

Third Session - Thirty-Eighth Legislature
of the
Legislative Assembly of Manitoba
DEBATES
and
PROCEEDINGS
Official Report
(Hansard)

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The Honourable George Hickes
Speaker*

MANITOBA LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
Thirty-Eighth Legislature

Member	Constituency	Political Affiliation
AGLUGUB, Cris	The Maples	N.D.P.
ALLAN, Nancy, Hon.	St. Vital	N.D.P.
ALTEMEYER, Rob	Wolseley	N.D.P.
ASHTON, Steve, Hon.	Thompson	N.D.P.
BJORNSON, Peter, Hon.	Gimli	N.D.P.
BRICK, Marilyn	St. Norbert	N.D.P.
CALDWELL, Drew	Brandon East	N.D.P.
CHOMIAK, Dave, Hon.	Kildonan	N.D.P.
CULLEN, Cliff	Turtle Mountain	P.C.
CUMMINGS, Glen	Ste. Rose	P.C.
DERKACH, Leonard	Russell	P.C.
DEWAR, Gregory	Selkirk	N.D.P.
DOER, Gary, Hon.	Concordia	N.D.P.
DRIEDGER, Myrna	Charleswood	P.C.
DYCK, Peter	Pembina	P.C.
EICHLER, Ralph	Lakeside	P.C.
FAURSCHOU, David	Portage la Prairie	P.C.
GERRARD, Jon, Hon.	River Heights	Lib.
GOERTZEN, Kelvin	Steinbach	P.C.
HAWRANIK, Gerald	Lac du Bonnet	P.C.
HICKES, George, Hon.	Point Douglas	N.D.P.
IRVIN-ROSS, Kerri	Fort Garry	N.D.P.
JENNISSON, Gerard	Flin Flon	N.D.P.
JHA, Bidhu	Radisson	N.D.P.
KORZENIOWSKI, Bonnie	St. James	N.D.P.
LAMOUREUX, Kevin	Inkster	Lib.
LATHLIN, Oscar, Hon.	The Pas	N.D.P.
LEMIEUX, Ron, Hon.	La Verendrye	N.D.P.
LOEWEN, John	Fort Whyte	P.C.
MACKINTOSH, Gord, Hon.	St. Johns	N.D.P.
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MARTINDALE, Doug	Burrows	N.D.P.
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MELNICK, Christine, Hon.	Riel	N.D.P.
MITCHELSON, Bonnie	River East	P.C.
MURRAY, Stuart	Kirkfield Park	P.C.
NEVAKSHONOFF, Tom	Interlake	N.D.P.
OSWALD, Theresa, Hon.	Seine River	N.D.P.
PENNER, Jack	Emerson	P.C.
REID, Daryl	Transcona	N.D.P.
REIMER, Jack	Southdale	P.C.
ROBINSON, Eric, Hon.	Rupertsland	N.D.P.
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SALE, Tim, Hon.	Fort Rouge	N.D.P.
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SMITH, Scott, Hon.	Brandon West	N.D.P.
STEFANSON, Heather	Tuxedo	P.C.
STRUTHERS, Stan, Hon.	Dauphin-Roblin	N.D.P.
SWAN, Andrew	Minto	N.D.P.
TAILLIEU, Mavis	Morris	P.C.
WOWCHUK, Rosann, Hon.	Swan River	N.D.P.

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Monday, November 29, 2004

The House met at 1:30 p.m.

PRAYERS

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

PETITIONS

Highway 200

Mrs. Mavis Taillieu (Morris): Mr. Speaker, I wish to present the following petition to the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba.

These are the reasons for this petition:

Highway 200 is paved from Winnipeg to the Canada-U.S. border except for approximately a 10-kilometre section between highways 205 and 305 which remains unpaved. School buses, farm equipment, emergency vehicles and local traffic must travel on Highway 200 which is dangerous, if not completely impassable, during wet spring weather and other times of heavy rainfall.

Due to unsafe conditions, many drivers look to alternate routes around this section when possible and time permits. The condition of the gravel road can cause serious damage to all vehicles.

Insufficient traffic counts are not truly reflective of the traffic volumes because users tend to find another route to avoid this section. Traffic counts done after spring seeding, during wet weather or during school recess are not indicative of traffic flows.

Maintenance costs for unpaved highways are high and ongoing. It would be cost-effective to pave this section.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To request that the Minister of Transportation and Government Services (Mr. Lemieux) consider paving Highway 200 between highways 205 and 305 to ensure a smooth, safe and uninterrupted use of Highway 200.

Signed by Mona Gagnon, Danielle Gagnon, Roseline Gagnon and others.

Mr. Speaker: In accordance with our Rule 132(6), when petitions are read they are deemed to be received by the House.

Pension Benefits

Mrs. Myrna Driedger (Charleswood): I wish to present the following petition.

These are the reasons for this petition:

Pension benefits for thousands of Manitoba health care workers are being cut because the government has refused to support the front line health care workers in their desire to maintain their existing Health Care Employees' Pension Plan.

The government is doubling the early retirement penalty to 6 percent a year from 3 percent.

There will be no cost-of-living benefits for retirees in the foreseeable future, which means that inflation will erode retirees' pension cheques over time.

The government's refusal to support the existing pension plan will have a negative impact on hundreds of front line health care workers.

The government is demonstrating a lack of respect for front line health care workers by its decision to allow administrative costs in the regional health authorities to skyrocket by millions of dollars.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To request the provincial government to consider redirecting administrative cost-savings to front line health care workers.

To request the provincial government to treat front line health care workers with the respect they deserve, and to consider supporting the health care employees' pension plan by not cutting pension benefits.

Signed by Bonnie Moar, Karen Lawrence, Delia Friesen and others.

* (13:35)

Highway 227

Mr. Ralph Eichler (Lakeside): I wish to present the following petition to the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba.

These are the reasons for this petition:

It is unacceptable for the residents of Manitoba to travel the unsafe gravel roads of Highway 227 in the constituencies of Lakeside and Portage la Prairie.

Inclement weather can make Highway 227 treacherous to all drivers.

Allowing better access to Highway 227 would ease the flow of traffic on the Trans-Canada Highway.

Residences along Highway 227 are not as accessible to emergency services due to the nature of the current condition of the roadway.

The condition of these gravel roads can cause serious damage to all vehicles, which is unacceptable.

Residents of Manitoba deserve a better rural highway infrastructure.

We petition the Manitoba Legislative Assembly as follows:

To request that the Minister of Transportation and Government Services consider having Highway 227 paved from the junction of highways 248 and 227 all the way to Highway 16, the Yellowhead route.

