to Brandon. Mr. Michael McCain, the president and CEO, did fax me a letter this morning about the decision and outlined the extent of the investment, and I thank Mr. McCain for this courtesy.

I have replied to him, congratulating him, not only as the MLA in which the plant will be located but also—

**Some Honourable Members:** Oh, oh.

**Madam Speaker:** Order, please. The honourable member for Brandon East was responding to a ministerial statement.

**Mr. Leonard Evans:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. I might add, located in an industrial park area that was made possible by the expansion of Brandon city boundaries back in 1971 under the Schreyer government.

Madam Speaker, it truly is good news for Manitoba and indeed the whole province. The jobs are badly needed in the area, and certainly this plant will provide a major boost to the local economy, to the Manitoba economy. The city and the province, I know, had been working on this development for some time. They have been working very hard.

Indeed, I have had an opportunity to learn the challenges involved leading up to the decision in discussions with many people. I am pleased that, although the company is presently involved in major labour disputes elsewhere, it has acknowledged that the UFCW has successor bargaining rights dating back to 1989 when the Burns plant closed in the city of Brandon. Burns company, of course, was obtained by Maple Leaf Foods. The fact that the company has voluntarily and officially recognized UFCW as the bargaining agency will allow for early good relations between the company and the union. Indeed, I do believe, Madam Speaker, that this has paved the way for an early and satisfactory collective agreement that can be reached between the company and the UFCW before the plant goes into operation in 12 to 18 months from now. Indeed, Manitoba has enjoyed some good labour relations for many years.

\* (1340)

As has been observed by the minister, the plant will have many important economic and social impacts in the province and the Westman area, including indeed a major stimulus to agriculture and to hog production in particular, certainly an increase in the availability of manufacturing jobs which tend to have higher wages than some of the service sector jobs, and certainly it will provide many spin-off benefits to our economy in servicing the plant and its workers. As economists, we call this the multiplier effect. Indeed, there is a very important multiplier effect that will occur that will have—in fact, it is very difficult to estimate the extent to which it will have a positive impact on the economy. So that certainly will be at work. Of course, last but not least, it will give a major boost to the economic

development of the city of Brandon, Manitoba's second largest city.

So, in conclusion, Madam Speaker, let me say that I look forward to the development of the project in the next year or two. In fact, I can tell members of the House that I will be able to observe the plant going up out of my living room window, which faces east about half a mile from the proposed facility.

So, on behalf of my constituents and on behalf of the official opposition, let me extend our sincere congratulations to the minister, the government and indeed best wishes to the company and its workers for successful development and operation in the years ahead.

#### TABLING OF REPORTS

**Hon. Vic Toews (Minister of Justice and Attorney General):** Madam Speaker, I am pleased to table the Twenty-Sixth Annual Report of the Law Reform Commission, April 1996 to June 1997. In addition, I am pleased to table, pursuant to The Regulations Act, a copy of each regulation registered with the Registrar of Regulations since the regulations were tabled in this House in March of 1997.

**Hon. Linda McIntosh (Minister of Education and Training):** I am pleased to table the report for 1996-97 of the Manitoba Education Research and Learning Information Networks, MERLIN.

**Hon. Harold Gilleshammer (Minister of Labour):** Madam Speaker, I would like to table reports that have been previously distributed. They are annual reports for 1996-97 for the Department of Labour; the Manitoba Labour Board; the Labour Management Review Committee; Fire Commissioner; the Civil Service Commission; the Organization and Staff Development; and the Auditor's Report and Financial Statements for the Public Service Group Insurance Fund.

**Hon. Leonard Derkach (Minister of Rural Development):** Madam Speaker, I have the pleasure of tabling three reports that have previously been distributed, that is, the financial statements for Leaf

Rapids Town Properties Limited for the year ended March 31, 1997, as well as the Annual Report of the Conservation Districts of Manitoba.

**Madam Speaker:** I am pleased to table the following annual reports this afternoon: the Annual Report of the Chief Electoral Officer on The Election Finances Act for the year ended December 31, 1996, and the individual reports of members' expenses for the year ended March 31, 1997.

#### Introduction of Guests

**Madam Speaker:** Prior to Oral Questions, I would like to draw the attention of all honourable members to the public gallery where we have this afternoon ten Grade 11 English as Second Language history students from Gordon Bell High under the direction of Mrs. Beth McFee. This school is located in the constituency of the honourable member for Wolseley (Ms. Friesen).

Also, fourteen Grades 8, 9, 10 and 11 students from Niji Mahkwa School, the Songide' Ewin Program under the direction of Ms. Rhoda McKinney. This school is located in the constituency of the honourable member for Point Douglas (Mr. Hickes).

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

\* (1345)

#### ORAL QUESTION PERIOD

##### Child Poverty Rate Increase

**Mr. Gary Doer (Leader of the Opposition):** Madam Speaker, last year we quoted from the United Way report that talked about the unfortunate situation where children at six and seven years old were losing hope and were living in despair. We have had other reports that we have quoted in this Chamber.

Just this last week, the Social Planning Council of Winnipeg talked about 63,000 children living in poverty here in the province of Manitoba, an increase over the last number of years since this government has been in office. They talk about one in four children

been in office. They talk about one in four children living in poverty in the city of Winnipeg. In fact, the rate goes up to close to 35 percent for aboriginal children in Winnipeg, and I am sure that number is very, very high in some of our remote and northern communities in the province of Manitoba.

I would like to ask this minister: why has the rate of child poverty risen under the Conservatives and under this minister's administration?

**Hon. Bonnie Mitchelson (Minister of Family Services):** Madam Speaker, I would like to thank the Leader of the Opposition for that question. It does provide me with the opportunity again to indicate to all Manitobans that no level of child poverty is acceptable. We need to work very diligently to try to eradicate child poverty. That is exactly the reason that we have focused all of our initiatives on getting people into the workforce, because we recognize and realize that the best form of social security is a job and that we do not want individuals committed to a life of poverty on welfare. All of the initiatives like the national child benefit that has just been announced—and I might say that the national child benefit is an initiative that has been endorsed by the federal government and endorsed by provinces of all political stripes right across the country because they believe it will in fact reduce the depth of child poverty.

I have many, many more initiatives that are underway that I will be prepared to answer with subsequent questions.

#### **Minimum Wage Increase**

**Mr. Gary Doer (Leader of the Opposition):** Madam Speaker, in the Social Planning Council Report, they talk about not only the necessity of a job, which we obviously all agree with, but also the necessity to have jobs in the province that have a living wage, and they recommend to this government or they identify the tremendous pressure on people dealing with the wages in the province of Manitoba. They recommend to this government that they in fact raise the minimum wage in the province of Manitoba.

I would like to ask this minister: in light of the fact that the last increase in the minimum wage was two years ago on January 1 of '96, has the Minister of Family Services (Mrs. Mitchelson) recommended to her government, a government that is committed to a low-wage strategy, that they abandon the low-wage strategy that they followed and raise the minimum wage to get more families out of poverty here in Manitoba?

**Hon. Harold Gilleshammer (Minister of Labour):** Madam Speaker, this issue was brought to us yesterday by the Manitoba Federation of Labour in a meeting we had with them on a wide range of issues. We have indicated as recently as yesterday—a very productive meeting with the Manitoba Federation of Labour, and I have indicated that we will be looking at that issue.

**Mr. Doer:** Madam Speaker, I am glad the minister is looking at the issue. My question was: are you recommending an increase in the minimum wage? The Social Planning Council has recommended and articulated the fact that Manitoba now has one of the lowest minimum wages in Canada. We have one of the highest child poverty rates in Canada. They are saying that there is a connection between the two. They are recommending to us, the people who are stewards of policy, that we raise the minimum wage. I would like a yes or no answer from the Minister of Family Services (Mrs. Mitchelson). Are you recommending to your colleagues that the minimum wage be increased in Manitoba and be increased immediately to deal with families living in poverty?

**Mr. Gilleshammer:** Madam Speaker, I am surprised that the Leader of the Opposition does not know that we have a process in place where a minimum wage board will take advice from all Manitobans on that issue, and that process will be followed.

\* (1350)

#### **Child Poverty Rate Reduction Strategy**

**Mr. Doug Martindale (Burrows):** Madam Speaker, Winnipeg Harvest has put out a very disturbing 10-year snapshot on poverty, and they point out that 10 years ago 3,600 people a month needed food assistance, whereas today 34,000 people a month need food

assistance, that 10 years ago a single parent with one child employed in minimum wage needed to work 41 hours a week to bring the family to the poverty line, whereas today they would need to work 75 hours a week. Ten years ago there were 25,000 people unemployed, today 34,000 people unemployed. Ten years ago there were no rural food banks in Manitoba; today there are 43.

I would like to ask the Minister of Family Services: what is her government going to do in a proactive way to address this problem, particularly for the 23 percent of children in Manitoba who are living in poverty? Instead of cutting welfare rates, instead of reducing the welfare rate for children on city assistance, what are you going to do in a positive way to have a positive impact on these terrible, negative statistics?

**Hon. Bonnie Mitchelson (Minister of Family Services):** Madam Speaker, I thank my honourable friend for that question. Again, it does provide me with the opportunity to talk about some of the things that our government has done, contrary to some of the things that governments of New Democratic Party persuasion across the country have done. For instance, our rates for children are among the highest in the country. When I look at the rates for children in Manitoba on welfare, they are considerably higher than those of the province of British Columbia where in the city of Vancouver they pay a rate of \$103 per child. Our rates for children are \$116 to \$189 per month per child, significantly higher than a province that boasts a socialist government that has reduced rates for children. We have not reduced those rates.

Madam Speaker, I want to indicate that, regardless of the differences, there are many, many things that will be taking place in Manitoba as a result of the national child benefit. There certainly will be more money in the hands of working people on low incomes than there ever has been before. I think that is a significant message to all of the children and families that need support.

**Mr. Martindale:** I would like to ask the minister, who was quoted in the Free Press saying that the province's major goal is to get those on social assistance into the workforce, why it is that a single parent has gone into the workforce at \$6 an hour and is making less money

working full time than on social assistance, a difference of \$235 less? Why is this government promoting low-wage jobs which pay less than social assistance?

**Mrs. Mitchelson:** That is an issue that is being dealt with right across the country with the national child benefit. The principles of the national child benefit are to, No. 1, reduce the depth of child poverty; No. 2, to ensure that people who are working are better off than people on welfare; and to reduce the overlap in duplication between two levels of government so more money can go into the hands of families that need our support. Those are the objectives, Madam Speaker, and that is what is going to happen when the national child benefit kicks in as of July of next year.

Madam Speaker, all of our efforts and our energies on reinvestment through the national child benefit will be to ensure that we can find attachment to the workforce for people who are presently on welfare and that those people will be better off working than on welfare.

\* (1355)

**Mr. Martindale:** I would like to ask the minister what she and her government are going to do, other than the hollow promises of a throne speech, to address the shocking levels of child poverty in Manitoba and amongst aboriginal people in particular. I quote the report card again which says that 47 percent of all aboriginal households with children in Manitoba lived in poverty and 80 percent of all aboriginal single-parent households were poor.

What is this minister going to do to address the level of aboriginal poverty, particularly amongst children, in a positive, proactive way? What plans do you have to address this problem?

**Mrs. Mitchelson:** Again, I thank my honourable friend for that question because it does not matter what children are living in families that are living below the poverty line, Madam Speaker, we need to have initiatives to try to address issues right across the board. We all realize and recognize the statistics that my honourable friend has pointed out are statistics that need to be addressed. The initiatives that we will be

announcing through redirection of funds from the national child benefit will address those issues.

I want to indicate that some of the employment programs that have been taking place through Taking Charge!, through the Department of Education and through the private sector are single-parent welfare caseloads at the lowest levels that they have been since 1990. We have 1,700 less single parents and general assistance people on our welfare caseloads as a result of the Employment First initiatives that we have put into place.

We also know that there are 900 more single parents that are declaring some income and only having to have that income topped up by welfare than there were in the past. So indications are that we are moving in the right direction, and we will continue to place a focus on moving people off welfare and into the workforce.

### **Gurprem Dhaliwal Sentence Appeal**

**Mr. Eric Robinson (Rupertsland):** My questions are for the Minister of Justice. He probably has had an opportunity by now to review the court decision of yesterday in Thompson where a man was sentenced to just six years for the murder of an aboriginal woman by the name of Carol Marlene Hastings from Oxford House.

In regard to the charge of murder, why would the minister's department accept a statement that he should only receive the lesser charge because he did not have any prior convictions? I would like to ask the minister: what kind of message are we—and particularly this government—giving to the public when an aboriginal woman can be murdered, dumped in a ditch, and the minister's department strikes a deal allowing the killer to be released in less than the six years that he was given yesterday? My question is: will the minister appeal this decision?

**Hon. Vic Toews (Minister of Justice and Attorney General):** Madam Speaker, I have been briefed in respect of that particular case, and I am advised that, on the basis of the evidence, that was the appropriate disposition of this case. That is the best legal advice

that my department received and provided, and they proceeded on the basis.

**Mr. Robinson:** Madam Speaker, last night I had the opportunity of talking with the parents of the late Miss Hastings, the mother, Ethel Okimow, and the father, Thomas Okimow, who were no doubt very upset about the decision that was made in the courtroom yesterday in Thompson and also the lack of remorse shown on the part of this killer.

I would like to ask the minister: why did his department make a deal to accept a charge of manslaughter instead of proceeding with a more serious charge? [interjection]

**Mr. Toews:** Madam Speaker, whenever an unlawful death occurs in our province, we are concerned, and unlike the comments made by the member for The Pas (Mr. Lathlin), who continues to make inappropriate statements based on race, I do not—[interjection] Well, now the member for Wellington (Ms. Barrett)—

**Some Honourable Members:** Oh, oh.

**Madam Speaker:** Order, please. The honourable Minister of Justice, to complete his response.

\* (1400)

**Mr. Toews:** I find the kinds of comments coming from members opposite based on the race of a victim to be totally despicable, and it is a slur on the Crown attorneys who I believe are doing an excellent job in this province. They made a determination on the basis of evidence and proceeded on that basis. I find it very strange that when the Crown attorneys make decisions one way or another, whether it is a release of an accused or a conviction of the accused, there is always somebody there criticizing the Crown attorneys without knowing anything about the facts.

**Mr. Robinson:** Madam Speaker, I rise today on behalf of the Okimow family and other aboriginal people that have been failed by the white justice system. I would like to ask the minister how he is going to explain this to the daughters of the late Ms. Hastings, who are eight, seven, five and three years of age and also to the widower of Ms. Hastings, Mr. Hank Hastings. I would



like to ask the minister why the family was not consulted prior to last Friday before this deal and this conviction made yesterday.

**Mr. Toews:** Madam Speaker, the facts that the member puts forward are incorrect. The family in this particular case lives in Oxford House, and the RCMP kept in regular contact with them. They came to Thompson specifically to meet with the Crown attorney who met with the family for over three hours. A translator was also present. They were comfortable with the manslaughter plan and the sentence range. The Crown felt their comments on the sentence should be put before the court, and he arranged for them to meet with a victim services worker on both Saturday and Sunday.

A report was prepared and sent to the Crown who presented it to the court. The comments of Sara Okimow, Ethel Okimow, Thomas Okimow, Jr. and Hank Hastings were then read to the court at the sentencing, and the plea, again, as I indicated, was the appropriate one given the difficulty in proving this particular case. So I resent very much the implications that the Crown attorneys in this case did anything but their duty, and the comments regarding the racism from the other side are despicable.

### **Gurprem Dhaliwal Sentence Appeal**

**Mr. Gord Mackintosh (St. Johns):** It was during the last election campaign when this government promised to make the needs and the rights of victims the top priority in the judicial system. I think those were the words used. Yet, Madam Speaker, it is under this government that the public of Manitoba has come to realize and that we are committed to and that is rebuild the justice system around the needs of victims.

Madam Speaker, my question is to the Minister of Justice. In view of the needs and rights of victims and in this case the survivors of the victim, is it not true that the Crown cannot appeal this because the Crown was a party to the plea of manslaughter and to the sentence? Is it not true that in fact the Crown, the minister's department has bargained away the facts in this case, as in Bauder?

**Hon. Vic Toews (Minister of Justice and Attorney General):** Well, Madam Speaker, these are the slimy kinds of tactics that the member for St. Johns uses—

**Madam Speaker:** Order, please. I would caution the honourable Minister of Justice to pick and choose his words carefully so as not to provoke a disruption.