To request the Premier of Manitoba to consider supporting said initiatives to ensure the safety of all Manitobans and all Canadians who travel along Manitoba highways.

Submitted on behalf of Sheldon Hildebrandt, Lena Hildebrandt, R. Buors and others.

Minimum Sitting Days for Legislative Assembly

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Inkster): Mr. Speaker, I wish to present the following petition to the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba.

The background to this petition is as follows:

The Manitoba Legislature sat for only 37 days in 2003.

Manitobans expect their government to be accountable, and the number of sitting days has a direct impact on the issue of public accountability.

Manitobans expect their elected officials to be provided the opportunity to be able to hold the government accountable.

The Legislative Assembly provides the best forum for all MLAs to debate and ask questions of the government, and it is critical that all MLAs be provided the time needed in order for them to cover constituent and party duties.

Establishing a minimum number of sitting days could prevent the government of the day from limiting the rights of opposition members from being able to ask questions.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To request the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba to consider recognizing the need to sit for a minimum of 80 days in any given calendar year.

Signed by R. Acuna, Santiago Merdoza and Angelita Limbuza.

Addictions Foundation of Manitoba

Mr. Jack Reimer (Southdale): Mr. Speaker, I wish to present the following petition to the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba.

These are the reasons for this petition:

The Addictions Foundation of Manitoba (AFM) provides intervention, rehabilitation, prevention, education and public information services on addictions for the citizens of Manitoba.

Manitoba's provincial Budget 2004 cut funding to the AFM by \$150,000 and required the organization to absorb a \$450,000 wage settlement.

In order to operate within its budget, the AFM was forced to close 14 treatment beds in its primary care unit and eliminate 10 nursing positions.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To request the Minister of Health to ensure that his attempts to balance his department's finances are not at the expense of the health and well-being of vulnerable Manitobans suffering from addiction.

To urge the Minister of Health to consider monitoring the waiting lists for addiction treatment and to consider ensuring that timely treatment for Manitobans with addictions is not compromised by the provincial government's decision to cut the AFM's annual budget.

Signed by Sarah Janz, Amy McDonald, Chris Ford and others.

TABLING OF REPORTS

Mr. Speaker: I am pleased to table the Annual Report of the Office of the Children's Advocate for the periods April 1, 2002 to March 31, 2003, and April 1, 2004 to March 31, 2004.

Hon. Christine Melnick (Minister of Family Services and Housing): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to table the Manitoba Family Services and Housing 2003-2004 Annual Report.

Hon. Gord Mackintosh (Minister of Justice and Attorney General): I am pleased to table, under The Regulations Act, a copy of each regulation registered with the Registrar of Regulations since the regulations were tabled in this House in March 2004, more than 14 days before the commencement of this session.

* (13:40)

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

Bill 8—The Manitoba Council on Aging Act

Hon. Theresa Oswald (Minister responsible for Healthy Living): Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by

the Minister of Industry, Economic Development and Mines (Mr. Rondeau), that Bill 8, The Manitoba Council on Aging Act; Loi sur le Conseil manitobain du vieillissement, be now read a first time.

Mr. Speaker: It has been moved by the honourable Minister of Healthy Living, seconded by the Minister of Industry, Economic Development and Mines, that Bill 8, The Manitoba Council on Aging Act, be now read a first time.

Ms. Oswald: Mr. Speaker, The Manitoba Council on Aging Act entrenches the Manitoba Council on Aging into legislation. The council provides advice to government on matters relating to the aging process and the needs of seniors. It also promotes public understanding about the aging process.

Mr. Speaker: Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the motion? *[Agreed]*

Introduction of Guests

Mr. Speaker: Prior to Oral Questions, I would like to draw the attention of all honourable members to the public gallery where we have from Neepawa Area Collegiate 20 Grade 11 students under the direction of Mrs. Michelle Young. This school is located in the constituency of the honourable Member for Ste. Rose (Mr. Cummings).

Also in the public gallery we have from St. Boniface University College eight students under the direction of Mr. Jerome Chouinard. This school is located in the constituency of the honourable Minister of Finance (Mr. Selinger).

Also in the public gallery we have 40 fourth-year nursing students from the University of Manitoba. These students are under the direction of Linda West.

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

ORAL QUESTIONS

Health Care Workers Pension Benefits

Mr. Stuart Murray (Leader of the Official Opposition): Mr. Speaker, health care workers have come down to the Legislature today with hundreds of

petitions, demanding that they get treated with the same respect that the Doer government showed them leading up to and during the last election. They find themselves in a position where, unless the Doer government accepts a compromise where all parties agree to put a 1.9% increase in their contribution rates, they have to do this in order to make up a shortfall in their pension plans. Can the Deputy Premier (Ms. Wowchuk) please tell all of the health care workers in the gallery today and all of the 34 000 health care workers affected by this government's plan to slash their pension benefits, will they accept the solution put forward by the health care workers?

Hon. Tim Sale (Minister of Health): First of all, Mr. Speaker, I think it is a policy of this party and always has been that workers should be covered by adequate pensions, that pensions are essentially part of the appropriate way in which we should remunerate all employees in the public or private sector. This is a very large plan, about \$2 billion. There were increases in benefits provided in 1999, but there were no increases in the contribution rate at that time to cover those new benefits because it was assumed that the market would provide sufficient earnings to cover the new benefits. Unfortunately, as members opposite probably know, the stock market did not provide the rates of return that were anticipated and so benefits will need to be changed or there will need to be greater increases. We are working with all of the unions to make those increases possible.

Mr. Murray: Mr. Speaker, I would like to quote from a letter of the Manitoba Council of Health Care Unions that was sent to the government. It says: In November of 2003, the MCHCU communicated to the government that member unions were willing to increase their contributions to the health employees pension plan to make up for a projected shortfall in the plan. The employers, funded by government, must match this contribution increase to provide members' benefits. This position is fair and reasonable to retain what members have been told they can expect from their pension plan.

* (13:45)

They had a solution. That is what this is all about, Mr. Speaker, was trying to find a solution on behalf of the workers, and they had one. So, rather than seeing this government waste tens of millions of dollars of skyrocketing admin costs, we see we have

Laundromats being purchased, sandwich factories being purchased, admin costs skyrocketing, why does the Doer government not accept the plan that was put forward to them instead of slashing pension benefits for those health care workers? How can the Doer government justify to all of those people who are here in the gallery that they have wasteful spending habits and yet those health care workers' pensions are going to be slashed?

Mr. Sale: First of all, Mr. Speaker, the increase we provided last year to health care spending was between 6 percent and 7 percent. They wanted to manage Manitoba's health care system of 1% increase. What kinds of pension cuts would have been required under a 1% increase?

Secondly, we have been meeting with the health care unions, all of them including the nurses, since the early summer. This is not news to us, Mr. Speaker. We have been aware of the shortfall. We have been working with the unions in a respectful way all around the same table, and we will find a solution to this problem that will be equitable, will be acceptable to all of the unions and will maintain the benefits. We need no lessons about benefits to unions from this party.

Mr. Speaker: Before I recognize the honourable leader, I would like to remind all honourable members that questions and answers be put through the Chair, please.

Regional Health Authorities Administrative Costs

Mr. Stuart Murray (Leader of the Official Opposition): For the Minister of Health who loves to point fingers, blame everybody, Mr. Speaker, that is a bit of a history of this minister whatever portfolio he seems to have. This is simply a matter of being accountable. Not only does this minister like to hide when we have issues with respect to moms in Brandon, but now this minister is responsible for a department that is hiding skyrocketing admin costs.

I would like to refer to the Winnipeg Regional Health Authority that says, "expenses, direct operations, regional health authority expenses." In 1999, Mr. Speaker, they were \$5.7 million. In 2000, they were \$9.7 million. In 2002, they were \$14.6 million and in 2003, the regional health authority costs for Winnipeg had skyrocketed to \$16.6 million.

As I turn the page, and as we ask with those skyrocketing admin costs, remember, Mr. Speaker, this government is going to slash pension benefits while these admin costs skyrocket. When you look to see what they are in 2004, guess what? They do not list them in here. They are hiding the admin costs. This government is hiding the admin costs so they can justify slashing pension benefits.

Mr. Speaker, the Doer government should be controlling or managing their administrative costs instead of slashing the pension benefits of health care workers.

Mr. Speaker, I would also like to make a comment.

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Mr. Murray: Well, Mr. Speaker, you know, again all we hear from the other side is chirping and blaming and pointing of fingers. These are about health care workers. That is what this issue is about. It says right here in this letter to the government, "The government does not appear eager to resolve this issue. Representatives of the government have proposed more discussions instead of action. They are putting pressure on us to accept other changes in the way we deal with government. It seems they are holding the pension issue hostage to their own agenda."

My question is this: Why is the Doer government holding these pension benefits, these health care workers hostage to their own agenda?

Mr. Speaker: Order. Before recognizing the honourable Minister of Health, I would like to remind our guests in the public gallery that there is to be no participation by our guests in the gallery, and that also includes applauding. That is a reminder to our guests who are in the public gallery.

* (13:50)

Hon. Tim Sale (Minister of Health): Mr. Speaker, one, CIHI reports Manitoba has the third lowest administrative costs in Canada at 6.9 percent; and No. 2, when the former government was in power, 1585 fewer nurses were left at the end of their tenure than at the beginning. There are 689 more today.

Mr. Speaker, we reinstated the RN program, and now there is a laddered program for health aides, LPNs, RNs, BNs and advanced practice nurses. These are the people under whose governance more than a thousand nurses left this province. These are not the friends of union members, they are not the friends of nurses, they are not the friends of health care workers. They wanted to privatize home care. I am glad to hear them today finally taking some interest in the real needs of our workers for fair pensions that are sustained over the history of our province.

Regional Health Authorities Administrative Costs

Mrs. Myrna Driedger (Charleswood): Mr. Speaker, the arrogance of the Minister of Health does absolutely nothing for front line health care workers. Front line health care workers are feeling pretty beaten down right now especially when they see these administrative costs skyrocket while they are here fighting for their pensions.

Mr. Speaker, the administrative costs at the WRHA have risen. They have skyrocketed from 5 million to over 16 million in the last five years. So you can imagine my surprise when I looked at this latest audit, and there is no longer a line item in here to show what those administrative costs are for the WRHA. We do not have a clue whether those costs are now 20 million, 25 million. It does not say in here any more. They have buried the costs.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to ask the Minister of Health to explain to those health care workers who are in the gallery today how he can allow this offensive, offensive lack of accountability by the WRHA in burying those admin costs while we have health care workers here fighting for their pension plans.

Hon. Tim Sale (Minister of Health): Probably, Mr. Speaker, the member did not hear my answer to the previous question. Third lowest administrative costs in Canada at 6.9 percent. First of all, our administrative costs are not only in line, they are in the lower third of Canada's health care administration costs. Secondly, we would never let the pension systems of our health care workers fall into any kind of disarray. Pensions are an integral part of wages. They always have been. This government believes in fair pensions. We will do what is required to make this

pension system work. We recognize that workers are prepared to contribute. So are we.

Mrs. Driedger: Mr. Speaker, what the Minister of Health has allowed the WRHA to do is to bury their specific administrative costs in amongst the general administrative costs of the whole system. Therefore, nobody will know what exactly those corporate administrative costs are where they have added 9 percent to their numbers in terms of people working in the WRHA. They have added an extra floor to their corporate office tower, and now, in this budget, there is no longer a line item to tell us what those numbers will be. People here that are fighting for their pension, one nurse said, "How can they do this?"

Mr. Speaker, on behalf of these health care workers that are here today, I would like to ask the minister this: How can the Doer government do this to front line health care workers? How can they cut their pension?

Mr. Sale: Mr. Speaker, I guess I would urge the member opposite to begin to think on her feet and ask a new question. I have answered this one three times. We will support the existing pension plan. We will resolve the shortfall. We know the workers in the system are prepared to contribute their share. We are prepared to contribute our share. We have been working on that since June with HEPP's actuaries, with our actuaries and with all the unions at the same table. That is three answers identical to three questions that are identical. I hope we have a new question now.

*(13:55)

Health Care Workers Pension Benefits

Mrs. Myrna Driedger (Charleswood): The front line health care workers are the glue that holds the system together, and they certainly deserve a lot of respect. Perhaps the Minister of Health can answer the question for us today. Why do the people that are fighting for their pension plans not know this then already? Why are they having to come here and fight today for their pension plans?

If the minister has said he has taken care of all of that, he has resolved the issue, he will maintain the pension plan and there will be no cuts, why has he not told that to the front line health care workers?

Why are they feeling that he is holding their pensions hostage right now?

Hon. Tim Sale (Minister of Health): Mr. Speaker, we have been meeting, as I have said, several times with the representatives of those workers who are their union representatives, their stewards, their executives and their presidents of their unions.