### **Point of Order**

**Mr. Steve Ashton (Opposition House Leader):** Point of order, Madam Speaker. I would ask that the minister be required to withdraw those comments. The member for Rupertsland (Mr. Robinson) has talked to the family. This is of some concern. I know my own community of Thompson—we are asking questions. I think it is only appropriate the minister not resort to the kind of language he has just used in this House, show some respect, if not for this House, for his office as Attorney General and answer some very serious questions that are being asked by people who are concerned about the way in which this case was dealt with. We are asking serious questions; we expect the same kinds of serious and direct answers.

**Madam Speaker:** The honourable Minister of Justice, on the same point of order.

**Mr. Toews:** On the same point of order, Madam Speaker, day in, day out the opposition brings to this House facts that are not correct and then expects the public of Manitoba to accept their word as being accurate. I have indicated what the true facts here are, that this is both an issue involving the police, the Crown attorneys who analyze the evidence in respect of the law, and after consultation with the family, that this decision was made.

These are not decisions that are made lightly, and to make disparaging comments about the quality of the service provided by our Crown attorneys is simply unacceptable, and it is for that reason I use that kind of word.

**Madam Speaker:** On the point of order raised by the honourable member for Thompson, just prior to recognizing the honourable member for the point of order, I had indeed admonished the Minister of Justice and asked him to pick and choose his words carefully.

I have checked all of the unparliamentary lists in Beauchesne. That word has not been listed, but it is not a very polite word. It is the kind of word that does indeed, as I indicated earlier, cause a disruption with the proceedings, and I think at this instance I would ask that the honourable minister withdraw the words.

**Mr. Toews:** I think, Madam Speaker, that is a good idea. I withdraw the word "slimy."

**Madam Speaker:** I thank the honourable Minister of Justice.

\* \* \*

**Mr. Mackintosh:** I thank the minister. But the minister who knows of course that we on this side have high respect for the Crown attorneys—it is the government policy that we are criticizing in this province and in that regard I ask the minister: was it not the case and it is not the policy of this government that the survivors of the victim in this case had no knowledge whatsoever of the plea bargain, had no input whatsoever into the plea bargain of manslaughter nor the sentence? Would he simply answer that question?

**Mr. Toews:** Madam Speaker, as indicated, that is not the case. The family specifically met with the Crown attorney for a period of three hours. A translator was present, and the issue of the manslaughter plan and the sentence range was put before the family. Indeed, the Crown felt that their comments in respect of this were essential to the administration of justice, and therefore they were in fact put in touch with a victim services worker on both Saturday and Sunday, and a report was prepared and sent to the Crown, who did in fact present it to the court. So the comments of the member for St. Johns are completely erroneous.

**Mr. Mackintosh:** The minister did not hear my question, Madam Speaker. I was not talking about what happened on Friday. I am asking the minister: will he not confirm that the family had no knowledge before the bargain was entered into and no input into the bargain?

That is the question. He is leaving the victims out and the survivors, the most affected.

**Mr. Toews:** I know that the member for St. Johns would love to see nothing better than a political minister being involved in the prosecution of a case. That would be totally inappropriate.

What I have indicated to this House is that in fact the family were not only in touch with the Crown's office but in fact with the RCMP where they live in Oxford House.

If the member has any information that is contrary to that, he can bring it to this House specifically or he can raise it with me otherwise, but I do not think it does the administration of justice in this province any good to simply make bald accusations without any facts and then expect me to agree with that.

\* (1410)

### **Break and Enter Reduction Strategy**

**Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Inkster):** Madam Speaker, my question is also for the Minister of Justice. I had an opportunity to meet an elderly lady that lived in Portage la Prairie when we were out knocking on doors, and this particular individual was sleeping during the daytime. The reason why she was sleeping during the daytime was because one of the nights earlier her house was broken into in which she was roughed up, and she was literally scared to sleep at night.

In Winnipeg alone, 5,841 homes were broken into in 1995. My question to the minister is: does he believe that because of the number of break-ins that we have marginalized the seriousness of this very serious crime?

**Hon. Vic Toews (Minister of Justice and Attorney General):** Madam Speaker, without eliciting an opinion from me, which I do not think is appropriate, I can say that both my department and the courts view housebreaking as a particularly serious crime. Indeed, recent sentences given out by the courts in respect of what is commonly referred to as home invasions have been quite substantial and have been imposed at the urging of the Crown attorney's office. We are continuing to ensure that that kind of proactive prosecution takes place.

The other half of the equation, of course, is the issue of community policing where we need to have our police officers working closely with the community to prevent these types of break-ins, whether they are home invasions or the more common invasions, and I use that term in an advised manner. To me, whether they involve violence or not, they are serious invasions of personal property and personal security.

### Sentence Length

**Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Inkster):** Madam Speaker, I am wondering if the minister will acknowledge that when he says a home invasion is very serious, every residential break-in has the potential to be a home invasion and can be very serious, and the aggregate total, if you like, of time served is less than nine months for someone that is actually prosecuted with this. Does the minister believe that not only should he be getting more strict with respect to home invasions but also with home break-ins?

**Hon. Vic Toews (Minister of Justice and Attorney General):** Madam Speaker, I certainly agree that the Crown attorney's office needs to be vigilant in ensuring that all relevant facts are brought to the attention of the courts in making the disposition. Clearly, wherever there is a threat of personal violence or the invasion of someone's personal home, that is an extremely serious matter, whether violence occurred, whether actual personal contact ever occurred. I agree with that.

I know that the Crowns on a regular basis seek substantial jail sentences and prison sentences, and I would encourage them to continue that policy. I believe that it is absolutely essential to making our communities safe.

**Mr. Lamoureux:** Madam Speaker, I am not convinced that that is in fact the policy. I would ask the Minister of Justice: can he then provide for this House an average, if you like, a means average of actual time served for those individuals that are caught in break-and-enter situations? Can he do that and bring it back to the House sometime over the next week?

**Mr. Toews:** Madam Speaker, I will look to see whether that type of information is available, both in the sense of home invasions and break-ins into

residential homes where there is no personal contact with the occupant and indeed other types of break-ins which may involve businesses or unoccupied buildings. I will see if those types of statistics are available and bring them forward for the member's consideration.

### Urban Affairs Committee Meeting Attendance—The Speaker

**Ms. Becky Barrett (Wellington):** Madam Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Urban Affairs. Has the Speaker attended a meeting of the Urban Affairs committee of this government?

**Hon. Jack Reimer (Minister of Urban Affairs):** I do not know whether she means recently or this year or at any time. I am not too sure what the question is implying, Madam Speaker. Maybe she could rephrase the question.

**Ms. Barrett:** Did the Speaker of this House attend a meeting of the Urban Affairs committee of this government on November 3, 1997?

**Mr. Reimer:** I will have to take that as notice and check the minutes. I do not have those types of facilities in front of me. The members must recognize that the Urban Affairs committee of cabinet is open to all members of Urban Affairs. I would have to check that specific date to see who was attending.

**Ms. Barrett:** Has the Speaker of the Legislature of the Province of Manitoba ever attended a meeting of the Urban Affairs committee of this government while she has been Speaker of the House?

**Mr. Reimer:** Madam Speaker, I would have to check the records because I do not have those figures in front of me. Whether I can get back to the member on that—

**An Honourable Member:** Were you there?

**Mr. Reimer:** I was there, but if the member is asking me for specific times, I cannot remember.

### Students' Association Meeting Attendance

**Ms. Jean Friesen (Wolseley):** Madam Speaker, on September 8 of this year, the Minister of Education met

formally with representatives of the student societies of Brandon University and the University of Winnipeg to discuss government policy and post-secondary education.

Would the minister tell us who, apart from students, attended that meeting?

**Hon. Linda McIntosh (Minister of Education and Training):** I meet frequently with students. The September 8 meeting—I normally will have officials from the department with me; I can check to see who was at that meeting. Normally, when I meet with students from the universities, which I do frequently, I will have either the deputy or someone of that stature, at that level of the government. I can check for her to find out who was at the meeting and let her know.

#### Meeting Attendance—The Speaker

**Ms. Jean Friesen (Wolseley):** Madam Speaker, would the minister tell us whether or not the Speaker of the Legislature attended that meeting with the students?

**Hon. Linda McIntosh (Minister of Education and Training):** The Speaker does not normally attend meetings with students, although from time to time students will ask to meet with members of the Legislative Assembly, and I will extend invitations to those members. Again—I believe the member said September, some time in September—and I will check to see. There was a meeting that I had with students that I invited all members to attend if they wished, but I do not know who was there. I will check and see. She might like to check with students as well because they know who they asked to meet with, and they know who they asked to have in attendance at those meetings.

#### Meeting Attendance

**Ms. Jean Friesen (Wolseley):** Madam Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Northern Affairs.

Could the Minister of Northern Affairs tell us whether he was at that meeting to discuss government policy with student representatives from the University of Winnipeg and the university of Brandon, and could he tell us which of his colleagues accompanied him?

**Hon. David Newman (Minister of Northern Affairs):** Madam Speaker, I was at a meeting involving some representatives of the student leadership community and certainly the honourable Minister of Education (Mrs. McIntosh) was there. I would have to check my notes. I believe the Speaker was present at that meeting.

\* (1420)

#### Urban Affairs Committee Meeting Attendance—The Speaker

**Mr. Steve Ashton (Thompson):** Madam Speaker, we seem to have collective amnesia on the other side of the House.

In view of the fact that Beauchesne in every principle of parliamentary law and every principle of democracy requires that the Speaker remain absolutely impartial and not involve him or herself in any partisan activities, I want to ask the Minister of Urban Affairs if maybe he would perhaps care to think back a little bit. Will he confirm now that the Speaker was part of the meetings with the Urban Affairs of cabinet, something that is absolutely unacceptable, which is absolutely partial and partisan behaviour on behalf of the Speaker of this House?

**Hon. Jack Reimer (Minister of Urban Affairs):** Madam Speaker, in the previous question that was asked to me by the member for Wellington (Ms. Barrett), I had indicated at that time I would check to see who was in attendance at the meetings. I can honestly say I do not remember or cannot remember under specifics what meetings the member is referring to who was there. At times there are people who come and go. There are members who come and go. I cannot specifically say that she was there or not there.

**Mr. Ashton:** Flashbacks to Watergate, Madam Speaker.

I want to ask the minister and perhaps the Minister of Education (Mrs. McIntosh), who seem to have selective amnesia in this case—it is a very simple question. The Speaker, was she in attendance? Perhaps if the minister cannot remember that, will he outline who is eligible to be part of these meetings? Is it by any chance members

of the Conservative caucus which the Speaker has functionally been ever since she has been in the Chair since 1995?

**Hon. James McCrae (Government House Leader):** Madam Speaker, a number of times earlier today questions have arisen and been the subject of reminders from yourself that we ought not to be provocative, those of us on this side of the House. I wonder if the honourable member for Thompson would care to review his question and ask himself if honestly he feels there is no provocation intended in his questions. That aside, the honourable Minister of Housing and Urban Affairs has already responded that he will indeed look into this matter, but the presiding officer of the House, I suggest to you, is in no different position than other members of this Legislature when it comes to representing certain matters related to their constituencies.

A very strong argument ought to be made that no matter what position one holds in this Chamber, one has a duty—and not only a right and a privilege and an opportunity but a duty—to represent constituents. So if Your Honour had been present at this meeting or that meeting in furtherance of your responsibilities, that would, I am sure, be the appropriate response to this particular matter being raised by the honourable members today. But I do suggest that they preach a lot about some of our answers; they might do well to read Hansard once in a while and look at the provocative nature of some of their questions.

**Madam Speaker:** Order, please. Just for clarification, I would ask: was the honourable government House leader on a point of order?

**Mr. McCrae:** I was answering the question.

**Some Honourable Members:** Oh, oh.

**Madam Speaker:** Order, please. The honourable government House leader responded to the question. I thank the honourable government House leader for clarification.

**Mr. Ashton:** On a final supplementary, since the government House leader is now answering for the Minister of Urban Affairs (Mr. Reimer), I want to ask

the government House leader: in all honesty, how can he say that attendance at a cabinet committee or attendance at a meeting sponsored by a minister of the government does not violate every principle of Beauchesne 168(2), that in order to ensure complete impartiality, the Speaker has relinquished all affiliation with any parliamentary party and any outside political activity?

When are we going to have an unbiased Speaker in this House, Madam Speaker?

**Mr. McCrae:** Madam Speaker, my colleague and friend and the honourable member for Thompson can bang away at Beauchesne all he likes, but the fact is members around here have a responsibility. He need look only two seats to his left to see an honourable member who is brought into the councils of government decision making from time to time when that is appropriate, and earlier today the honourable Minister of Agriculture (Mr. Enns) announced a history-making development and the honourable member for Brandon East (Mr. Leonard Evans) was part of those meetings.

If something like that was going to happen in your constituency, Madam Speaker, would you not want to be present and take part in some of the discussions? I suggest there is nothing wrong with that.

**Some Honourable Members:** Oh, oh.

**Madam Speaker:** Order, please.

**Mr. Ashton:** On a new question.

**Madam Speaker:** On a new question.

**Mr. Ashton:** Madam Speaker, I want to point out that the member for Brandon East is not the Speaker. He would make a very good Speaker actually, but he is not the Speaker. I want to ask the government House leader if it is the policy of this government to treat the current occupier of the Speaker's chair as being part of the Conservative caucus?

We see pictures issued under the Conservative caucus with the Speaker as part of that. We see the Speaker at meetings with the Minister of Education (Mrs.

McIntosh) in the Urban Affairs committee of cabinet. Is it the policy of the government to have the Speaker as part and parcel of this government and is that why you refuse to bring in an elected Speaker, an impartial Speaker that we all need in this House?

**Mr. McCrae:** Madam Speaker, if I were a New Democrat, I suppose I would be rising in my place on a question of privilege and complaining that by the questions being asked today the constituents of Seine River are being denied appropriate representation on issues of importance to them.

The honourable member for Thompson said that the honourable member for Brandon East (Mr. Leonard Evans) is a member of the Legislature and not the Speaker, and that is true, but if the honourable member for Brandon East were the presiding officer of this House, you can be damned assured that honourable member would want to be heard on matters of importance to his constituency and you, I suggest, with respect, Madam Speaker, ought to be accorded that same right.

\* (1430)

**Mr. Ashton:** Madam Speaker, as a supplementary, I want to ask: what is the policy of this government? The Urban Affairs committee of cabinet, who is that committee open to? It is apparent, it is obvious that it is open to Conservative MLAs of which the Speaker is being an active Conservative MLA.

I want to ask perhaps the government House leader if he can maybe indicate whether there was a House strategy committee of cabinet last year. Maybe the Speaker was part of that last year when we saw you ram through the sale of MTS, again breaking hundreds of years of parliamentary tradition.

**Mr. McCrae:** I think most times the honourable member for Thompson agrees with me that being an elected representative is a noble calling, and I think we try to carry out our duties as if that were the case, Madam Speaker.

I implore the honourable member for Thompson and his colleagues to forget about their narrow political interests and put the interests of the people of Manitoba

ahead of their own political Brownie-point interests. The honourable members cannot seem to get on. They cannot seem to get over it. They cannot seem to get on with the business of doing the work of the people of this province, and I think that explains their questions and their behaviour again in the House today. I wish they would search their souls, look in the mirror and ask how best can we serve our constituents.

Madam Speaker, I suggest to you that honourable members are deflecting—and not doing a very good job of it—away from the very miserable record that they have been putting before the people of this province for the last number of years.

**Madam Speaker:** Time for Oral Questions has expired.

### Speaker's Ruling

**Madam Speaker:** I have two rulings for the House.

I took under advisement on November 25, 1996, a matter of privilege raised by the honourable member for St. Johns (Mr. Mackintosh) about my ruling of November 21, 1996, respecting the timing of votes on Bill 67.

There are three conditions to be met in order for a Speaker to find that there is a prima facie evidence of a matter of privilege. First, was the matter raised by the honourable member for St. Johns at the earliest opportunity?

I believe that November 25 was indeed his first opportunity, because after I had delivered the ruling on November 21, the House considered a matter of privilege raised by the honourable member for Thompson (Mr. Ashton) and then adjourned. The House then did not meet until November 25.

The second condition for a matter to proceed is that the member raising a matter of privilege must provide the House with a reparation or remedy. The honourable member did propose a motion that the matter be referred to the Standing Committee on Privileges and Elections, so the second condition has been complied with.

The third condition to be met is that sufficient evidence must be presented to suggest that a breach of the privileges of the House has occurred. I must find that the third condition has not been met. My ruling of November 21 was challenged but sustained by the House on a recorded vote. Immediately thereafter the honourable member for Thompson rose on a matter of privilege that was a nonconfidence motion in the presiding officer, and that matter arose directly from my November 21 ruling, and that nonconfidence motion was defeated on a recorded vote that day.

The November 20 ruling has already been challenged and sustained twice. In reading the comments of the honourable member for St. Johns (Mr. Mackintosh) when he raised this matter of privilege on November 25, I can locate no substantially different perspectives in his arguments than those which had been put forward by the official Opposition House Leader (Mr. Ashton) on November 21 when he raised a matter of privilege.

Citation 558 in Beauchesne, which is based on a statement by the parliamentary authority Sir John Bourinot, states "That a question being once made and carried in the affirmative or negative, cannot be questioned again but must stand as the judgment of the House.' Unless such a rule were in existence, the time of the House might be used in the discussion of a motion of the same nature and contradictory decisions would be sometimes arrived at in the course of the same session."

The decision of Speaker Graham of April 15, 1981, in a similar matter is also I believe a relevant Manitoba precedent. Because no new evidence was presented to the House between November 21 and 25, I must rule that the motion of the honourable member for St. Johns does not meet the requirements of a matter of privilege and must be ruled out of order.

**Mr. Steve Ashton (Opposition House Leader):** Madam Speaker, this ruling was based on a matter of privilege that was raised November 25, 1996, and therefore I would like, on behalf of our caucus, to challenge this incompetent ruling.

**Madam Speaker:** The ruling of the Chair has been challenged.

### Voice Vote

**Madam Speaker:** All those in favour of sustaining the ruling of the Chair, please say yea.

**Some Honourable Members:** Yea.

**Madam Speaker:** All those opposed, please say nay.

**Some Honourable Members:** Nay.

**Madam Speaker:** In my opinion, the Yeas have it.

### Formal Vote

**Mr. Ashton:** Yeas and Nays, Madam Speaker.

**Madam Speaker:** A recorded vote has been requested. Call in the members.

### Division

**A RECORDED VOTE** was taken, the result being as follows:

#### Yeas

*Cummings, Derkach, Driedger, Dyck, Enns, Faurshou, Findlay, Gaudry, Gilleshammer, Helwer, Kowalski, Laurendeau, McAlpine, McCrae, McIntosh, Mitchelson, Newman, Penner, Pitura, Praznik, Radcliffe, Reimer, Render, Rocan, Stefanson, Sveinson, Toews, Tweed.*

#### Nays

*Ashton, Barrett, Cerilli, Dewar, Doer, Evans (Brandon East), Evans (Interlake), Friesen, Jennissen, Lathlin, Mackintosh, Maloway, Martindale, McGifford, Mihychuk, Reid, Robinson, Sale, Santos, Struthers.*

**Mr. Clerk (William Remnant):** Yeas 28, Nays 20.

**Madam Speaker:** The ruling of the Chair is accordingly sustained.

### MATTER OF PRIVILEGE

**Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Inkster):** Madam Speaker, I would stand on a matter of privilege if I may.

This is one of those rare occasions—in fact I cannot necessarily recall the last time I had abstained from voting in my previous nine and a half years inside the Chamber. I guess in most part I felt that it would not be appropriate for me to vote for a couple of reasons, one of those reasons being that I did not necessarily hear the articulation as to why or why not from either side of the Chamber. I also feel that this is an issue which has come up on numerous occasions in the past.

As I sat through a good portion of listening to the bells, I was not too sure in terms of if in fact Manitobans were being served in the best way they can because of the issues that have been surrounding something that has happened, and it happened quite a while ago, Madam Speaker. I think that there would have been more fruit, if you like, if in fact there was more debate on the throne speech, because there is a limited amount of time. In all likelihood, for example, not every member inside this Chamber will be provided that opportunity to speak because of that limited amount of time.

I was thinking in terms of how it is I would respond. I had one member of the media ask in terms of what are my thoughts and my position on what has happened and I did not know what to say to the member of the media. In fact it indicated that I wanted to spend some time just to think about it prior to giving an opinion. As I was thinking about it, more and more I felt that in fact I should be standing up today and addressing the Chamber in the form of a matter of privilege.

What I want to be able to do is to point out the MTS affair, if you like, and compare it to something else that occurred back in 1989. The reason why I am doing this is that today there might have been some merit in terms of some of the questions that were being posed from the opposition with respect to events that you would have attended or might have attended, Madam Speaker. There might have been some merit to that. But what I really want to focus my attention on is why it is that we are constantly challenging the Speaker to the extent of ringing the bells, it seems more often than not. Have in fact you been provided an opportunity to be a Speaker inside this Chamber from the official opposition?

Well, in my nine and a half years there have actually been two really significant incidences that have

occurred. A number of members would not be aware of the first one because they were not here, and that was in the minority days when in fact I sat inside a committee room inside the Legislature. The Minister of Finance then, Mr. Manness, was talking about Repap and the sale of Repap. The Liberals were the official opposition, and how I long for those days, but we were the official opposition at the time. What happened was we were getting into the debate, Madam Speaker, when all of a sudden the Minister of Finance felt that it was no longer important for him to be there, and he just walked out of the committee room. The current Minister of Culture and Heritage is very familiar with this, because he was in fact the Chair of that particular committee and I am sure can relate to what it is that I am talking about.

\* (1520)

**An Honourable Member:** The Speaker supported you.

**Mr. Lamoureux:** We took exception to—and I am going to get to that—we took great exception to the way in which this occurred. Imagine, if you will, a duly called meeting. A majority of the committee members wanted to continue on in the committee; yet, the Chair and the ministry decided to leave the committee room, thereby calling it to an end. We searched everywhere, and at that time we had fairly good research capabilities because of the resources. We did a thorough research in terms of where something of this nature might of even happened, anywhere in the parliamentary Commonwealth. Well, Madam Speaker, we found absolutely nothing that gave any sort of justification to what took place—and as the member for Burrows (Mr. Martindale) points out, he is dead right. Shame. It was a shameful day for the Manitoba Legislature, and I really and truly believe that.

Madam Speaker, when I compare that incident to the incident of the MTS, both of those things, both of those incidents, were not in our glory days as Manitoba legislators, but when I try to draw the comparison, the only real thing that stands out—other than the obvious, as opposed to a chairperson it was the Speaker, which is a fairly significant difference in itself—is that we have to remember that we were operating under provisional rules back during the MTS affair.



Madam Speaker, there were a lot of things that occurred from both sides, and at one time we were in full support of what was happening. At other times, we accused the government of hiding behind the Speaker and so forth.

Now what I find more often than not whenever I am approached by members of the media is to try to have this balancing effect. You know, I do not want to come across as browning up to the Speaker or taking the sides with the government. I do not want to come across as being unfair, for I have been treated relatively fairly as a minority party inside this Chamber. So there have been areas in which for me it has been a fine line in wanting to do the right thing.

Well, Madam Speaker, I do believe very firmly that the previous incident, the walkout of the committee was never resolved. Privileges and Elections did in fact meet. It was supposed to discuss it; it never ever happened. I would suggest to you because there was no provisional rules, because there was no other agreement in place and so forth, that that is a fairly significant flaw in our tradition from within this Chamber.

I do not support it now, but I have got over it in the sense that I no longer raise the issue. It is in my mind, I am not going to forget about it, and I am pleased to be able to share it with other members because it was wrong then and hopefully it will never ever happen again. But I do not see the benefit of constantly bringing up the issue inside the Manitoba Legislature. I think what is important is that the record will clearly show what I have said is in fact quite accurate. You could read the pages and pages of Hansard, whether it was from Reg Alcock or from John Angus and I am sure even Sharon Carstairs, possibly even Jay Cowan, would have spoken on it. So it is there for us to be able to reflect on when things in the future—and hopefully it does not occur but if, in fact, it does.

Madam Speaker, I think the same needs to apply with respect to what happened with MTS. Like the New Democrats, I agree that the government should not have sold MTS. I think that was a mistake and, given the opportunity, that is what I would articulate in the next provincial election. I look at how it actually transpired, and I disagree in many parts in different ways with what occurred last November. I do believe it was a

good learning experience not only for me but for all members of this Chamber. I think that as a result of what has occurred that we will grow from that. I believe that to be the case because equally there were members that were not here during the committee affair.

In future years, there will be MLAs that were not around for the MTS affair and that issue will be brought up. It is not going to be something that is going to be forgotten, but one has to start questioning why it is that it is in fact constantly being brought up in a format that takes away from other debates within the Chamber, given the limitations of debate that we have inside the Chamber. I think by doing that, we are not able to address the many different issues, allowing other members to be able to stand up, whether it is the throne or by chance the throne did come to an end prematurely in terms of debate because of a lack of interest to speak, well, there would be more things that would be brought onto the table for debate.

Strategically and from a tactical point of view, at times there is a need to allow for bells to ring. I do not necessarily see the one that is there today. I want to be able, as I indicated at the beginning, to respect the fact that the New Democrats brought up some valid points in Question Period. Madam Speaker, I think that there is some merit to it, but what I would suggest that we really need to do is to start talking about exactly what role the Speaker has to play. We are talking about electing a Speaker, and I think that is a positive thing. I hope that in fact we will have an elected Speaker at some point in time, the sooner the better as far as I am concerned, but the role of the Speaker needs to be talked about.

From what I understand, for example, the Speaker in Saskatchewan attends caucus meetings intersessionally. That is from what I understand. I had asked our research to look into what happens in B.C., what happens when a Speaker needs to confer or to consult with the minister, and fortunately, even with our limitations, I was able to get somewhat of a response on that. Andy from our research indicates that in B.C. the Speaker will not venture into the space used by members of Executive Council. When constituency issues or the need arises for discussion with ministers, the government ministers head to the Speaker's office.

The Speaker in B.C. is also provided with his own dining room. Meetings with government ministers take place there or in committee rooms. Private meetings are not uncommon. No one in the B.C. Speaker's office knows when this rule was started, but it has been accepted practice for some time.

\* (1530)

Well, Madam Speaker, the reason why I bring that up is because I do not think Beauchesne's is as clear as it could be on this particular issue. In fact, what I would suggest to you is that we need to look not only at having an elected Speaker, but we also need to know what sort of rules need to be taken into consideration in terms of the actions that a Speaker may or may not take without putting at risk, compromising the Chair.

When I talk about compromising the Chair, Madam Speaker, that is ultimately the reason why I felt that it was important that I stand up today, because I have in the past shown considerable support for the Chair. To date I am still prepared to give that support to the Chair, and I say that to my friends in the New Democratic Party. I do not say that because I am hoping to be able to achieve more through the Speaker's Chair. I can tell them I had to fight for what I have and I am still trying to fight. I still believe that it is three independents because as a caucus you can determine who can stand up when for members' statements, for Question Period, that we do have very strong limitations. I still argue today with you, as you know, in terms of that we need to have more rights inside this Chamber, because, again, I believe that we do need to have more rights, that at times you have to acknowledge the need to change that status quo.

So in summation, I guess what I would say, Madam Speaker, is that there is the need for us to look at what role the Speaker should be playing in the future in the Province of Manitoba which includes having the elected role and which also includes what limitations that that Speaker should have in place.

I would also appeal to all members, in particular members of the New Democratic Party, that we have learned, I believe, from what occurred in the past, but maybe it is time that we move ahead, Madam Speaker, in trying to deal with what is obviously important and

in order to allow for more time on debate of many other issues.

*Mr. Marcel Laurendeau, Deputy Speaker, in the Chair*

In the responses that we give to the throne speech, we can talk about the problems as we saw them that occurred last November. We can continue to bring up MTS all we want, but surely to goodness there is a better way.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I do have a motion that I want to be able to move because, always wanting to be constructive, I would like to be able to see meetings occur. The last time I had a meeting with the Speaker's office was with my two other colleagues, and we talked about our rights going into the session. [interjection] At what point in time? I say this with all honesty. She was defending the New Democrats' rights, saying, well, they should anticipate some sort of changes in Question Period, that I should not be taking it for granted. We had taken the line that, look, no, Madam Speaker, you should not be taking away rights from us. We will c.c. it and let us see if the government House leader or the opposition House leader respond negatively; and, if they respond negatively, then I will take it up with whomever it is that has responded negatively. So, again, I have to worry about rights being taken away from us on occasion but not to fear in the sense that I, along with the member for St. Boniface (Mr. Gaudry) and the member for The Maples (Mr. Kowalski), will continue to articulate as to what is important in terms of rights of individuals who are in our current situation, because that is very, very important to us.

What I hope is that in fact the opposition House leader and the government House leader (Mr. McCrae)—I understand that they do not meet very often with the Speaker; I am not too sure when the last time is that they actually met—but we need to see, we are not prepared—[interjection] Well, again, I was sympathetic to your questions today, but you also have to take into consideration that there is that need to look at the rules. Like Glenn Hagel, whom I have a deep amount of respect for, the Speaker out in Saskatchewan, from what I understand meets in caucus intersession with the New Democrats. You know, this is in fact what I am told. I trust that will be confirmed one way or another. We do need to look at it, and you raise a very good

point. [interjection] But, as the Leader of the New Democratic Party says, I am starting to be somewhat repetitive, so I will leave it at that, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

I would move, seconded by the member for The Maples (Mr. Kowalski), that the Speaker convene a meeting of the House leaders and a representative of the independent member caucus intersessionally to resolve the issues facing the Speaker's Chair.

**Motion presented.**

**Mr. Steve Ashton (Opposition House Leader):** Mr. Deputy Speaker, I may be in some difficulty with my Leader because I know we talked at our convention about hugging Liberals, but I would suggest to the member for Inkster (Mr. Lamoureux) that, if he wants to start some consensus, he might want to start with his own caucus. Indeed, this is the same caucus that on MTS voted on a key matter that was before this House in which one voted for and one voted against and one abstained. I think we have seen some of the explanation of that logic today. I have seen very important matters trivialized in this House before, but for the member for Inkster (Mr. Lamoureux) I think to suggest that someone call a meeting and that is going to solve the problem I think is trivializing the root cause of the problem, and that is that we have no confidence in the Speaker. We have had no confidence in the Speaker since 1996. We will never have confidence in this Speaker.

I appreciated the member for Inkster's rather twisting and turning version of life as he sees it, but I still do not see any indication yet of the fact that we in this House do not have confidence in this Speaker.

I would appreciate I think from the member if he would recognize why that has occurred. We saw one of the biggest bills in Manitoba history pass through this Legislature when every single rule in the book was broken by the Speaker. We have clear evidence. We are going to be checking further evidence despite the rather foggy memory of the Minister of Urban Affairs (Mr. Reimer) as seen earlier in Question Period. We have clear evidence that the Speaker sees no problem in attending government-sponsored meetings, policy meetings, whether it be on education or committees of cabinet. It is just unbelievable, absolutely unbelievable.

\* (1540)

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** Order, please. Could I ask the honourable members that want to carry on their conversations to do so in the loge. I am having great difficulty, and I am trying to get some evidence on whether I should deal with this now or take it under advisement. So the honourable member for Thompson, to continue.

**Mr. Ashton:** I find it unfortunate that we are in a position having to deal with a motion that is before this House that fails to recognize the root cause of the problem. We have not had Speakers in the parliamentary system that have been spokespeople for the government and previously the Crown since the Plantagenet and Tudor times. That was the last time in history. We are talking now about 500 years ago. At that time, the Speaker was seen as the mouthpiece of the Crown, and anybody who is aware of parliamentary history will remember the courageous act of the Speaker of the day that refused to dismiss Parliament when requested by the king of the day, refused—the beginning of the impartiality of the Speaker's office. It amazes me.

I had the opportunity this summer to actually go to Runnymede, which is where the Magna Carta was signed, which was the beginning of the parliamentary system.

I think after seeing what has happened today, and particularly the comments by the member for Inkster (Mr. Lamoureux), that what we need is to educate members of this House, particularly on the Conservative benches, and I would not suggest necessarily all the Liberals, because I still have some hope on the Liberal side of what the basis of parliamentary democracy is. It is separation first and foremost between the Crown and Parliament, and that can only be achieved when Parliament has rights and when those rights are enforced through the respect and enforcement of our rules by an impartial and objective Speaker.

If anybody doubts what can happen when that is taken away from a Parliament, just look at what has happened in this House since 1996. I find it absolutely amazing that today, in December of 1997, earlier today

we dealt with a matter of privilege that was raised in this House November 23, 1996. It is interesting, because we are not only in the next session, we are in the next, next session.

I do not know why the Speaker of the House did not come up with a ruling in the previous session. I mean, how long did it take to research a one-and-a-half-page ruling? We did not sit between June and just a few days ago. I know we have a hard-working Clerk's office, an office of the Legislative Assembly, but surely this could have been researched and brought back to the House, I would have suggested, probably immediately after the ruling was made. It was a matter of privilege.