These officers have been in touch with our staff for some months now. We have had actuarial reviews of what would be required to make the HEPP plan whole over what period of time. We have had discussions about the options in order to accomplish this with the union representatives around the common table, Mr. Speaker. I expect that, in fact, the union representatives have made some information available, and I hope that the members of their profession in the gallery will confirm that with their representatives.

Crime Rate Homicides

Mr. Gerald Hawranik (Lac du Bonnet): The city of Winnipeg broke an all-time provincial record for homicides with 31 homicides so far this year. Mr. Speaker, 31 homicides broke the previous record in Winnipeg which occurred in 1987 under the Howard Pawley government.

I ask the minister this: Is the new all-time provincial record for homicides due to his inaction, or is it generally due to the failed policies of NDP governments?

Hon. Gord Mackintosh (Minister of Justice and Attorney General): Mr. Speaker, the last time there was a record outbreak of violent crime in Manitoba, in 1996, it was followed by a reduction in support to the RCMP by the former government. Last week we announced that we will increase the number of police officers on the streets and roads in Manitoba by 40.

Mr. Hawranik: Mr. Speaker, to put this all-time record into perspective, 31 homicides in Winnipeg is almost as much as the combined totals of Calgary, Ottawa and Québec City, cities which have a combined population of over 2.5 million people. Many of these homicides are gang-related, and we can thank the NDP for allowing the Hells Angels into Manitoba in the year 2000 under the watch of this Justice Minister.

I ask the Justice Minister to take action to reduce homicides rather than to announce another press conference to blame everyone for this record except himself.

Mr. Mackintosh: Mr. Speaker, again, I remind members opposite that they seem to disregard the importance of policing in Manitoba. When there was a record in violent crime, the former government chose to reduce the commitment to the RCMP.

Mr. Speaker, I remind members opposite that we are committed to, in addition to the new investments in policing in Manitoba, we are adding 40 more officers in this province. We are now establishing, not just in Winnipeg, an innovative way to counter domestic violence through a family violence intervention team.

We are also committed to increasing the resources available to those who are in an integrated unit fighting organized crime, making sure that they have the flexibility and access to an operating fund.

Mr. Hawranik: Mr. Speaker, in the future when Manitobans look back at the legacy of this Justice Minister, I believe they will remember three things about the Justice Minister: one, he was the Justice Minister at a time when Winnipeg recorded more homicides than at any other time in Manitoba's history; two, he was Justice Minister at a time when the Hells Angels came to Manitoba in the year 2000; and three, one of his employees, Bob Morrison, a senior Crown prosecutor, called him soft on crime. That is unprecedented, unprecedented for a Justice Minister.

I ask the Justice Minister this: Has he actually worked at developing this dubious legacy, or is it just due to his complete mismanagement of the Justice Department?

* (14:00)

Mr. Mackintosh: Mr. Speaker, once again I have to remind members opposite that we do not need lessons from Conservatives when it comes to public safety. It was under their watch that the Hells Angels came to Manitoba, under their watch we had the worst jail riot in Manitoba history. It was under their watch that we had the highest violent crime rate ever recorded in this country for a province.

It was under the former government's watch, Mr. Speaker, that we had a confidential gang hotline that was neither confidential nor hot. That was their response to organized crime. They did not even answer the phone. That is how committed they were to fighting organized crime.

We have added 40 officers, a million more to the organized crime task force, Mr. Speaker, and we are stepping up our fight against domestic violence.

Crack Cocaine Reduction Strategy

Mr. Kelvin Goertzen (Steinbach): Mr. Speaker, today in Manitoba it is easier for young people to buy crack cocaine on the streets of Manitoba than it is for them to get help for their addiction. Since organized gangs like the Hells Angels established in Manitoba in the year 2000, the availability of crack cocaine has only increased. It has skyrocketed.

What is the minister's solution? Well, he hands out free crack pipes to users to feed their addictions, and then he cuts funding to the AFM, to the Addictions Foundation of Manitoba, so they cannot even get help once they get them addicted. Enough is enough.

What is the strategy? Not a news release, Mr. Speaker. What strategy does this minister have to help young people who are suffering under their crack addiction today?

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Hon. Theresa Oswald (Minister responsible for Healthy Living): Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the member opposite's question about the Addictions Foundation of Manitoba. I do want to concur with him that there was a reduction of \$150,000 this year. I have heard most recently that the opposition is rather concerned about the notion of skyrocketing administrative costs, and to that end the reduction at AFM came as a result of two retirements. We are making sure that we have efficiencies at AFM. Certainly no one lost their job as a result of these cuts, and the programs have remained consistent. Thank you.

Mr. Goertzen: Mr. Speaker, that was absolutely appalling. I mean, I applaud the minister for admitting the cuts at AFM, but the question was to the Minister of Justice, and he did not have the nerve to stand up and answer the serious question about an increase of crack on our streets.

In fact, if the Minister of Justice would just come out of his ivory tower, get out of his office and walk down the street, he could see the real increase of crack cocaine in the province right now, and that there are young people becoming addicted, becoming slaves to this addiction, Mr. Speaker. A generation of young people are growing up in the province as addicts to crack cocaine, and this minister sits in his seat and does not have the nerve to answer the question to tell us what he is going to do. What is he going to do as Justice Minister to take crack off the streets?

Hon. Gord Mackintosh (Minister of Justice and Attorney General): Mr. Speaker, I am glad the member can take a breath now, I want to provide some answers.

I think it is important that we recall that drug policy is driven by Ottawa. Nonetheless, we are not going to sit back and wait for some national drug strategy which has been promised to unfold. Here in this province, we have taken action that other provinces now are looking at us to duplicate.

Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to announce today that under The Safer Communities Act, the only one of its kind in Canada, we have now shut down 84 gang houses or drug dens and, in particular, I am pleased to note that at least 60 of these 84 closures are related to crack operations. Not only have we shut them down, but as a result of working with Winnipeg police, we have 44 drug-related arrests as well.

Mr. Goertzen: Well, Mr. Speaker, the minister can be arrogant if he wants on this but this is a very, very serious issue. He notes The Safer Communities Act, and I am pleased to say that it was the previous government that brought that act forward in 1999.

Mr. Speaker, we are not talking about today closing down homes in communities that are distributing crack. We are talking about right on the streets. In a mall down the street, young people can walk in and buy crack at any time and what does this

minister do? He talks about press releases, about a house that closed down far away. It is time that this minister took real action and gave real direction so that young people can be assured that they are not going to be faced with this on the streets every day and that those who are addicted can find real help from the Addictions Foundation. What is this Minister of Justice going to do except put out another press release?