I find it amazing that when we rise on a matter of privilege in this House, we have to establish that it is raised at the first opportunity. Then we have to establish a prima facie case. Does nobody on the Conservative benches understand that there is something bizarre when we get rulings that are made a year and some days later?

Mr. Deputy Speaker, some of those members have sat in opposition, and if they keep up with this arrogant and smug attitude will sit again in opposition very soon. I could imagine the howl and I look to some members. Well, I will not mention them by name. I will not, but they know of what I speak because there are members on the other side who have been in government and in opposition. They have been around. They will probably be around full circle again because they know they are survivors, and I think they have survived because they understand Parliament. At least in their heart of hearts they do.

Does somebody not see why we are so frustrated? It is not just a question of partiality anymore; it is a question of competence. To the member for Inkster (Mr. Lamoureux), what are we going to do as House leaders—and this is a new, I am not sure how to describe the three members who were elected as Liberals. I, by the way, have always respected that while they may not be a recognized party, that they are Liberals. I am not sure what the Hansard states today because one of them was a Liberal, two of them were listed as independent Liberals. Now I think it is two Liberals and one independent Liberal, and the member for Inkster talked about the caucus of independents.

I do not know what they do in terms of meetings anymore, but I respect them as members of the House, but how do they expect us to sit down with the Speaker? How many times have we had to bring matters of no confidence in the Speaker? What are we supposed to do, sit down and eat cookies and drink tea and then discuss the House as if nothing happened?

What planet are we living on here? We have no confidence in the Speaker. I can tell you I have not had any meeting with the Speaker now for more than a year. I would suggest to you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that knowing the feeling in our caucus and of many Manitobans about what happened in 1996, that should come as no surprise. I cannot think of anything more bizarre than having a motion of the House now that suggests we call a meeting. If there is a meeting called by the Speaker we will not attend, because we do not have any confidence left in the Speaker. How many times do we have to say that?

Now, I say to the member for Inkster (Mr. Lamoureux) again, I thought there were some encouraging signs in his statements, and, by the way, I do want to credit at least one member of this House I think who showed some real honesty earlier, and courage, and that is the Minister of Northern Affairs (Mr. Newman). I mean, he was asked a straight question and he gave a straightforward answer. I respect that. The Minister of Urban Affairs (Mr. Reimer), I have to be careful because I do not want to transpose my remarks to leave any unparliamentary impression, but I can tell you, if he does not remember who shows up at his meetings of the Urban Affairs committee of cabinet, boy, he has more problems than we thought he had.

And the twisted logic of the Minister of Education (Mrs. McIntosh)—they do not get it, Mr. Deputy Speaker. The Speaker's office is not an additional cabinet member. I mean, how many times do we have to read from Beauchesne, from Erskine May? It is fundamental. It is absolutely fundamental to the parliamentary system. The chief characteristics attached to the office of the Speaker in the House of Commons are authority and impartiality. That is from Beauchesne. Erskine May, which references the route British parliamentary tradition: The chief characteristics attached to the office of the Speaker in

the House of Commons are authority and impartiality. The impartiality of the Speaker is an indispensable condition to the successful working of procedure, and many conventions exist which have as their object not only to ensure the impartiality of the Speaker but also to ensure that his, and I might add her, impartiality is generally recognized.

It is not just that the Speaker does not speak in this House. That is a given. Unless there are exceptional circumstances, the Speaker does not vote in this House. It extends to cabinet committees. I say to government members opposite, rhetorically through you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, have they been in office so long that they do not see the root problem with having the Speaker of the House sit in cabinet committees? What I referenced earlier, just think of the logic here. I mean by their definition, and we suspect this may have actually even happened, there would be no problem with the Speaker sitting in on a cabinet committee on House strategy, particularly if they were dealing with MTS. Think about it. Why not have the Speaker attend cabinet meetings? It might make communication a lot easier the next time the Premier tells the Speaker of the House what to do. Think about it for a moment. There are some members opposite—oh, I know in your heart of hearts—they know that this is the most flagrant abuse that we have seen of any Speaker.

I was concerned when I saw the Speaker's picture as part of the Conservative caucus that went out on a Conservative Party ad, but, okay, you know, it was a picture and perhaps the Speaker socializes with members of the Conservative caucus, you know, social events. That is not a problem. I am sure the Speaker may do that as well. Think about it for a moment, Mr. Deputy Speaker, what do we have left of a parliamentary democracy in this Legislature if we have the Speaker of the House seen as nothing more than another member of the Conservative caucus?

I noticed with interest—I thought the Minister of Urban Affairs (Mr. Reimer) nearly gave it away. He said that the committee was open to all con members of Urban Affairs. I was thinking “con.” Con what? Would this be cons? Conservatives? Cons? Well, I guess, in Saskatchewan, cons and conservative do mean the same thing, but it may be unparliamentary to suggest that here. I wonder if the minister opposite

actually watched all those Watergate hearings, because about the only thing he did not do was say “let me make this perfectly clear.” Because you know in that fog, I think we know the answer. We know that the Speaker attended the Urban Affairs Committee of Cabinet. The Speaker attended the Urban Affairs Committee of Cabinet.

\* (1550)

I ask members opposite to put themselves in the shoes of being members of the opposition—and I say to the Minister of Urban Affairs, you know, you may get this chance before you realize and I want to see what your reaction would be, because I heard members saying, oh, an MLA cannot deal with that. You know, Speakers have always dealt with items related to constituents, always. In fact, in 1986, it was recognized that Speakers do have a role as members of the Legislature when an assistant was provided to the Speaker, something that continues to this day, so that they can deal with constituency concerns.

That does not mean that they then go and sit on cabinet committees. No, the leaps of logic on the other side are unbelievable. Same with the Minister of Education (Mrs. McIntosh), does she not get it? Well, she probably does not actually, but does she not see that when she is sitting there with students? What is she discussing, the weather? She is discussing government policy. You know why we were aware of this? Because some of the students who attended that meeting understood something the government did not. I do not know if they were political studies students or just that many of the students are very aware of what is happening in politics and the political system. But you know the university students who were there understood something that the Minister of Education did not. I think if we have compulsory testing in this province, it might be with the Minister of Education rather than with students.

But think about it for a moment, and I say this to the member for Inkster (Mr. Lamoureux), you know, when do we draw the line? When do we draw the line between the Speaker and partiality? I say that line has been long crossed. Now I want to indicate, too, Mr. Deputy Speaker, we will be reviewing the transcripts from today, the Hansards. I want to determine exactly

what was said earlier in Question Period, because I feel there may be a far more important matter to deal with in the matter that the member for Inkster brings forward.

But I would suggest to you in conclusion that the member for Inkster does not have a matter of privilege. I would suggest the only matter of privilege that would have been appropriate coming from the Liberals would have been a matter similar to matters we have raised time and time again in this House pointing out that we have no confidence in the Speaker. I do not know what it is going to take before the member for Inkster—[interjection] I do not speak for the other Liberal members and I know the member for The Maples (Mr. Kowalski) who has been critical of some of our views understood our concern today. But I do not know how many more times we have to go through this.

This is not about something that is frivolous. This is root. This goes to the root of our ability in this House to represent our constituents. I represent 58 percent of the people in the province who did not vote Conservative in the last election. You know, this is not a Legislature that is an extension of the Conservative caucus. We will never allow it to become an extension of this Conservative caucus, and the way we are going to do that is by continuing to push for a Speaker in this House. I look at you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, and I note, having seen you function in this House, that—and I want this on the record, too, because this is not partisan—as we did before with the previous Speaker, having an initial affiliation with a political party does not prevent someone such as yourself from doing a commendable job, for being very impartial. I want to put that on the record because it is not about any frustration we have with Conservative Speakers. There are Conservative Speakers who have been, and Deputy Speakers, who continue to be impartial. All we ask is the ability to have a Speaker who is impartial. Thank you.

**Hon. Vic Toews (Minister of Justice and Attorney General):** Mr. Deputy Speaker, I am honoured to rise to speak in support of the motion brought by the member for Inkster (Mr. Lamoureux).

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** Order, please. I would just like to advise the minister that I am just taking advice at this time. You are not speaking to the motion. You are

giving me advice on whether I should bring this to debate.

**Mr. Toews:** Thank you very much for that direction.

I certainly would like to advise that we should be supporting this particular motion brought by the member for Inkster. I think in this particular situation, the member for Inkster in fact has shown that he is a consensus builder.

I note with some regret the comments of the member for Thompson (Mr. Ashton), the way in which he expressed his comments, his emphatic statement that he and his caucus would not attend any type of a meeting that would be brought forward by all the House leaders as well as a representative of the independent members' caucus. I think that is quite unfortunate. I think that the conduct in this House over the last number of days has demonstrated that we in fact do require some type of forum.

We know, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that past Speakers appointed by NDP governments have attended government caucuses and in fact cabinet meetings. We know that the present practice in such provinces as Saskatchewan, where there is an NDP government, the Speaker regularly attends caucus and cabinet meetings. So I think this is an issue among others that need to be discussed, and if in fact there is some dispute over whether or not the Speaker from Saskatchewan attends both caucus and cabinet meetings, that is an appropriate issue to discuss at the type of forum recommended by the member for Inkster. This is an issue that does need to be discussed, and I think it clearly shows the leadership of the member for Inkster in attempting to have the House resolve an outstanding problem.

So I certainly support the motion and the sentiments brought to this House in the form of the motion by the member for Inkster.

**Hon. James McCrae (Government House Leader):** Mr. Deputy Speaker, in response to the motion brought by the honourable member for Inkster, I think it would be safe to say that honourable members on this side of the House would be prepared to waive the kinds of requirements that I have no doubt you were about to talk about with respect to a question of privilege. I

think that strictly applied rules in this case might cause a valuable motion like this one to fail, and I do not want that to happen. So I would say that we on this side of the House are quite willing to waive any rules that require certain tests—[interjection]

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** Order, please.

**Mr. McCrae:** Something that happens on a daily basis in this House in order to help with the business of the House is that members on all sides of the House from time to time waive various rules and requirements in order to get the business done, and honourable members in the New Democratic Party tend to want to disrupt again my opportunity to have a word on a topic of very great importance to honourable members in the New Democratic Party if you believe what they tell you. So I would appreciate it if they would let me finish my comments.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, what I am suggesting in the spirit put forward by the honourable member for Inkster to get serious and to get some resolution to some of the things that are bothering members around here is that, in order for us to do what is suggested in the motion, we would need to waive the requirement of the kind of urgency that is called for under a question of privilege that would be required, and so we would waive that.

\* (1600)

The honourable member for Inkster (Mr. Lamoureux) in his motion suggests that there be a meeting of House leaders and a representative of the independent members of this House in order to discuss and, hopefully, resolve issues. I understand from the comments of the honourable member for Thompson (Mr. Ashton) that he does not want to resolve the issues. He does not want to have such a meeting. He and his colleagues want to carry on a personal vendetta that gets in the way of doing the business of the people of this province, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Rather than putting forward any forward thinking or coming up with any constructive suggestions for the business of the people of this province, members of the New Democratic Party choose instead to engage in personal attacks on people. That is what is going on around here. There is a total dearth of any constructive suggestion. They obviously want to talk about their

vendetta every day rather than talk about what is contained in the throne speech. They have done this before, by the way, when we have had—they have absolutely no policy, no alternative policy to offer to the people of Manitoba, so daily they take their place in this Chamber and kick up as much fuss as they can. It is convenient to go after the Speaker of the Legislature. It is an easy thing for them to do.

I know, I heard someone say a little while ago that members of this side, some of us, have had the opportunity to sit in the opposition, and it is a fact. I remember very well 1986 coming here as a new member and learning very quickly—

**An Honourable Member:** You even got kicked out.

**Mr. McCrae:** I even got kicked out as the member for Thompson (Mr. Ashton) points out. I do not hold that against the presiding officer of the day, but I had certain impressions of that particular presiding officer, one Myrna Phillips. Honourable members know what those impressions were, and they know very well why, and they sit in their places today mostly from their seats, but one or two of them on the floor of this House, making suggestions about the present occupant of the Chair of this House. The more things do not change, Mr. Deputy Speaker, it seems the more things do not change.

But I do believe the honourable member for Inkster (Mr. Lamoureux) is on to something here. [interjection] That is right. Well, I have got another one for you if you did not like that one. I will share it with you privately. It says something like things are more like they are today than they have ever been before in history, and I think there is some truth in that. I invite honourable members to contemplate that.

Quite seriously, the honourable member for Inkster I believe is trying to create an atmosphere or rebuild an atmosphere in this House where we can get some orderly work done, and he suggests that we get together with the Speaker and iron out some of our differences. What a great idea—

**An Honourable Member:** Oh, let us have cookies and cake, and let us forget anything ever happened.

**Mr. McCrae:** Well, the honourable member for Thompson (Mr. Ashton) is in a very awkward position, because it is an entirely reasonable proposition and because such a meeting might tend to put the New Democrats on the spot and make them have to search in their souls and come up with the right kinds of answers so that we can go forward and do the real work of the people. They do not want that to happen; then they would not have a vendetta they could carry on anymore. That is why they are going to oppose what the honourable member for Inkster is talking about, while I and my colleagues would support the approach suggested by the honourable member for Inkster. That is why I thought it was necessary for me to say I think we need to waive the rules in order to do what this motion suggests under a question of privilege.

If this should fail for whatever reason and if the honourable member wants to put a notice on the Order Paper for such a meeting to happen, I and my colleagues would be only too happy to entertain it and indeed to agree with it. Why will the NDP not? Why do they not want to sit down like normal, reasonable people and discuss our differences? Let them answer that, Mr. Deputy Speaker. In the meantime, I am with the honourable member for Inkster (Mr. Lamoureux) and so are my colleagues.

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** Normally I would have already said I have enough information. I am going to hear from one more member here.

**Mr. Gary Kowalski (The Maples):** Mr. Deputy Speaker, I will just be very short in my comments. I was just reading a book here, and it refers to a quote by Sir Robert Borden. I do not know what his—members here may know his party affiliation.

Well, regardless of it, his words belong to no party. In the highest ideal party government, two parties unite in generous rivalry for the service of the state, and a rivalry should be generous, but at all times the ultimate purpose should be service to the province of Manitoba.

Now, I am on leave from the police force. I may return for the police force but, in the time that I am in this Chamber, I would like to debate important issues, I would like to contribute what I can, and I would like to move on. I feel that my privileges as a member to do

that are being hampered by keeping bringing forward this subject—[interjection] No, the motion was a way of finally resolving this.

The official opposition, from the time the Speaker was appointed, made comments about how they were disappointed that Speaker Rocan did not continue. So right from the outset they had a bias against the present Speaker, and then they use that bias now, and that is fine, people can have biases, but now it is interfering with my privileges. I was looking so forward, this is the session of the Legislature that I was looking forward to more than any other, because I was going to listen more carefully than I ever have to the Throne Speech Debate. I wanted to hear the opposition members. I wanted to hear what they had to say about the throne speech to help me decide how to vote. I wanted to hear very carefully, but what are we doing? On and on and on about the Speaker, holding us back from doing the business of government, and I am tired of it. We should be moving on and dealing with the business.

So I support the motion brought forward, and I think, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that my advice to you is that we should proceed with it so this issue could be resolved. If people can get together—they make fun and said, do you want to get together for milk and cookies in the Speaker's office? Well, do you know what? Generous rivalry in a statesmanly way would be a way to deal with this. They want to form government next time. Well, let us show them, do it in a way that they could get together with people to resolve situations, instead of continually this partisan way with their vendetta against the Speaker, interfering with our doing the business of government.

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** A matter of privilege is a very serious matter, and I do not take them lightly, and I know that honourable members do not. I would prefer to take it under advisement, but I am willing to see if there is a will of the House to debate it at this time.

Is it the will of the House to debate this at this time?

**Mr. Ashton:** Mr. Deputy Speaker, I know the government House leader indicated on the record he has no problem with waiving the rules. We in the



opposition are quite aware of that, but I do not believe this is a legitimate matter of privilege. I would like to hear your ruling on that. [interjection] It is not a matter of shame, I think if the government House leader would care to listen on that.

But the matter made reference to this House calling for a meeting, which is not a matter of privilege, first of all, and second of all is avoiding the reality of the fact that we have stated very clearly on the record that we do not have any more confidence in this Speaker. It is not a question of personalities; it is based on her actions in this House.

I would appreciate your ruling, Mr. Deputy Speaker, on this matter, and until that time I would suggest you either make the ruling or take it under advisement.

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** I thank the honourable member for Thompson for that. At this time, I am not prepared to make a ruling, so I will be taking it under advisement and reporting back to the House.

#### Members' Statements

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** We will now move on to Members' Statements.

#### Manitoba Winter Games

**Mr. Edward Helwer (Gimli):** From March 4 to March 8, 1998, Gimli will host the MTS Manitoba Games. As the MLA for the Gimli constituency, it is a real pleasure to see the tremendous progress that the organizers have made in preparation of these games. Amateur sport makes a significant contribution to the economic, social and physical well-being of our province, and these games will have an important impact on the Interlake.

\* (1610)

Gimli will be the host community and the focal point for the games, but other Interlake communities will also be actively involved. Some hockey and ringette events will be held at Winnipeg Beach. The five-pin bowling competition will be held in Selkirk, and the alpine skiing will be held at Stony Mountain.

By working together and using facilities in surrounding communities, organizers will be able to stage events that will be enjoyed by many more people, and this will benefit the whole Interlake area. Approximately 1,600 athletes, coaches and volunteers will make their way to Gimli and the area to participate in the Manitoba Winter Games, and the games will represent the largest continuing multisport competition ever held in Manitoba. I am sure that all the visitors and all the athletes will be overwhelmed by the hospitality and generosity that they will experience in the Gimli and in the Interlake area.

So I would like to congratulate all the games organizers for their hard work in bringing the games to Gimli, and I want to wish them success in their future games. Thank you.

#### Child Poverty Rate

**Ms. Diane McGifford (Osborne):** Mr. Deputy Speaker, I ask permission to make a member's statement.

**An Honourable Member:** You do not have to.

**Ms. McGifford:** I do not need permission. Well, that is good. One never knows for sure.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, last Thursday, November 27, the Social Planning Council of Winnipeg held a public meeting and issued its child poverty in Winnipeg 1997 report card. There was an interesting juxtaposition of events this day, for this very same day the Lieutenant Governor read the Speech from the Throne. The Social Planning Council told us that Manitoba had the third highest child poverty rate in Canada. We lag behind only Newfoundland and New Brunswick. Later that same day, this government assured us through the throne speech that, and here I quote: "Manitoba is recognized across the continent and abroad as one of the top provinces in Canada for new investment opportunities and sustained growth."

Yet despite this reputation, Mr. Deputy Speaker, Manitoba has the third highest rate of child poverty in Canada, and, furthermore, in Winnipeg 35 percent of aboriginal households with children live in poverty. How to explain this anomaly—booming economic

prosperity and the shame of a province where 23 percent or one in four children live in poverty.

Well, the Minister of Family Services (Mrs. Mitchelson) took a stab at it. She said, and this was reported in the Free Press on Friday, November 29, that her government did not believe in handouts, and consequently they would not resort to the rainy day fund to assist families on welfare. They believe in jobs and would find jobs for parents. The question she evaded and the information which she chose to ignore was that huge numbers of Manitoba's poor children live in families where both parents are working. They are just not making a decent income.

I note here that we have the third lowest minimum wage in Canada. The logical conclusion is clear. [interjection] May I finish my sentence, Mr. Deputy Speaker? I can conclude?

I want to thank the Social Planning Council of Winnipeg for their report. We urge this government to adopt their recommendations, to put children first. Remember children are our greatest resource, our hope for the future and our best teachers.

### **Maple Leaf Foods**

**Mr. David Faurshou (Portage la Prairie):** Mr. Deputy Speaker, it is truly a pleasure for me to rise in the House today to add a note to indeed a tremendous achievement for the province of Manitoba. Earlier today, as members know, it was announced that Maple Leaf Foods will be investing \$112 million in Manitoba's economy in the construction of a state-of-the-art, world-class hog processing facility in the city of Brandon.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I was pleased to hear that the member for Brandon East (Mr. Leonard Evans) indicated his support for Maple Leaf meats, as well as acknowledgement of the efforts and all of the departments of this government to bring this project to Manitoba. For the 2,200 people who will find employment eventually in this plant, the announcement of Maple Leaf meats is another indicator that Manitoba is experiencing a strong sustainable economic growth. The announcement today is a result of a government that has worked hard to nurture an industry as part of an overall plan to diversify our economic base. It is a result of a government that has worked hard with all

stakeholders to promote an industry while putting in place the environmental parameters needed to ensure its sustainability.

### *Madam Speaker in the Chair*

Madam Speaker, the pork that is processed in the Brandon facility will find its way into markets around the world. It will assist in distributing the finest pork in the world, and it will help distinguish our province as truly a global competitor and will undoubtedly pave the way for an even brighter future and further investment in our province.

Today, it is a day that all residents of Manitoba should stand proud. It is another day that Manitoba has shown that it is growing even stronger. Thank you, Madam Speaker.

### **Commendation of Brian O'Leary**

**Mr. Gary Kowalski (The Maples):** I just rise to make a few comments about an incident that happened in The Maples in front of the Maples Collegiate yesterday, and I will not speak about the incident because it will be before the courts. My daughter attends Maples Collegiate, and myself and many other parents in the community were very concerned, but I want to commend the principal of the school, Brian O'Leary. [interjection] Right, and apparently he is a constituent. I believe he might even be a member of the opposition party. I do not know, but that is not why I am rising.

What he did yesterday, he made an announcement over the public address system at the high school after the incident, cooling the situation, commending the students for their behaviour afterwards not to get overexcited and take any retaliation in any way, shape or form. He assembled a group of counsellors that dealt with the students, and his quick reaction, I think, lessened the seriousness of what could have happened after this incident, which could have transpired into further incidents. So I commend the principal of Maples Collegiate, Brian O'Leary, for his quick action yesterday. Thank you.

### **Philippine President Fidel Ramos**

**Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Inkster):** I would like to just say a few words. I know the member for Broadway

(Mr. Santos) had the opportunity yesterday actually to comment on the visit of President Ramos from the Philippines. I, too, wanted to echo many of the comments that the member for Broadway had put forward. I was really thrilled with the response in Winnipeg in particular to the president's visit. I know that there were literally hundreds of members from the Filipino community, a number of them very good, personal, close friends of mine, who had the opportunity to be able to meet with the president and to extend my hearty congratulations to all those that were involved in getting the president of the Philippines to come to visit, from Dr. Rey Pagtakhan to the Premier and whomever else was involved in having, inviting if you like, the president of the Philippines to come here, because it did give a very big boost to a lot of people who reside here. He was warmly welcomed and hopefully we will see, if not him, his replacement sometime in the not too distant future.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

## ORDERS OF THE DAY

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

**Madam Speaker:** To resume adjourned debate on the proposed motion of the honourable member for Pembina (Mr. Dyck) and the proposed motion of the honourable Leader of the official opposition (Mr. Doer) an amendment thereto, standing in the name of the honourable member for Emerson (Mr. Penner) who has 25 minutes remaining.

\* (1620)

**Mr. Jack Penner (Emerson):** Thank you very much, Madam Speaker.

As I ended off yesterday indicating the trauma that many of the people that experienced the flood of the century was like sailing into the North Atlantic Ocean on a small ship and experiencing one of the North Atlantic storms. The unknown that happened during this flood was very similar, and the many people that came to the rescue when the ship was about to sink will never be forgotten by those who experienced the kind of trauma that one can only experience when one has

an ocean of water start slowly creeping up around your house. It gives one that sinking feeling.

So many people are very, very happy today that the province saw fit to enhance the diking program that was initially announced by the federal and provincial governments, a \$24-million program, and that our Minister of Government Services (Mr. Pitura) and our Minister of Natural Resources (Mr. Cummings) jointly announced would be increased. We had asked on a number of occasions the federal government to increase the floodproofing program. They have not yet decided to do that. However our ministers and our government indicated clearly that we must set at ease the people in the Red River Valley and allow them to continue to protect their homes and their properties. So we increased that portion of floodproofing by \$34 million.

Madam Speaker, that and the other announcement, the other changes that were made whereby we set aside the deductibles and the depreciation on essential items of homeowners has allayed most of the fear that I heard expressed during and after the flood. Most people, after the waters were gone, started putting their lives back together. Many people in the Red River Valley are agricultural people, farmers, and they started putting their crop in as they normally had. However, back in July, roughly about July 20, they experienced something that they had not seen again in a while and that was a rainstorm that went through and dumped between six and eight inches of rain into the valley, drowning many of the crops. But one of the key things that attributed to much of the flooding the second time in a year was the closed-in and silted ditches that most farmers in the Red River Valley depend on to take away the waters during the summer months when we have heavy rains. So those are some of the things that farmers experienced.

I guess, through all this disaster that the communities in the valley experienced, none is more important than the recognition of communities actually putting their lives back together and getting on with doing the ordinary business of the day.

So our government has clearly indicated our support for the agricultural industry through many programs that have been initiated and encouraged the diversification of agriculture in our province. And

diversify, it really has done. The announcement today of a new hog-processing plant in Brandon, Manitoba, the expansion of hog processing in this city is clearly something that farmers, a secondary industry, have been looking forward to for quite some time. It is a clear indication of the confidence that has been demonstrated by the initiation of our government over the last 10 years to get our economic house in order.

It is an indication that industries from outside of this province want to move here and make their homes here. It is an indication that unemployment has dropped and will drop further to the lowest level of virtually any province within Canada, and I think that is a compliment to the people of this province for putting together their minds as well as their resources and building this economy and that can only happen if government supports those initiatives.

Under the new Manitoba Pork Advantage, a hog production and marketing program sponsored by the government and industry has taken place, and Manitoba Agriculture has been promoting the potential of the province's pork industry. It is a tribute to our Minister of Agriculture (Mr. Enns) for recognizing that through adversity can come prosperity. Many people were seeing as an adverse move the federal government's doing away with the Crow benefit, taking out of the hands of agricultural people throughout western Canada income of \$750 million annually. There is no other industry in this country that has ever experienced that kind of reduction in government support in any given year. They did it in one year, like that.

It is about time that we recognize that the agricultural community and the industries supporting it turned around and said: Let us take advantage of a disadvantage. And that is where Manitobans shine; that is where Manitoba producers shine. They were not afraid to invest in an area of the agricultural community that gave them the competitive advantage. We now know that because we are going to have the highest freight costs on grain, on raw products, grain being moved out of this province, that at the same time designates it as the cheapest feed supplement in this country, and therefore processing of many of the other commodities, I believe, will have a real advantage in Manitoba.

We can build on those advantages and the pork industry is doing that. I think the 2,000 to 3,000 jobs that will be created by the announcement that the minister made today is a very significant factor. There will be a tremendous advantage for the city of Brandon. It will be a clear indication to people in western Manitoba that they are in an advantageous position to take advantage of that industry, and it will also be an advantage to all Manitoba producers.

But there are other aspects of the industry that it will have a great impact on, I believe, and that is our secondary manufacturing sector. Much of the equipment that will be needed in the production of the hog industry will be manufactured by local manufacturers, by small manufacturing plants all across this province and in the city of Winnipeg.

I believe that the initiatives that the Department of Agriculture put in place through the Farm Credit Corporation implementing the new credit corporation Diversification Loan Guarantee Program is a very significant program that will encourage further production and further expansion of other industries. We know that producers in the province have no hesitation at all to invest, but they want an assurance that the province, the government of the day, will not deviate too dramatically in their policies and their taxation initiatives.

I had the pleasure, Madam Speaker, of chairing the value-added task force a year and a half ago, and I was very proud to be associated with Merv Tweed, the member for Turtle Mountain, and Frank Pitura, the Minister of Government Services, when we toured the province. We heard people from all across this province tell us constantly, you as a government have a responsibility, a responsibility to search out the markets. I have heard snide remarks from time to time from opposition members when our ministers have travelled abroad on trade missions and those kinds of things, and clearly people in Manitoba indicated during our task force hearing that that is one of the key things that was missing in their ability. So people said continue this, expand this. Bring us back the information. Tell us where the markets are. This is what they were asking for. They needed somebody to go out and search out the markets for them. They are quite willing to make the investments, to do the

processing, to add the value, but they told us that they did not have the marketing expertise that was required nor did they have the resources required to go out on trade missions by themselves continually.

So our government is doing exactly that. Our government has initiated a significant number of the recommendations made in the task force report. We believe that while government can continue to play the catalyst to change the success and efforts to expand the value-added activity in rural Manitoba, and indeed all of Manitoba, it hinges in large part on the willingness of Manitobans to form a partnership and play the role, the key role of investment broker in the expansion of our industries. We think it needs an attitude, a positive attitude. We believe that it is government that can nurture this positive attitude. We believe that there needs to be an adequate vision, that government must have a broad enough vision to put forward a long-term plan and indicate that we are not about to waver from that plan every time there is a ripple or an effect such as the flood of the century to make us change course. People expect us to remain on course with our policies.

\* (1630)

There is one thing that I think we need to talk about and discuss, and that is the environmental effect of much of the development that will take place, and most farmers know the value of the by-products of the agricultural expansion in the livestock sector. One of the key elements of the by-products is the fertilizer, the fertilizer that we can utilize which is one of the most natural products for the enhancement of crop production that we can find anywhere in the world.

I have always been concerned that manufactured products for fertilizer and other kinds of things, there should be some caution used. However, the livestock by-products give us back the opportunity to put fertilizers on our land from the most natural source anywhere in the world. I think we need to practise care and caution when we store those by-products to allow farmers to utilize them when the crops need them most, and that is for application in the spring or the fall of the year, to utilize them in such a way that they will not deter the longevity of the industry and our ability for our children to be able to take on the production of agricultural goods in the future. That means simply that

we must maintain vigilance about the quality of our water and our land over the long term, that we must take care not to pollute as some have raised some severe concerns, and they should be concerned. We should all be concerned. But it is our government's intention, and has been continually, to review constantly the processes and procedures of production, as we should, and encourage that the environmentally safe conduct of the operations in all parts of the province be maintained at such a level that we do not destroy the basic elements of agricultural food production, and that is our land and our water.

We believe that there are a significant number of things that can happen in the province and should happen, but recognizing again full well that there are some very primary elements that need some support, some broader-based support. One of them is our transportation system. We have allowed the railways basically free access now to do away with branch lines through the deregulation process in our transportation system.

During the debate of the Crow during the past decade or so it was clearly indicated the impact to the municipal and provincial road structure would be immense, and we now see that happening. Many of our secondary roads are really suffering the consequences of a much, much greater degree of truck traffic, and we knew this would happen. I think this will be expanded greatly, and therefore we are becoming more dependent on increased revenue into our road construction system both through the municipal sector and the provincial sector. We believe and I believe that it is imperative that the federal government take part, at least part of the Crow benefit that they pocketed, part of the \$750 million, and I would say even give us back 50 percent of that. Give the provinces back 50 percent of that and that would mean to the province of Manitoba that we would receive better than \$150 million annually from provincial revenues, and they would still save \$350 million that they could put in their bank account.

I also believe that it is imperative that the federal government should relegate some of the monies that they raise through fuel taxes back to the provinces for the construction of roads. There does not need to be any further increase in taxation as some of the federal ministers have indicated they might do. There is no

need for that. All they need to do is transfer some of the monies that they are already raising back to the provinces. We could see a dramatic increase in road construction on a long-term basis in the province of Manitoba, as we should, and we are going to have to. If we do not, Manitoba taxpayers are going to bear the brunt of the decision on the Crow benefit as they are now, and I do not believe that that is fair. Nor is it right.

I am extremely fortunate in my constituency, extremely fortunate, to be a member that represents an area of the province that has seen the greatest growth rate in all of Canada over the last eight to 10 years. It makes me extremely proud to be a member of those communities. But it takes a tremendous amount of effort. It takes a fortitude that can only be expressed with confidence, and it takes a confidence in an economy and in a country. I believe that the people in southern Manitoba and the southeast part of Manitoba have that confidence in their country. They are true Canadians, but they also have expectations. But because they are confident in the economy of this province they have invested very substantially, and we have seen very significant growth in those areas.

Some of the community loans programs that we have put forward have been taken up by communities and community organizations such as the Montcalm Community Development Corporation, and I was quite proud to be involved in putting in place a program that will now see \$75,000 be loaned to small industries and small businesses in the Montcalm area. I congratulate our Minister of Rural Development (Mr. Derkach) for having put that program in place because it truly supports the economic base of our province, and that is the small business community because they are, after all, the people who initiate most of the job creation in this province.

The Grow Bonds Program is another program that I think has done a tremendous amount and can do a tremendous amount more if it is directed in the right way to see growth expanded in communities.

I believe that the \$21-million water project that was initiated by the Pembina Valley Development Corporation and the Pembina Valley Water Co-operative two years ago is a step in the right direction.

It will provide a security of water supply to virtually all of the communities south of Winnipeg in the Red River Valley, and that is, of course, what they need to expand and create growth. So we see that virtually all of the communities will see part of that growth.