Mr. Mackintosh: Mr. Speaker, in addition to The Safer Communities Act, and I should add that other provinces are now looking at what has developed here. The act was not introduced by the former government. That was taken off the books because that left it in the hands of individual neighbours which was inappropriate.

In addition to The Safer Communities Act and our addition to the police forces of Manitoba, I am pleased that this province is the first known jurisdiction in this country, at least, to bring in legislation to deal with drug-impaired driving that goes beyond efforts made in the past to deal with alcohol-impaired driving. As well, I certainly support the efforts of police getting into our schools. We have a police in schools initiative that was brought in under this government in partnership with others like the Winnipeg Police Service.

Crime Rate Reduction Strategy

Mr. Stuart Murray (Leader of the Official Opposition): Mr. Speaker, we on this side of the House take the issue of crime very seriously, and I would hope that the Doer government would finally. After six years now under this Doer government, what we see is an epidemic.

We have the Hells Angels moving in under the Doer government's watch, giving towing contracts to known members of the Hells Angels. The number of grow ops in Winnipeg and throughout this province is through the roof, and all we hear time and time again from this Premier (Mr. Doer) and from this Minister of Justice is that they either want to blame somebody or they want to point to some kind of an announcement that they made.

Mr. Speaker, the facts are very clear: 31 homicides in the city of Winnipeg, more than ever has happened, even under the previous NDP

government. When will the Doer government and this Minister of Justice take this issue seriously? Yes, they talk about we are going to put 40 more police in the streets. Where have they been for six years? This is an appalling record. When will this government slam closed the revolving door of justice and do something in the province of Manitoba?

Hon. Gord Mackintosh (Minister of Justice and Attorney General): Mr. Speaker, the fact that under the former government funding was not only cut to the Addictions Foundation in three fiscal years, but it was cut over several years to the RCMP. I remind members opposite that it was this government that is now putting 40 more officers on the streets and roads of Manitoba.

Mr. Murray: With respect, Mr. Speaker, we have Manitobans who are saying crack cocaine is devastating communities, wrecking families and is as easy to get as a \$2 slice of pizza at a mall food court. That is what is happening under his watch. It is going on right under, excuse the expression, right under his nose. That is not acceptable to the people of Manitoba.

So, yes, we are going to put more police on the streets. We have heard that before from this Doer government. It is political spin and political rhetoric. Manitobans want to know that their communities are safe, that they support the police officers, and that when they have watched the Hells Angels move into the province under their watch, when they have seen gang activities go through the roof, when they have seen grow ops and meth ops operating under their watch, the hollow words from this Justice Minister are unfortunate to Manitobans.

Do something, Mr. Speaker. Ask him to do something on behalf of those families in Manitoba. Take action, instead of announcements.

Mr. Mackintosh: I am afraid what we are hearing from members opposite actually is a veiled attack, Mr. Speaker, on our police officers who are on the front lines making a real difference in this province. I am not going to stand up here and put up with this nonsense. I remind members opposite that just last month—

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Mr. Mackintosh: Mr. Speaker, we should be supporting our officers who last week, as a result of a

joint effort, arrested 35 people in project Othello, dealing with drugs.

I remind members opposite that, when they were in office, how many gang houses, how many crack houses, how many drug dens did they close? Zero. This side of the House 84.

* (14:10)

Mr. Murray: Mr. Speaker, this is a sad legacy for any government to know full well that you have exceeded the number of murders in the city of Winnipeg than the previous NDP government. Then to get from this Justice Minister some kind of a lecture and some kind of a blame game speaks volumes about this minister who is more interested in political rhetoric, more interested in putting out press announcements than doing the right thing on behalf of Manitoba families.

We support the police on this side of the House, Mr. Speaker. We do not need lectures from this Justice Minister. The police are doing the right thing. The problem is this Minister of Justice has talked about putting more police on the streets and has failed. If he would live up to what he said, then he would not have the kind of activity that we see in the streets of Manitoba. This Justice Minister is a failure to those people that are being addicted by the Hells Angels and gangs, and meth and grow ops. When is he going to do the right thing and get this thing under control?

Mr. Mackintosh: Well, they were in office, zero drug dens closed. We are in office, 84 drug dens closed. Black and white, Mr. Speaker.

Today, Mr. Speaker, there are more police and prosecutors that work on behalf of the safety of Manitobans than ever before. We now have a gang unit in the Prosecutions branch. We have an integrated police operation.

Mr. Speaker, we are recognized as having the strongest provincial laws against organized crime in the country. That did not happen under their watch when the Hells Angels actually came in here, when the Zig Zag Crew came in here, when we had an outbreak of auto theft, when we had street gangs rear their ugly heads. We are taking action.

I ask the opposition this: Will they now support the Throne Speech and its delivery of 40 more officers?

**Public Accounts Committee
Hydra House Review**

Mr. John Loewen (Fort Whyte): Mr. Speaker, we have seen inaction from this minister for the last six years. We look forward to some action finally taking place, but to tell you the truth we are not very hopeful.

Mr. Speaker, we are still seeing numerous contradictions surrounding the mismanagement of funds at Hydra House. We have been told that although the serious allegations were raised in November of the year 2000, that the minister was told at the time, "Well, do not worry about it. It is just an argument between a former staff member and the people in charge of Hydra House today." After the Auditor was finally called in two years later, we found out that in fact those allegations were true. There were some serious issues, and those allegations were found to be clearly true.

I would say to the minister that the only way to get to the bottom of this is to do as the Auditor General has recommended and have senior administrative staff come before the Public Accounts Committee and advise that committee as to what they knew in 2000. I have asked the minister if he was going to follow through with the Governor General's recommendations and let those administration officials come to committee.

Hon. Greg Selinger (Minister of Finance): Just to set the record straight, Mr. Speaker, the Governor General resides in Ottawa. He has nothing to do with this Legislature.

Secondly, we have had more Public Accounts meetings during our term in office than they had in their term of office by at least double. We are prepared to meet. We wanted to start meeting in August, but members opposite were not available. They wanted to be on vacation.

We will meet again tonight. We will make publicly elected officials, past and present, available to address the concerns, and we will, most importantly, make sure the kids and families served at Hydra House continue to have consistent service and are properly cared for, and the money not going into Cadillacs like it was under their term in office.