I am extremely proud to see that Friesens Corporation in Altona is again expanding. This is the third expansion in the last decade that they are into, and this is a company that has demonstrated to all Canadians, indeed all North Americans, that you do not have to be located in a major city in order to be a leader in the industry. Friesen Printers—David Friesen is now at the head of the corporation—is clearly a very aggressive company, an aggressive organization, recognizing what it means to utilize the resources in your own community and cause growth by those kinds of initiatives, and they need to be congratulated on that.

Secondly, we have something that is very unique in our part of the world, and that is a radio station that has become a fairly significant player in the broadcast field. Golden West Broadcasting was born in Altona, where CFAM was the first radio station built by this corporation, and they are now the owners of a multitude of radio stations all across western Canada and indeed into Ontario. They have become a major player in the broadcast field.

Similarly Loewen Manufacturing took advantage of a disadvantage, and that was really when you buy equipment, when farmers buy equipment, they realize very soon that there are some parts that wear off or wear out very quickly, such as combine beater grates or chains that move grain through combines and those kinds of things. So Loewen Manufacturing was started on that basis, that there was a need for replacement parts, and they have become a major player in the replacement parts business.

\* (1640)

But what this all leads to—and there are many other initiatives that are taking place such as the wood industry in the southeast region. There are a number of new players manufacturing wood products. There is Dave Desjardins in Portage and Main, building wood stoves, and Dave Desjardins building palleting, making palleting out of poplar wood that used to be a scrub

wood that nobody wanted, now adding substantial value and jobs in the southeast part of the riding.

But all of this is needed in order to support three of the prime elements of this government's initiative, and that is our health care system. We need a sound economic base. We need sound rural communities. We need a sound tax base in order to maintain, over a long-term period, a health care system that we all want and need. That is our desire. We all need a sound tax-based system in order to support an educational system that will serve the young people of our province. We all need a proper testing system to see whether the education system truly, truly demonstrates the current needs on a day-to-day basis. We need a sound solid tax base and income base in this province to ensure that our family services, through the Minister of Family Services (Mrs. Mitchelson), will be served on a long-term basis.

Without those key ingredients, our society would not be what it is today. It is only through the efforts of people in rural and urban Manitoba, whether it is the city of Brandon or the city of Winnipeg or Portage la Prairie or Steinbach or the towns such as Altona and Winkler and Morden and Dauphin and Vita or Piney—and we can name all these towns, but they would not be anything if it were not for the people. Those people we congratulate for having the wisdom to take on the initiative to build rural communities.

Our rural communities are the true lifeblood that we need and should not forget. They provide the basis for community living. They are the basis for our children's existence. They allow us to operate our schools, many of the community facilities and our churches. We should never forget our churches, and we should never forget the reason why our churches are there. I have some great fears about some of the things that we are into, which I will discuss at some other time. But it is really the essence of the people of Manitoba that I congratulate for having brought on the economy as it has been brought on in this province till now.

Madam Speaker, I thank you very much for your indulgence.

**Mr. Tim Sale (Crescentwood):** Madam Speaker, as other members have done, let me add my voice of

welcome to our new member, David Faurshou, who has joined us. I had the chance to welcome him informally when he came to the Legislature a few days after he was elected and had a chance to chat with him and wish him well, and more formally I would like to do that again here in the response to the throne speech.

Also, as well, we have had the demonstrations of the competence of our new pages already, and they have managed to make it through two calls with only one very minor slip, and David will be glad to know that he was elevated so soon to the ranks of the cabinet. But I know that that was a very minor slip, and it is quite amazing to be able to do it so quickly at the beginning of the session, and I congratulate the pages and welcome them here again.

There will probably be no responses to the throne speech, Madam Speaker, which do not reference the flood. Indeed when I came here as a clergyman in 1966, that was only 16 years after the 1950 flood—and I can tell the House that there was not a home that I visited in Wildwood Park, which of course was flooded out completely in 1950, where the subject of conversation at some point during a visit always turned to the memories of those people of that particular time. Whether it was maintaining the dikes or whether it was rebuilding the flooded-out homes, the flood of 1950 was still very much alive and well in 1966, so I expect that this one will be alive and well for a long time to come.

When we raised early in the flood the need to move the compensation level from the \$30,000, which was badly outdated—it might have been reasonable in 1986, but it was not reasonable in 1997—when we raised that issue, we were heartened by the government's response, in spite of the fact that they had printed their manuals which we all have a copy stating that the compensation maximum was \$30,000, the government moved quite quickly under some urging from the members, and probably from their own members too, to be more generous, and I think that was a good early sign.

Throughout the flood, as many of us did, I had the opportunity, and really both at the time and in retrospect, the privilege of working with people of all nations and statuses and ages and abilities on various dikes in various parts of the city, and in the riding of the

Deputy Speaker in particular, on many dikes at many different homes. That was, while a very exhausting experience for those of us who are not labourers by profession, a lot of us found muscles we did not know we had after about two weeks or three weeks of this process and we were all better for it.

I do remember a particular time of understanding just how fit some people really are when I watched some Hutterian brethren who were sandbagging down on Turnbull Drive at a home where most of us were taking sandbags in two hands, they were somewhat frustrated by the slow pace of things because they were taking one in each hand with no difficulty at all and just doing this with them. The frustrating thing was not only that they were doing it, but they were doing it without a break and they were doing it without breaking a sweat, so we all were privileged to share many different companions on that line.

There were funny times. There were also incredibly sad times, Madam Speaker. I remember sandbagging one day in the Wildwood Park area, and you know how you always introduce yourself to the people that you are heaving sandbags at or receiving them from, and there was a young couple there. So I introduced myself and asked them their names. They told me and I said the inevitable question because people were coming from all over the place. They were coming from the States, they were coming from western Manitoba to be of help, so I asked where they were from and they said Ste. Agathe, and I said, "My goodness, wasn't Ste. Agathe flooded out just yesterday?" and they said, "Yes, we lost our home." There they were on a sandbag line next day saving somebody else's home. That, to me, was an incredibly poignant moment that I still have great feeling for because these people were amazing. They were there. They were going to help their neighbours even though they themselves had lost their home.

I remember, too, a truck driver, a big burly man, a City of Winnipeg employee, in one of the big trucks that those of us who were involved in sandbagging—I know that most of us in this House were—used to find it very frustrating. We would just get finished the sandbags in a big pile, and you would just think you know you were going to get a break and then along would come another one of those darn dump trucks, and they would dump another 500 bags and you would

be at it again before you had a chance to have a real break.

Well, this guy was driving away and I just said to him, "Thank you very much. You know, you guys are doing a great job. You are just keeping us quite busy here and working a lot of hours and doing a great job to help save our city." And he stopped and said, "No, no, it is all you folks. We are getting paid to do this, you are the volunteers." Then he stepped out on his running board and he said, "But let me tell you, the next guy that bad mouths kids in this city is going to have to answer to me." Because he had seen the high schools turning out hundreds and hundreds of workers, and he had realized, as all of us do realize, that kids have a great deal to contribute, and that we often I think do not call on them enough to make their contributions because they are there and I think able and willing to contribute in ways that we often do not take advantage of.

\* (1650)

Unfortunately, we then move from that kind of spirit into what might almost be called a battle of attrition in which unfortunately it took the combined weight of public opinion, voices of the opposition, the voices of the press to wear this government down into a more reasonable approach to compensation for the flood. Finally after twisting arms and pushing and pushing and pushing, there was a recognition that the process of imposing deductibles on top of depreciation was simply not acceptable, and finally a more reasonable compensation program was arrived at, but so late and after so much frustration and after so many wasted months of effort with 300 people—260 I think it is now—still out of their homes over this winter unnecessarily.

Madam Speaker, I thought that it would have been so easy for the Premier (Mr. Filmon) to have backed away from his statement, whether it was misinterpreted or whether it was simply misinformed. It would have been so easy for him to be gracious and say to people we are all a family in Manitoba. We stand together with each other in good times and in bad times. We will not blame victims as a government, and if any interpreted my statement to be blaming victims, I apologize; that was not what I meant to say. What I



meant to say was—and he could have clarified it and gone on with it and removed the hurt that was inflicted on Manitobans who had never been flooded in any flood, including the flood of 1854 and 1826. They had never been flooded, but they were flooded this year. They had been told they did not need a dike around Ste. Agathe, but it turns out they did. They had been told that they could stay where they were; they were not at risk. Unfortunately they were. They did what they were told to do. Unfortunately, it was not enough. Now, is that their fault? I do not think so, but this Premier, stubborn as he is, would not do the gracious thing for those folk and give them the support that they needed from their leaders at that time.

Then this week we had the sad spectacle of the government trotting out its chief spokesperson on the flood, Mr. Whitney, who did a wonderful job, did a wonderful job during the flood, of keeping people's anxieties as low as it could be managed.

Unfortunately, the Premier was quite absent from that process. He turned it over to civil servants in case things went wrong, I suspect. Trotted out Mr. Whitney again, stuck the minister up beside him and said this is what the Commission of Inquiry will find. Why not just write them a letter? Why not just write them a letter and say this is your finding; here is your report; those road cuts did not cause anything different to happen than would have happened anyway.

Well, of course, the obvious answer is if it would not cause anything different to happen, why did you do them? Why did you feel the need to relieve the pressure on the Brunkild dike? The answer is obvious and reasonable. The Brunkild dike was a fresh dike. It had not had a chance to compact and settle, so, sure, it was the right decision to relieve the pressure on that dike, to relieve the pressure by cutting roads, by blocking culverts, by changing the drainage pattern. That is the right thing to do, I suspect, although I am no expert, but surely it is also then the right thing to say of course our actions changed the course of the flood and we will not abandon you in that circumstance.

Even under the most crass of calculations this government makes 17 cents on every dollar that is spent just on direct taxes, and when it is spending only 10 cents on the dollar to begin with because of the federal

formula, why would you complain? Because it might be seen to be more generous than you would like to be? Understand, members opposite, that charities in Canada will have laid out more dollars than your government will have laid out at the end of this day because of the flood formula, the 10 percent formula.

Well, the throne speech is usually a place where people talk about economic good news. Unfortunately, this throne speech is full of half truths. It talks about job growth. Last year, in 1996, there was some very good job growth. There is no question about that, some very good job growth in 1996. Unfortunately, it stopped in January of 1997. It not only stopped but went backwards, so that by October of 1997, 10 months into the year, we had lost 3,400 jobs from February; 2,600 jobs since January. Now that is not a gain of 15,000 as the minister talks about in his prebudget consultations. That is not a gain; that is a loss. Yes, there was good job growth in 1996, but the rest of the truth is there has been no job growth in 1997, and in fact, there has been a loss of jobs since January of 2,600, since the beginning of this year. The Finance minister, in an exercise in creative accounting tells his audiences partial truths and some outright whoppers, for example, on revenues.

Now, I acknowledge, Madam Speaker, that the Tories have a problem, and the problem is this: How do we position ourselves in regard to the Reform Party? How do we keep the Reform Party at bay because the Reform Party is ready to run 57 candidates? They will not hurt too many of us in the urban area, but they will sure hurt some Tories in the rural area. So how do we keep the Reform Party at bay and yet hold onto those middle-of-the-road Manitobans who want health and education and decent jobs and a good environment and parks you can afford to go to? How do you do this?

Well, the Tory answer is to make people think that things are much worse than they really are. That way you can pile up big surpluses during your time in office and then at election time you can offer all your Reform Party friends a big tax cut. In the meantime, you have misled Manitobans into thinking things are much worse than they really are, and what is the technique? Well, the Finance minister can tell us the technique, but it is actually simple. You use a phoney base number, but you use the real federal estimate of growth. So the

Finance minister can stand up in the House and say the federal government tells us how much taxes are going to grow next year; we have just used the federal government's number. Of course, he is truthful; they do just use the federal government's number, but they used the wrong base. They used a base that the Finance minister knew when he used it was \$140 million low.

So what is the result of this creative accounting? Well, the result is that I spoke of yesterday in the House. The result is that the Finance minister is in the embarrassing position, as the minister in charge of boosterism for Manitoba, of saying in his Public Accounts for last year, page 1-4, we got \$1,653 billion worth of income taxes last year; \$140 million more than we budgeted for. Oh, that is good news. However, the difficulty is that in his budget he is saying—this is on page 15—we are only going to get \$1,626 billion in taxes this year. Now this is a problem. We have got a Finance minister and a Premier (Mr. Filmon) who boast about booming economies, booming export trade, booming rural Manitoba, booming investment, but their tax revenues are falling. Now this is a trick. How do you manage this? Well, of course, he will not manage it. He will have something in the order of \$150 million to \$160 million more in taxes than he has told us in his budget. He did the same thing with sales tax revenue and with lotteries. The bottom line is the revenues will be somewhere between \$175 million and \$200 million more than budgeted for.

\* (1700)

What else did he do? What else are we hearing about in this throne speech? Now this is really creative accounting. He draws on the slush fund \$100 million because he says the federal government is cutting its funding for health and education, so we will take \$100 million out of the rainy day fund and plunk it into our revenues. Why does he do that? Well, he does it at least for this reason that he wants to make that slush fund look a little smaller than it really is, because it is embarrassing as a Tory government to have \$577 million there when 26 roofs in Winnipeg schools are leaking. That is embarrassing. It is embarrassing when seniors cannot afford to fill their prescription drug needs and are letting their food cupboards run down to get the drugs they need to have \$577 million in the bank. So let us take some of it out. We will get rid of it.

What is the problem this creates? I mean this one is one that I think even those who do not like math—and I understand the member for Wellington (Ms. Barrett) does not like math a lot—but even those who do not like math will appreciate this one. Visualize it. You take \$100 million out of one of your savings accounts, and over here you put \$75 million of it in your debt retirement account. You just took some money from this account, and you put it in this account. Do you have any more money? No. You just moved it from A to B. At the end of the year what does the minister say he is going to have as a surplus? He says he is going to have \$26 million as a surplus. Well, he took \$100 million out of the bank and he paid his debt retirement fund \$75 million, and he has got \$26 million left. Let us add it up; 26 and 75, 101—\$101 million. He took \$101 million out of the bank, put \$100 million back in the bank. Has anything changed? Oh, yes. There is \$1 million better. Creative accounting. The peas move so fast under the pods being swirled by Julian Benson and the Finance minister (Mr. Stefanson) that nobody can figure out where they are going, but it all looks okay as long as you do not actually look at the balance sheet and actually do the numbers.

The math is pretty simple, though. You take \$100 million out of your savings account; put 75 of it back into another savings account; have \$26 million left and put it back into the savings account you took the \$100 million from in the first place. This is a circle. It is not paying off debt. It is not changing the bottom line one iota, and any of the Conservative businessmen over there who think they can read a balance sheet would know that.

Why does the Finance minister not just tell Manitobans in his so-called consultations that his revenue numbers are much too low? We already know the answer to that. That might give them some ideas about how to improve the quality of our life as a province.

Then there is his capitulation on finally showing the pension liability. Finally. The last province in Canada to do so. He finally shows the pension liability. But, of course, that is all he does, he just shows it. It is a lump sitting there on the balance sheet now. He is not funding it partially or fully. He is not doing anything with the accumulating liability; it is just sitting there, a

big lump on the balance sheet. But that is not new, Madam Speaker. The bond rating agencies knew it was there. The Auditor knew it was there. The public knew it was there. They even knew how big it was because the Auditor has been telling them for years how big it was because he would not approve the statements. Any change? No, this is truly a change without any substance. Contestant, the Finance minister (Mr. Stefanson). Subject, the bleeding obvious. So what is he going to do with the lump now that it is here? We did not hear anything about that in the throne speech.

Let us talk about things that really do matter to Manitobans. First and obviously, and we know this and you know this, they want sound financial management. They want to balance our day-to-day revenues and day-to-day expenditures just as a family would. Manitobans want that. We understand that. We want that. That is only sound judgment, sound business. But Manitobans are much smarter than this government gives them credit for. They also know that very often to buy a car, to purchase a house, to get newer farm machinery—the member for Roblin-Russell (Mr. Derkach) would know about that—to build a new barn, to build a factory, you sometimes have to borrow money to do that. In fact, it would be perhaps only the very wealthiest of the members opposite who could ever have a house if they did not borrow to buy it in the first place. There may be a few of them who could just plunk the cash down. There may even be a few of them that could just plunk the cash down for a new combine, but I doubt that there is too many of them over there that do that. I think they probably finance them.