Mr. Loewen: Mr. Speaker, I remind the Minister of Finance that misspending carried through at least

until 2002, and may have carried forward, in fact, until 2004, but we were unable to get to the bottom of this issue because although, while in opposition, the Minister of Health proclaimed that he would like to see the Auditor General's recommendations undertaken, we now have a government that is stonewalling the committee by refusing to allow the Auditor General's recommendations to proceed.

I would like to ask the government if they can explain why they were all for these changes to the committee process prior to coming to government. Now they are in government, they are refusing to allow the Auditor General's recommendations to proceed. Why are they stonewalling the committee? Why can we not have administrative officials at committee to answer questions?

Mr. Selinger: Mr. Speaker, the only reason this thing got out of control is because the former government cut the staff in the Department of Family Services that were responsible for monitoring these for-profit agencies. They eliminated the ability of the public service to actually monitor what is going on, and now they are trying to cover that up with these silly questions.

Mr. Loewen: Mr. Speaker, it is unfortunate that the Minister of Justice (Mr. Mackintosh) does not even go through his own Estimates books where it clearly shows, and it was questioned by his party when in opposition, and they agreed to the fact that the audit function was centralized into the Department of Finance. It is housed in his own department. He does not even know that.

But the real question is this: Why is this government, why is this minister getting in the way of the committee doing good work for the people of Manitoba? Why is this government continuing to stall on recommendations that were put forth in good faith by the Auditor General? Why is the minister, why is the government, refusing to allow administrative heads of departments to come before committee so we can get to the bottom of this scandal?

Mr. Selinger: Once again, these members opposite cut the compliance staff in the Department of Family Services so that the proper monitoring could not occur. We have added those staff back now. We have put staff back into that department to ensure all the agencies delivering service are properly managed

and are properly accountable. These members will then jump up a couple of months from now and say there is too much administrative expense in the Department of Family Services. I guarantee you they will say that a few months from now.

We have added the staff back. We are going to solve the problem. We are going to make sure the children and families retain and continue to have proper services, and we are going to do it under non-profit control run by the community.

Aiyawin Corporation Operational Review

Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights): Mr. Speaker, improving the health of low-income Manitobans must include better attention to low-income housing. Today there is a major shortage of low-income housing, and organizations like Aiyawin have long waiting lists. Indeed, I understand Aiyawin's waiting list is more than a thousand people and four years long.

Mr. Archie Lafrenier, who earned well over \$200,000 last year, and I table his labour income, is living in one of the low-income Aiyawin homes. Why was Mr. Lafrenier able to queue-jump and get a low-income house ahead of many others who should have been provided housing? The government's policy on low-income housing is clearly in shambles.

I ask the minister what are the government standards and why are they not being followed.

Hon. Christine Melnick (Minister of Family Services and Housing): Mr. Speaker, the information that the member has provided today on the individuals named is not new. In fact, concerns were raised some time ago, which is why we began an operational review. The operational review is a very detailed review of the activities of the organization that we are discussing. This review was referred to the Auditor General. The department went through the proper process. We are now taking the proper actions, and we are making sure that we will continue in the future to deal appropriately with the Aiyawin Corporation, depending on how they respond to our requests for information on whether or not they are accepting that there are, indeed, major problems in that organization.

Mr. Gerrard: Mr. Speaker, at every step of the way, the government has been slow when it comes to the Aiyawin Corporation. The government did such a poor job of monitoring and mentoring the organization and its operations that it appears that terrible abuses have occurred. The government was slow to react when presented with detailed information about these abuses.

Today, the government has still not acted to take over the operations, and abuses may be continuing as we speak. I ask the minister this: What is happening at the organization? Is it business as usual or are there still abuses? Are the more than 200 people and families in the Aiyawin low-income housing still receiving service, or maybe disservice, from this corporation, and what is the minister doing?

* (14:20)

Ms. Melnick: Mr. Speaker, I will go back to what I said last week. Maybe the member opposite would like to read Hansard after, but I will just refresh his memory. We referred our concerns to the Auditor General. We asked his assistance in reviewing this further. We sent a letter to Aiyawin Corporation. They have until tomorrow to respond to the concerns raised in the operational review. They will then have two weeks to come forward with a plan to fix up the concerns that are there. If either response is not acceptable, we will take the actions necessary which may mean withdrawing funds from Aiyawin Corporation. We are following the process.

Immigration Family Reunification

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Inkster): Mr. Speaker, since 1999 the government has been talking about increasing immigration to the level of 10 000. In fact, even in the recent Throne Speech, it says, again, 10 000 is the number. If the political will was there to actually see that number realized, it, in fact, could have been done, not only by now, it could have been done several years ago.

My question to the minister responsible is will the minister exempt the family support stream from having to comply with the restricted occupation list. If the government were to do that, we would be able to see, if not hundreds, but thousands more immigrants coming to our province. All we are doing is asking the government to recognize the importance

of family immigrants being able to come to our province to establish their homes and to be able to add to our economy, add to our social fabric, and here is a wonderful way. If you want to do what your government has been talking about doing, will you do it?

Hon. Nancy Allan (Minister of Labour and Immigration): As you know, it is always a pleasure to get up in the House and speak about Manitoba's immigration strategy. We have the best Provincial Nominee program out of nine jurisdictions in Canada.

This program started in 1998 with 200 principal applicants. In the year 2003, we saw our Provincial Nominee program grow by 40 percent. We are on track this year to grow it by the same amount, that would be 7500 principal applicants. We will meet the target of 10 000 with no problem by the year 2007.

Mr. Speaker: Order. Time for Oral Questions has expired.

Speaker's Rulings

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

I would like to remind all honourable members when the Speaker is standing all members should be in their seats, and the Speaker should be heard in silence.

Following the Prayer on November 22, 2004, the honourable Member for River Heights (Mr. Gerrard) rose on a matter of privilege concerning comments that were made in the House on July 31, 2002, by the then-Minister of Family Services and Housing in connection with Hydra House. The honourable Member for River Heights contended that the statements made on July 31, 2002, were misleading in light of information that was more recently provided by a report of the Auditor General and by information discussed in the Standing Committee on Public Accounts.

At the conclusion of his remarks, the honourable Member for River Heights asked that the House find that the statements made by the current Minister of Health (Mr. Sale) in the Legislative Chamber on July 31, 2002, provided misleading information and therefore directs the Minister of Health to apologize to the House and to all Manitobans for his statement.

The honourable Government House Leader (Mr. Mackintosh) offered advice to the Chair.

I took the matter under advisement. However, on November 23, 2004, I did allow the honourable Official Opposition House Leader (Mr. Derkach), the honourable Member for Inkster (Mr. Lamoureux), the honourable Member for River East (Mrs. Mitchelson) and the honourable Government House Leader to offer further advice to the Speaker. I would like to note that I allowed this due to the exceptional circumstance of the issue having been initially raised on opening day. Normally, when the Speaker takes the matter under advisement, no further advice is permitted to be given at a future time.

I thank all members for their advice to the Chair on this matter.

There are two conditions that must be satisfied in order for the matter raised to be ruled in order as a prima facie case of privilege: First, was the issue raised at the earliest opportunity, and second, has sufficient evidence been provided to demonstrate that the privileges of the House have been breached, in order to warrant putting the matter to the House.

Regarding the first condition, the honourable Member for River Heights asserted that he was raising the matter at the earliest opportunity, and I accept the word of the honourable member. I note from some comments made by members that other members in the House take issue with the fact that a matter of privilege was raised on the opening day of a new session. While it is not for the Speaker to comment on the appropriateness of such actions, members do have the opportunity to address this issue in another forum, such as in the Standing Committee on the Rules of the House.

Regarding the second condition, whether there is sufficient evidence that the privileges of the House have been breached, it is important to determine whether parliamentary privilege has been breached in the actions complained.

Joseph Maingot, in the second edition of *Parliamentary Privilege in Canada*, advises on page 241 that to allege that a member has misled the House is a matter of order rather than privilege. In addition, it has been ruled by Speakers in Manitoba that the member raising the matter of privilege must furnish proof of intent. Speaker Phillips ruled so in

1987, while Speaker Rocan made similar rulings seven times between 1988 and 1995. Speaker Dacquay made nine such rulings between 1995 and 1999. In a ruling that she gave on April 20, 1999, she advised that short of a member acknowledging to the House that he or she deliberately and with intent set out to mislead, it is virtually impossible to prove that a member has deliberately misled the House. Similarly, Deputy Speaker Santos made one ruling finding no proof of intentional misleading in 2001, while as Speaker, I have made three such rulings during the period 1999 to 2003.

I would also note for the House that Joseph Maingot states on page 224 in the second edition of *Parliamentary Privilege in Canada* that allegations of misjudgment or mismanagement or maladministration on the part of a minister in the performance of his ministerial duties do not come within the purview of parliamentary privilege. This concept is supported by a ruling from Speaker Fox in 1972, from a ruling by Speaker Rocan in 1994, and by three rulings from Speaker Dacquay in 1996.

Although this issue is one that is of obvious importance and significance to many members in the House, with the greatest of respect, I must rule on the basis of the procedural authorities, and on the basis of rulings from previous Manitoba Speakers, there is no prima facie case of privilege.

*(14:30)

I have another ruling for the House.

Following the Prayer on November 23, 2004, the honourable Member for River Heights (Mr. Gerrard) rose on an alleged matter of privilege regarding the comments made by the honourable Attorney General (Mr. Mackintosh) and the honourable First Minister (Mr. Doer). The honourable Member for River Heights asserted that comments made by the honourable Minister of Justice at a Governance in Canada conference and by the honourable First Minister on a local radio station were a slur on the dignity of the Chamber.

At the conclusion of his remarks, the honourable Member for River Heights moved "THAT the House finds the statements of the Premier and Minister of Justice to be contemptuous and ones which go against the dignity of the House."

The honourable First Minister, the honourable Official Opposition House Leader (Mr. Derkach) and the honourable Member for Steinbach (Mr. Goertzen) offered advice to the Chair on the matter. I took the matter under advisement in order to consult the procedural authorities.

There are two conditions that must be satisfied in order for the matter raised to be ruled in order as a prima facie case of privilege. First, was the issue raised at the earliest opportunity, and second, has sufficient evidence been provided to demonstrate that the privileges of the House have been breached, in order to warrant putting the matter to the House.

Regarding the first condition, the honourable Member for River Heights asserted that he was raising the matter at the earliest opportunity, and I accept the word of the honourable Member.

Regarding the second condition, whether there is sufficient evidence that the privileges of the House have been breached, it is important to determine whether parliamentary privilege has been breached in the actions complained of.

In the sixth edition of *Beauchesne*, Citation 31(3) advises that statements made outside of the House by a Member may not be used as the basis for a question of privilege. Marleau and Montpetit state on page 522 of *House of Commons Practice and Procedure* that the Speaker has no authority to rule on statements made outside the House by one member against another.

Rulings from Manitoba Speakers support these findings from the procedural authorities. It has been ruled a number of times by Manitoba Speakers that comments made outside the Assembly Chamber cannot form the basis for a prima facie case of privilege. Speaker Walding ruled so in 1983, while Speaker Phillips made similar rulings in 1986 and 1987. Speaker Rocan ruled six times, between 1988 and 1995 that statements made outside the House cannot form the basis of privilege while Speaker Dacquay also ruled the same way in 1995.

On the basis of commentary from the procedural authorities and from rulings of previous Manitoba Speakers, I must therefore respectfully rule that there is no prima facie case of privilege.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

St. Leon Wind Farm

Mr. Jim Maloway (Elmwood): Mr. Speaker, it is with great pride that I rise today to say a few words about the construction of Canada's largest, and Manitoba's first, wind farm. The 99-megawatt project will house 63 1.65 megawatt Vestas v-82 turbines located near St. Leon in the R.M.s of Lorne and Pembina. This exciting, cutting-edge technology will be a welcome addition to Manitoba's clean, renewable energy portfolio, and it will make a vital contribution to Canada's effort to meet its Kyoto commitments. Over the 25-year duration of this venture, it is projected that nine million tonnes of coal-fired CO₂ emissions will be eliminated.

Mr. Speaker, wind power is an excellent complement to Manitoba's existing hydraulic energy system. A hydraulic system can store energy in reservoirs when the wind is blowing and release water to generate electricity when the wind is calm. The wider diversification of our electrical sources will better equip the province to meet its domestic and export needs as well as provide support in times of drought. On completion, the turbines will generate enough power to serve almost 35 000 homes, or the total needs of Portage la Prairie and Morden combined.

The developments in St. Leon will also make a vital contribution to our province's economic growth. Mr. Speaker, \$190 million will be invested into the construction of the wind farm, which will result in the creation of 280 construction jobs and 25 long-term operational jobs for rural Manitobans. In addition, local farmers will earn \$10 million in exchange for having the turbines on their land.

To conclude, Mr. Speaker, I would like to congratulate Air Source Power and its partners, Algonquin Power Incorporated and Green Wing Energy, for raising the large amounts of capital required to make this endeavour a reality.