Most Manitobans know that affordable, sustainable debt, repayable debt is a key to prosperity. There is no business person over there that has not taken out debt in order to invest in his or her future business. So Manitobans wonder why this Tory government is so keen always to show that debt just as big as it possibly can be and to hide the assets that that debt purchased. They even had poor Fred Cleverley—I do not know, you have to feel sorry for Fred Cleverley. Poor old Fred was writing an editorial yesterday about how the reduction in our debt service cost has been because of the wonderful management on the benches opposite. Now, I mean, Fred wrote the best part of two-thirds of his column on the wonderful management that had achieved the lower costs of debt service over there. He

said, look, the proof is in the pudding. He said, our debt service costs have gone down by \$80 million since these guys took office, \$80 million. In fact, it is \$77 million from the peak, but we will let him have \$80 million.

Then old Fred said—and of course 1 percent of \$8 billion is only \$8 million. So, if interest rates went down 1 percent, it would only account for \$8 million of the \$80 million improvement, Fred said. Oh, Fred, get some new batteries for that calculator, because 1 percent of \$8 billion is \$80 million, not \$8 million. All those Grade 3 kids that the Minister of Education (Mrs. McIntosh) puts through tests know that. So we have got to get Fred jacked up a bit on his calculation skills. So in fact the more than 1 percent that long-term interest rates have gone down is more than your debt service costs have realized. [interjection] She woke up all by herself. Yes, that is good. The Minister of Education is chirping from her seat. The Minister of Government Services (Mr. Pitura) was also talking about this debt service cost. Yes, it has gone down, and it has gone down entirely and only because interest rates have gone down, because you, I mean, mighty and powerful as you think you are, you really do not control how much you pay on your debt. All you control is the size of it and whether you honour that. You do not control how much you pay on it. It is interest rates that have saved you that money, and finally the Bank of Canada let interest rates fall a little bit.

We were talking about the things that that debt that you are so worried about, that \$6.4 billion in debt has purchased, and, you know, Stats Canada actually records that stuff. You may not know that, but they do. It is called the capital stock, accumulated capital stock figures, and you can go to StatsCan, and if you are really sleepy and you need help to get to sleep, you can read the capital stock figures. What are the capital stock figures for Manitoba's—Manitoba's—assets? Not Manitoba Hydro. Not Manitoba Telephone that you got rid of. Just the Province of Manitoba itself. What are our assets? Well, the answer, Madam Speaker, is \$12.4 billion; that is the depreciated value of all the things we have accumulated in 127 years of being a province. What is our accumulated debt? \$6.4 billion. \$12.4 billion assets, \$6.4 billion debt. What do we really have? We have \$6 billion positive on a balance sheet of assets that we have through our collective effort built up.

Now it is interesting, the member for Pembina (Mr. Dyck) is chuckling. I think that the member for Pembina should be referred to Statistics Canada and he should ask them for their capital stock figures for Manitoba. In fact, if he is really interested, I would be glad to supply him with those figures so that he can find out the error of the accounting ways of this government.

\* (1710)

The Tories, however, are doing their level best to get rid of the assets that have been built up, those \$12.4-billion worth of assets. We had an opportunity, a few of us, Madam Speaker, to tour the University of Manitoba. We took a look at what they are doing to manage their capital assets. There were more patches on the roof of the engineering building than there was roof. It was all patches.

When you go down to the Minister of Education's (Mrs. McIntosh) library in the basement of the education building, they have actually had to build a new step. There is a nice new step at the base of the stairs because the basement has fallen eight inches. Well, I hope that step will be away just very soon. You go into the basement of the old agriculture building and you see cement block walls that have fallen over because the floor has fallen down. They no longer are supported. The Tories are trying to get rid of that \$12 billion in assets just as fast as they can. They either privatize them or run them into the ground. They do not understand or they do not care about the social deficit, the education deficit, the health deficit. They even think that cutting health costs makes those costs disappear. They think they are Merlin the magician over there. We will just cut the costs and they will disappear. Of course, they do not. They just move from the public pocket to the private pocket. You take costs that were borne compassionately, collectively by all Manitobans and you give them to the sick to bear on their own in addition to the illness that they bear. That is Tory social policy.

Canada has shifted in this manner over \$5 billion from the public sector to the private sector. Have the costs gone away? Absolutely not. Are they being borne by different people? Yes, they are. They are

being borne by the sick instead of by all of us collectively.

Madam Speaker, Manitobans were dismayed yesterday on World AIDS Day that the government sent out the Minister of Northern Affairs (Mr. Newman) to speak to the crowd, and he said to the crowd just be patient folks, just be patient, wait a few more hours, days, weeks, months, and we will get around to thinking about beginning to plan the possibility of needing to consider a strategy, and he was told very clearly by someone dying of AIDS, sir, I came here to have hope; I came here to hear that you were concerned about what was happening to me, and you gave me nothing. You gave me nothing. What callous hypocrisy.

Then to add to this, the Premier (Mr. Filmon) stood up in Question Period, Madam Speaker, and suggested that the government's contribution to the care of people living with AIDS was funding the Village Clinic. Well, now, is that not interesting? This was a response to AIDS as though those people with AIDS should be grateful that they were given health care at the Village Clinic. What was the option? To give them no health care? Is that what the option was? So this was the government's special response? Obviously, these people have some reason for their concern. Are they supposed to be grateful for receiving health care that is supposedly guaranteed to all of us; they are supposed to be especially grateful that the Village Clinic gets some funding?

Madam Speaker, I say, yes, let us set some targets. Let us balance the operating budget. I agree with that, that is a good target, but let us also agree that we should have some other targets, that no Manitoban should have to seek routine health care in another country or in another province. Let us agree that no Manitoba child should live all of her or his years as a child in poverty. Let us agree that the dropout rate from high school should be a half or a quarter what it is under this government. Let us agree that justice delayed is justice denied, and get our courts working again for Manitobans, for victims. Let us agree that it makes no sense to have 26 schools with leaking roofs which will soon have rotted walls, which will soon have fiendishly expensive repairs because this penny-wise, pound-foolish government has cut and cut and cut to the point

where routine maintenance cannot even be done. Where there used to be more than 20 painters and routine maintenance people at the University of Manitoba, there are now two. How is that sound stewardship of public investment?

In concluding, Madam Speaker, I had waited in this throne speech eagerly to hear the government's position on the Multilateral Agreement on Investment. Now, if we are to believe the Minister of Industry, Trade and Tourism (Mr. Downey), he did not even know what it was when we raised it in Estimates. He did not even know what it was. I asked him about it, and he did not know what it was. He had to go home and do some homework. He had not heard about it. Now he probably does not know what is in it yet either. He probably has not taken the trouble to read the draft. It is not that long, about 150 pages. It is not like the Free Trade Agreement.

The draft says that even bonds and stocks and speculative capital will have rights under the MAI, that George Soros with his hedge fund will have the right to sue the government of Indonesia or the Philippines because he did not make as much money as he would have if they had not changed a rule of one kind or another.

The MAI wants to give companies like the Ethyl Corporation of the United States the right to sue governments, specifically Canadian governments because Canada does not want the latest antiknock additive put in ethyl gasoline for Canada. Why does it not want it? Well, the state of California has outlawed it on the basis that it is a carcinogen, a mutagen, that it is real bad stuff in other words, that there is no other company in the United States that is even trying to use this additive in its gasoline because there are states that are saying, no, you are not going to use it in this state. Canada has said, no, you cannot put it in our gasoline. But the Ethyl Corporation says, that is not fair, you have prevented us not from making a current profit, you have prevented us from making a future profit, so we are going to sue you.

Members opposite might want to confirm that the Ethyl Corporation is suing the Canadian government for \$375 million under the NAFTA treaty. What would they do under MAI where they have even more rights?

The MAI would outlaw any environmental or labour measure put in place after MAI was agreed to that would raise the goal posts in terms of environmental protection or labour standards.

Most interestingly, for members opposite who seem to be concerned about Manitoba from time to time, the MAI would bind this government because one of the terms of the MAI is that subnational units will be bound under the MAI treaty. So you are not even at the table, but you are going to be bound by the terms of that treaty in health care, in social services, in the environment, in labour. You will not be able to set any of the employment objectives that you set with the call centre firms that you brought here for example. You could not do that under the MAI. You could not have made the grants that you made to bring Maple Leaf to Brandon under the MAI. You could not do that; it would be illegal. There would be no grants.

**An Honourable Member:** There are no grants.

**Mr. Sale:** Oh, yes, there are. Read the agreement, \$8 million, read the agreement. You could not do it under the MAI. The hands of governments are to be tied irrevocably under this treaty, and you do not know what is in it. So before you talk about it, read it and read whether you should not be concerned as a government of a sovereign part of a sovereign nation about what is happening to our ability to make our own public policy for our own people.

MAI believes that the fundamental system in the world is money and that everything else hangs off that money, that people are to serve money and not the reverse. It holds up as a model for the world the shocking fact that 412 billionaires in this world now collectively own more capital and more assets than the poorest 2.7 billion people in this world. That is the kind of wealth distribution that the MAI holds up as a model. It rewards those who would destabilize nations' currency, their financial institutions and then reap the evil rewards of their speculation.

Not a word in this throne speech about the aspirations of those global capitalists who flock every year to the slopes of Davos, where this Premier loves to chair meetings—he is noted as a great facilitator of Davos

meetings—and where he buys advertising by the yard to get a puff piece in the Davos Daily Mail.

We believe that Manitoba is a Manitoba for all people, not just the elite 19 percent that the Ekos poll identifies that the Premier so easily socializes with, but a province for ordinary wage-earning, community-minded, fair-minded people who care about each other and act out this caring in part through a compassionate government collectively bearing burdens and sharing successes, not by joining in a mindless race to the bottom, a race that leaves most of us—perhaps not those on the opposite side of the House but most of us—far behind while those who seek the sun every February in Davos race on ahead.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

\* (1720)

**Hon. Frank Pitura (Minister of Government Services):** Madam Speaker, I welcome the opportunity to put a few comments on the record with regard to the throne speech.

**Some Honourable Members:** Oh, oh.

**Madam Speaker:** Order, please. I am experiencing difficulty hearing the honourable Minister of Government Services.

**Mr. Pitura:** At this time, Madam Speaker, I would like to welcome my colleague that just recently won the Portage la Prairie riding, David Faurchou, and I wish him well. I know that he will represent the people of Portage la Prairie well and look after his constituents.

I would also like to welcome at this time the pages who will be with us for this session. I know that for them the first few days of the session was probably a bit of a nervous experience, but I think judging by the way they are functioning right now that they are well settled in and relaxed and they know exactly how to handle all us MLAs here in the House. So I wish them a welcome and hope that they have a good session here.

As well, I would like to welcome all members, all my colleagues and members opposite, back to the House for this session of the House.

Madam Speaker, as everybody has indicated that within this throne speech and the outset of the throne speech much has been said about the flood of the century that affected Manitobans this past spring, and there is no doubt that this flood was of a magnitude and probably the worst flood of this century and the second-worst flood of the last century in comparison. So I hope that it will take a couple of centuries before we see a flood of the same magnitude.

I would just like to go backwards a little bit in history and talk about some of the things that happened during the 1950 flood. During the 1950 flood I was a seven-year-old living on the farm. The flood waters from the Red River were on the road opposite the farm. As a family we were evacuated, and we were evacuated through the term of the flood. My father remained behind to look after the livestock and eventually had to evacuate the livestock. But as a kid we were evacuated to the north end of Winnipeg with relatives, and I can remember quite well that because of the contamination of the water supplies that it was necessary for all of us to have typhoid shots. I can remember full well lining up to have the shots, and it was a scary thought because at that time they used awfully big needles to give those, at least from my perspective. I was not really excited about getting three needles about a week apart.

I can also remember vividly the military and their active role in the flood-fighting efforts during the '50 flood as they moved around the city in their tanks and army ducks in terms of assisting the Manitobans fighting the battle of the 1950 flood.

If we move on a few more years, Madam Speaker, my next experience, personal experience, with the flood was in the 1979 flood. We were on the farm at Domain, and at that particular time, of course, the floodway had been constructed, and the floodway dike had been constructed. So we were deemed to be on the dry side of the dike, so that most of my neighbours on the south side of the dike were advised that they should get their grain out of storage and into the elevator space. So on a seven-day-a-week basis, my neighbours including myself, we helped those people on that side move their grain out, shovelling grain, moving canola into Altona to the crushing plant, moving all the cereals into the local elevators and having it loaded on cars on a seven-day-a-week basis and working well late into the

night. Fortunately, in 1979 the water never materialized to what it was supposed to be, and so as a result the 1979 flood passed by and we were okay in our particular area. However, there were a number of people that were devastated by the flood, and they went through flood recovery program, through the Disaster Financial Assistance Program, and also into a floodproofing program which occurred probably a year, year and a half after the flood event when it came into being.

This year my involvement with the flood has been a little more intense from the standpoint that I happen to be the minister responsible for the Emergency Management Organization and the Disaster Financial Assistance policy and many of my constituents and friends and neighbours who were affected by the flood, in speaking with them, have indicated to me that they thought that I was really baptized under this flood this year. In fact, for me, Madam Speaker, having the flood right in my backyard also meant that on a seven-day-a-week basis I was constantly talking with people about the flood and flood issues, about financial assistance issues and so on. So I was never really able to get away from the concerns about the flood. But that is not bad, I think that was good. It gave me a chance to really see what people were concerned about and to be able to talk to them within the confines of their yard that had been damaged by flood waters, and so I could see firsthand. So I have had a lot of opportunity to get into and look around and see the devastation of the flood waters in many rural Manitoba yards.

At this time I would like to particularly give some thank yous and bouquets to the many, many, many accumulated efforts by many people in terms of fighting the flood. First, I would like to say a great big thank you to the Manitoba Red Cross and to the Manitoba Flood Relief Fund that was established. In particular, I would like to thank Blair Graham and Jackie Wright for all of their assistance and work in developing the programs that the Red Cross put into place to help those people that are affected by the flood. The Red Cross has indicated to me that of the total \$22 million that they have received to date in terms of donations that some \$16 million has been disbursed. They will have about \$6 million left over at the present time. However, they also indicated to me that funds are

still coming into the relief fund from across Canada and indeed from outside of the Canadian boundaries.

I would also in particular like to thank the Salvation Army in the form of Sally Ann who were present at the communities to help with clothing, with household needs that people might have as a part of their recovery process. I would also like to pay particular thank you to the Habitat for Humanity group. They help many people who are unable to construct homes readily. They moved in, and they helped these people build homes. In fact, in one particular instance I was advised of a young family where the mother of the family had recently passed away. Dad was trying to cope with trying to raise three young children, and all of a sudden, it was about a month that he was in that position, and along came the flood, displaced them from their home. Habitat for Humanity came in and helped them reconstruct a brand-new home. They had the ribbon cutting in that home I believe sometime in early August if I am not mistaken. So that was a very welcome event for that young family to be able to move back into a house.

I would also like to pay particular thanks to the countless groups of young people that gave of themselves and helped in the efforts in flood fighting. In sandbagging they just worked tireless hours in helping neighbours, helping people they did not know try to mitigate the effects of the flood.

Also I would like to thank the young people who came after the flood to help in the flood recovery, to help in the cleanup. They put their rubber boots on, put their gloves on, were not afraid to get dirty and start cleaning up after the flood, because after the flood it is not a very pretty sight to see the damage.

\* (1730)

I would also like to thank those organizations, the organizations such as the Lions Club, Kiwanis Club, Kinsmen Clubs that helped out during the flood as well as the religious organizations that willingly took part in the recovery process through the time period of the flood, and all of them in helping in the cleaning up of the aftermath from the flood. An event such as this, with the magnitude of an event such as this, takes

everybody to be able to participate, to be able to effect the recovery process.

Madam Speaker, one of the things that I am very thankful in terms of what we have gone through with this flood is that we did not have a loss of one life as a result of the flood waters. I think that that is very commendable to everybody that participated in terms of flood fighting, in terms of recovery, that not one single individual died as a result of the flood. When I look at our neighbours in Quebec, where 10 people perished in the flooding that took place in the Saguenay, where over 200 people perished in the flood that affected the rising waters in Poland, from the standpoint of our ability to be able to respond to a flood like this and to be able to ensure that people's safety came first—and we were able to do this—really exemplifies the fact that Manitoba is a province that is ready to respond to emergencies most quickly and efficiently.

I would like to spend some time, Madam Speaker, just putting some facts on the record about the Disaster Financial Assistance Program and some of the things that have happened to this program over the course of the time that the flood waters started to recede and the Disaster Financial Assistance Program started to kick in. Some of the things that I would like to put on the record are some of the changes that have taken place in the program. These are changes that have come about as a result of constantly listening to the people who were affected by the flood, listening to the organizations and the feedback. I have been out in the area several times talking with groups, meeting with people, getting a feedback on the issues. As a result, many of the changes that took place in the program were a result of having all this input.

I would just like to say that, in terms of the program, right from the beginning when the flood waters were just starting to recede, the province offered a \$2,500 cash advance right up front to a claimant, whether they had a claim in or not, and these recipients of this \$2,500 were to use this money to help them in getting cleaned up after the flood and getting going with their recovery. We also very quickly raised the cap from \$30,000 to \$100,000 to reflect the needs of today's recovery process as opposed to the policy as it was historically.

We also, as a new initiative, Madam Speaker, were able to split homes and farm operations or small businesses for the first time, so these were all treated as separate claims. This doubled and tripled the amount of assistance available. For example, a farm operation that had the farm residence, had the farm business, and had a seed-cleaning operation was then eligible for up to \$300,000 of disaster assistance under this program. This is something that in the past has never been in place before. This is now in place in our program now, and it will be in our program for years to come.

Madam Speaker, in terms of the housing, evacuation and long-term temporary costs are paid by the provinces. Another move we made this year was to make the evacuation costs separate from the Disaster Financial Assistance claim as it affected the residence and business so that these evacuation costs were paid separately and did not affect the claim. These costs, as we are all aware, are ongoing even at the present time, but that was a new initiative to split those costs away from the Disaster Financial Assistance claim.

We also waived the deductible for claimants who had unsalvageable homes, and were able to advance them the 100 percent of the value of their home. We also waived the deductible for those people who were participating in the Flood Proofing Program. Once they indicated and signed up for the Flood Proofing Program, their 20 percent was waived, and we would expect that the majority of claimants under this program will get their 20 percent waived as a result of going into the Flood Proofing Program.

Madam Speaker, we also removed the depreciated value off household items, such as furnaces, water heaters, water conditioners, air conditioners, water softeners, fridges, stoves, all the major appliances, and we chose to replace it with an average replacement value for structural items, so that this in itself has expected to provide an extra \$8 million to be put into the hands of claimants. I am pleased to report that this money is already flowing to flood claimants, and as many of them that I have talked to—in fact, yesterday I was in Morris in the morning, and I was talking to some people there and they had already received their adjustments for these moveables.

The other thing, Madam Speaker, we also instituted a policy whereby if people were involved with



moveable items that there was no invoice required in order for their payment to be made. Therefore the amount of paper flow that is required has been cut down dramatically. We also have instituted and had an agreement from our federal partners in this program of the food that was lost in a freezer can now be claimed under the Disaster Financial Assistance Program as well as people who have had foundation damage to their homes. Under previous programs, foundations and repairs to household—in fact, foundations were not even considered part of the Disaster Financial Assistance claim in years past. It is now considered to be part of that claim, and so people are able to repair their basements. That is a major change in this program that has allowed this to happen.

Also, Madam Speaker, people who put up temporary dikes in the spring of this year to mitigate against the flood, as a new part of this policy they have now been able to leave those dikes in place and have them paid for under the Disaster Financial Assistance policy. To put this into more of a perspective, if you had a temporary dike in 1996, in order to get payment under the Disaster Financial Assistance Program which, of course, is the cost-shared program between the federal and provincial government, you had to remove the dike in order for the funds to flow. This year, those dikes can be left in place and be paid for under the Disaster Financial Assistance programs.

The other important aspect I think of the changes in the program, Madam Speaker, is I have mentioned already about the advancing of awards in regard to unsalvageable homes up to 100 percent. We were advancing 75 percent of foundation repairs that needed to be done. We were advancing 50 percent to any others that had structural damage, and if anybody had indicated that they had cash flow problems they could get up to 100 percent of their award up front.

We also as a new initiative, as well, have taken and advanced funds to the rural municipalities most affected by the flood, and we have also put into place guarantees that they can borrow money and have the Province of Manitoba guarantee their loans from an institution that they will be borrowing from. We have also put into place as a new part of this program a spending cap where a municipality, once they have spent 5 percent of their annual budget, then everything

that they spent thereafter in terms of flood mitigation and flood recovery costs was 100 percent covered by the province and the federal government.

So those are some of the changes that have taken place in the program, Madam Speaker, that I think have been reflective of this government's understanding, this government's sensitivity to the whole issue of the flood and the flood recovery that we put into place to be able to address those concerns.

Madam Speaker, one of the other areas that I just want to briefly touch upon is the fact that early on in the flood recovery process we put into place flood recovery offices in three communities, in the communities of St. Adolphe, Letellier and Rosenort. These flood recovery offices have been very much appreciated by the people who have been affected by the flood as it gave them a place to come and talk to people and to be able to do most of their paperwork with respect to the flood.

At these flood recovery offices, Madam Speaker, we have many teams there. We have our EMO staff there who are manning the office on a daily basis. We have the Manitoba Health trauma team, and there are a number of these teams who are active throughout the Red River Valley that have been able to respond to people's needs in terms of being able to deal with the disaster and having to move on and go through the recovery process. We also have Rural Development personnel who are also working out through the flood recovery offices, and they also supported the municipal staff who were running, logging long hours throughout the flood itself, and so they were able to help them out in their offices as well as the Red Cross and Salvation Army that are working out of these flood recovery offices. So many of the flood victims are assisted with counselling information and contacts for the government departments' agencies and programs as they deem necessary from time to time with people who are coming through the office.

\* (1740)

Madam Speaker, the next area I would like to spend a little bit of time in terms of discussion is the temporary housing program that is in effect. I know that there have been many comments made about the

fact that if the dollars had flowed quicker, everybody would have been back in their homes prior to snow flying. However, I want to clarify that situation for the House that, as regards the temporary housing program for those people who are still in the temporary housing program, many of them are in the process of rebuilding. In fact, if you drive through the flood area right now, you will see some houses that are in the process of being rebuilt that are going to be probably finished within a month. There will be those homes that are going to be finished by Christmastime. In fact, as the weather continues to co-operate, I would expect that we will see a number of homes still continuing to be built and finished prior to spring.

Out of the total current number of 199 that are now registered with the temporary housing program, we expect that by April 30 this number will be down to 117 and a possibility of even being lower if the weather permits and more construction starts to begin.

But some of the reasons that families are still in the temporary housing program—and there are a number of reasons why they are not—and I can mention some that I know personally where they are seniors that were living on the farm and had their house devastated by the flood. They are now presently living in the town of Morris in an apartment. They are waiting to see what happens in the spring of 1998. If there is going to be additional water that they have to cope with, then they will make the decision to permanently reside in Morris. Frankly, I think that they will probably end up choosing a residence in Morris and choose to spend their retirement years in Morris and not go back to the farm.

There is also another seniors couple I know that have been able to return to their home. They are still in the process. They will need to have floodproofing if they will continue to live there. I have talked to them, and I think that they will make the decision as well to go within a ring dike community.

But there are also other reasons that families have not decided to start to rebuild. I alluded to it earlier with the anticipation of maybe another flood in 1998 because that would seem to be the rumour going around in the late summer, that the flood of 1997 was bad, but look out, the spring of 1998 is even going to be worse. A lot of people were very concerned that they would be

seeing even a greater flood in 1988, so they have made that decision that they will not make any decision as to whether they rebuild or not until they get some sort of comfort level under their feet before they make that decision.

In other areas people are not returning to their homes because the studies are underway to take a look at ring diking the communities, and within the compassing of the ring diking plans not everybody will have their homes protected as a result of the ring dike in the communities. So there are a number of homes that probably will end up outside the ring dike. For those people who are kind of iffy as to whether they are going to be outside or inside, they are deciding that they will not rebuild until they find out where the ring dike is going to go, and then they will make that decision as to whether they rebuild and floodproof outside or in fact move their residence to the confines of the ring dike community and rebuild there.

There are also some families that are waiting for a particular contractor to be able to get caught up and to be able to come and start building their homes. They have chosen a contractor. The contractor is fully booked, but he cannot start on their homes just right now so that they have had to wait for this contractor to appear.

There is also the area, Madam Speaker, that people have got everything in place except that they cannot seem to get hold of the materials that they would like to have to build their homes. So there are many, many things happening that are causing people to choose a temporary location. In fact, the initial one is that some people have ordered move-on homes. Those are being built at another location. Those in fact can be set up and occupied throughout the winter. So if you drive through the flood area, you will see a number of basements that are built and awaiting a ready-to-move-on home, RTM it is called, to be placed on the concrete. So there are a number of reasons why people are in temporary accommodation.

Least of all, when you have two seniors living in a home out on a farm, and their home has been devastated by the flood, and they say, well, maybe we should not live here anymore, that decision is not that easy because now they have their children to talk to,

and they have their grandchildren that they have to take into consideration. Because for some of them if they are going to move off that location into a community, is that community going to be a ring dike community or is that community going to be the city of Winnipeg for their retirement? So they take a look at the— and weighing, you know, if I move into the city how far am I going to be away from the children and the grandchildren, or if I move into the ring dike community of Morris or St. Jean or Emerson or Letellier or St. Adolphe, how is that going to affect me with my family?

So these discussions are taking place and, Madam Speaker, these decisions are not easy to make. These people have lived there all their lives. They have planned to die living there. The flood has changed all that, and they have to deal with the fact that they will either have to rebuild or they are going to have to move to be able to go on with their lives. Their lives will not be the same. They will have changed, and I do not think there is any such thing as getting and returning back to normal after the flood, because everybody is going through these situations where they have difficulty of being able to make these decisions and deal with them.

Madam Speaker, another area that we are seeing happening now during this flood crisis and the flood recovery is the fact that we have some homes that are now showing the effects of some mould that is appearing in these homes. This is posing to be a major concern for our people both in Manitoba Environment and Manitoba Energy and Mines who are closely monitoring the situation in these homes. We spent some time in discussion with our Quebec counterparts and what they had done with the issue of mould. They informed us that there are some close to 800 different species of mould that are present in buildings of one sort or another. The particular types of mould that seem to be springing up in these homes probably would not maybe affect you or me, but somebody who has a distinct allergy to these moulds will be affected, and so therefore it now becomes a health risk. So that is an issue that we are facing at the present time, and we are dealing with it on a day-to-day basis.

Madam Speaker, one of the other interesting changes that took place with the program this year is the fact

that farmers could use to clean out the drains on their fields and use the Disaster Financial Assistance Program as a part of that funding for that initiative.

The R.M.s, rural municipalities, also under the Disaster Financial Assistance Program, can clean out municipal drains that have been lodged full of mud and debris as a result of the flood. So that in itself, Madam Speaker, is a new initiative under the Disaster Financial Assistance Program, which is being addressed with this year's flood and flood recovery.

As of today, there has been more than \$43 million paid out to claimants through the flood-recovery process, and there has been \$45 million awarded in private claims. One of the things that I would like to point out is that the number of claims are still coming in; the number of claims keep on increasing as we go along. We have extended the deadline to the end of December, and claims are still coming in to the Emergency Management Organization. As of today we are well in excess of 5,000 claims, where in early June we had not hit 3,000 yet, so we are still climbing, Madam Speaker, in terms of the total number of claims. The total number of dollars that are being paid out in this program is also being increased as well as a result.

\* (1750)

One of the things that we have and are proud of is the fact that, of the number of claims that we have in, almost 75 percent of those claims have been settled to date. When I take a look at our neighbours to the south in North Dakota, their funds have just started to flow late in October and early November. For some people there that have been assured that their homes will be bought out, they are finding right now that they have been given a small amount of money to tide them over, and the rest of the money, the city council, the state do not know where the funding is going to come from. They are hoping that the federal government in the United States will advance the money for them to be able to institute their floodproofing program and their buy-outs for all their homes.

Madam Speaker, I just want to spend a little bit of time talking about my personal association with the flood this year because it was kind of unique for me from the standpoint that the flood was in my so-called

proverbial backyard. The area that I grew up in was affected by the flood waters having been along the so-called western dike of the floodway. Many of my relatives, friends, long-time neighbours, long-time acquaintances and especially all the people in the Morris agricultural district, which is defined by the area where I worked out of the office there, that I got to know over the seven years that I was there, the close relationships I had with those people—all of them were affected by the flood. They all had to go through the mitigation of fighting the flood, dealing with the flood, and then going through the process of recovery. I am happy to report that most of those people, if not the vast majority of those people, have recovered from the flood and are back in their homes. As I have said, there are a few that are still waiting to be building their homes, but that is even progressing as well.

I would just like to share with the House what kind of a trauma a family goes through with regard to the flood. A family with young children, just south of Rosenort, got flooded very badly during the spring. They have since made all the necessary repairs to the hog barn, to the machine shed. They have fully renovated and rebuilt their home. They were living in a mobile home for many months during the summertime. They finally moved out of the mobile home in early November and then moved into their house.

I had the pleasure of encountering this individual when I was in Morris, and I asked him how the recovery process was going. His indication to me was that it was great. Everything that the government did for them, that the province did for them and the other agencies did for them, they were very thankful. I said, well, is everything back to normal? He said, well, we have moved out of the mobile home into the house, which is very nice, but the important thing, he said to me, was that, although we have moved into our house, it is going to take a long time before we will call it home because it is different than what it was before, and it is going to take our family time to get used to this new building, this building that we are living in, and to be able to call it home. So the recovery from the flood does take a long time in terms of being able to deal with the emotional aspect of the flood and being able to adjust oneself to say we will be able to participate fully and put the flood behind us. It is going to take a long time. There is no question about that.

I also had the pleasure of attending the Riverside Church south of Rosenort that had a rededication service of their church. In fact, if somebody saw the file footage on the flood, you would see that in one case they could take a boat right in the front doors of the church and right up and down the aisles of the church and all the pews were in water. Madam Speaker, that whole community, each individual that is a member of that church, was also flooded in their homes, yet they all got together. They were able to work on that church. They got it back into shape, and they were very thankful for all the assistance that the province gave them in being able to help them with the recovery process. For this reason that was why we were invited to attend this rededication service of their church. They were very thankful. But they are back in their church, and they were very happy that night that they were able to have that initial church service back in the building where they call their home church.

So there are a lot of good stories that are coming out as a result of the flood. There are a lot of people out there that know that they have gone through the trauma, the emotion. It has been difficult, but they have been able to make the adjustment. People of the Red River Valley are resilient, they bounce back. There is that old expression, it is not how many times you get knocked down, it is how many times you get back up that counts. I think that residents in the Red River Valley have that kind of energy to keep getting up and keep getting on with life. Many of those people have gone through eight and nine floods. They are well experienced in going through the process. So going through the process of the 1997 flood, the magnitude was much greater. They just knew they had to work a little bit harder to get back.

I guess I would like to doff my hat to all those people that dug in their heels and said we are going to recover, we are going to stay here and we are going to protect ourselves from future flooding. They are doing the job, and they are also very, very appreciative of all the efforts that the province has made on their behalf in terms of helping them through the recovery process.

They are also ones who tell us as well is that they do not expect the province to be able to do everything for them. They say that we have a responsibility. We have a responsibility to look after our homes, our families

and rebuild our lives here, and we will take on that responsibility. We know that the province cannot do everything for us, so we have to do things on our own as well, but they are still very appreciative of the help that we were able to give.

Madam Speaker, you know, one of the things that as a result of the 1997 flood was the fact that when people did have their homes devastated by the flood waters that they were in a position where they said, well, if we rebuild, I do not want to rebuild here and just have it be flooded out again because we already had situations where people were flooded out in 1996, went through the recovery process, rebuilt, only to be flooded out again in 1997. For those people it was very difficult for them to be able to deal with this disaster. I say that there are families out there that are having still at this time a great deal of difficulty if they have been hit twice in a row.

So the floodproofing program that my honourable colleague the Minister of Natural Resources (Mr. Cummings) brought into place is a program that most people, because of their high level of anxiety, were more than willing to participate in, so they are going to be protected from future floods of a 1997 magnitude.

I am also very pleased to be able to say that the Manitoba Agricultural Credit Corporation is willing to lend the money with no principal or interest in the first year to all those claimants who would like to floodproof but cannot afford to pay their share of the costing.

Lastly, Madam Speaker, the JERI program has been recently announced as a 50-50 cost-sharing program between the federal and the provincial governments, and this program is going to be addressing the jobs and economic recovery for the Red River Valley. I think that this program, very briefly, addresses some of the issues in agriculture and addresses a lot of the issues with businesses trying to reopen their doors and re-establish themselves within the valley.

In summary, Madam Speaker, I would like to say that I am thankful there was no loss of life. I am thankful we live in this great country of ours that allows us to be able to respond quickly to a disaster of this nature. On that note, thank you very much. I know my time is up.

**Madam Speaker:** The hour being 6 p.m., this House is adjourned and stands adjourned until 1:30 p.m. tomorrow (Wednesday). The matter will remain open.

# LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Tuesday, December 2, 1997

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