Also, I would like to thank the Premier (Mr. Doer) and the former and current Energy, Science and Technology ministers for the time and effort they have devoted to this project.

Buhler Hall

Mr. Jack Penner (Emerson): Mr. Speaker, the honourable Member for Pembina (Mr. Dyck),

accompanied by my wife and me and the honourable federal member for Portage-Lisgar were very fortunate yesterday to be able to attend the grand opening of the performing arts centre in Gretna which was named yesterday Buhler Hall. It is indeed a tribute to the men and women of the Mennonite community that once again prove that no obstacle is too large or too onerous. The building of a performing arts centre is proof positive that, where there is a will and co-operation, there is a way.

Congratulations to Paul Kroeker, principal at MCI, and his staff for bringing able people together to bring forward to construction the construction of a facility such as this. It is also a tribute to the students and the staff at the MCI, and the board of directors and the chairman, which is chaired by Ray Friesen, that this building is, indeed, a tribute to the young men and women that are able to learn how to perform adequately at a centre such as the performing arts centre. John Buhler, Elmer Hildebrand, David Friesen, Phil Ens were all people that became involved in the fundraising effort.

It is, without question, as indicated by the manager of Winnipeg Symphony Orchestra that performed there yesterday, that it is indeed one of the best facilities and with the best acoustics anywhere in Manitoba.

I want to thank the Winnipeg Symphony Orchestra, Henry Engbrecht of the MCI choir, the Canzona that performed there, and, indeed, MCI principal, Paul Kroeker, for putting on a tremendous show and building a facility that will serve the community of southern Manitoba.

Sokol Polish Folk Ensemble

Mr. Doug Martindale (Burrows): Mr. Speaker, I want to congratulate the Sokol Polish Folk Ensemble on its 90th anniversary.

The Sokol Polish Folk Ensemble is an enduring symbol of Winnipeg's cultural diversity and of the vibrant Polish community that exists here in Manitoba.

The Sokol Polish Folk Ensemble consists of approximately 60 members, 40 of which belong to the Sokol Choir and 20 of which belong to the Dance Ensemble. Formed in 1914, the Folk Ensemble shares its roots with the Polish Gymnastic

Association Sokol which was established in 1906 by a small group of dedicated Polish immigrants.

The Sokol Folk Ensemble is a dedicated group, proud to share their heritage with people from around the world. Choir and dance members have received numerous awards and recognition. In 1964, the choir won the prestigious Lord Tweedsmuir Trophy at the Manitoba Music Festival. The choir also took three top honours at the Festival of Polonia choirs in Koszalin, Poland, in 1976. Dance members have travelled extensively throughout Canada and Poland, dazzling people with their beautiful display of Polish singing and dancing.

The Sokol Polish Folk Ensemble is an important and vibrant part of Winnipeg's multicultural community. Ensemble members are the featured attraction at the Krakow Poland Pavilion at Folklorama, and have been since the beginning of this festival in 1970. Next summer, the Ensemble will celebrate its 35th anniversary participating in Folklorama. Songs and dances performed by Ensemble members truly reflect the pride and love that they have for their heritage.

A special guest at the 90th anniversary banquet on November 26, 2004, was Mr. Andrzej Krezel, Consulate for Polonia Issues in Toronto, representing the Republic of Poland.

As the MLA for Burrows, I was also honoured to attend the 90th anniversary ceremonies along with my wife Carol. I congratulate Krystyna Arndt, president of the ensemble, and all the dancers and choir members, past and present, for their commitment to cultural diversity of Manitoba. I wish the group continued success in the future.

* (14:40)

Aboriginal Music Awards

Mrs. Mavis Taillieu (Morris): Mr. Speaker, today I am pleased to share with this Assembly the success of a number of Manitoba musicians at the Aboriginal Music Awards.

Mr. Speaker, the annual Canadian Aboriginal awards ceremony and celebration took place in Toronto this past weekend, and it was an excellent time to showcase some of Canada's finest musical talent. Many Manitoba artists were nominated for

awards, which truly is an honour in and of itself. Congratulations to all Manitoba nominees which included Errol Ranville, Ness Michaels, Eagle and Hawk, Heritage, Clint Dutiaume, Billy Joe Green, Danny Schur, Longhouse Volume I, Spirit of the Nations, Rayne Delaronde, Jig Band, Gary Lepine, Edward Gamblin and Team Rezofficial.

Errol Ranville was honoured with the Lifetime Contribution to Aboriginal Music Award because of his role in founding the C-Weed Band, as well as being an active member of the Aboriginal music industry for more than 30 years. Ness Michaels was recognized for his contribution to the Aboriginal music industry, including founding Winnipeg's Sunshine Records and strongly supporting the industry for over 30 years. For these efforts he was presented with this year's Music Industry Award. Winnipeg's Eagle and Hawk brought home three awards, best songwriter, best rock album and best song single.

The purpose of the Canadian Aboriginal Music Awards is to acknowledge and honour the keepers, teachers, promoters, creators, and performers of Aboriginal music; to continue to develop and promote the diversity of all Aboriginal music; to celebrate the excellence of Aboriginal music; and to recognize the unique vision of Aboriginal musicians and encourage this rich cultural voice.

Mr. Speaker, it is important to recognize the success of these fine Manitoba musicians, not only because they received awards, but because of their contribution to the arts and cultural communities of our province and our country. Celebrating the talents of diverse cultural communities is imperative to developing and maintaining a healthy multicultural society.

If I may, Mr. Speaker, I convey congratulations on behalf of all members of this Chamber. Thank you.

Portuguese Village

Mr. Andrew Swan (Minto): Mr. Speaker, there is an exciting development about to occur in the West End of Winnipeg, the creation of a Portuguese village along Sargent Avenue from Arlington to Sherbrook.

The Portuguese village idea came about through the efforts of the Portuguese Business Association,

the Portuguese community, the residents of the West End and the West End BIZ. This plan will create an attractive area complete with street enhancements, store-front building improvements, sidewalk paving features and open-air cafes reminiscent of the beautiful country of Portugal. The development will create an exciting, fun, and safe atmosphere for Manitobans to visit, shop and play.

This is a vibrant multicultural area where many new Canadians settle upon their arrival in Winnipeg, and although there are challenges, the area is well located, close to both the University of Winnipeg and downtown. The area has many long-time residents and businesses and is enjoying great community interest and involvement.

The plan was created with the participation of Portuguese businesses, the Portuguese community, residents of the area and businesses already located in the area. Meetings were well attended, with good participation and useful feedback, and the resulting plans reflect the wishes of the community. The plans have been displayed for several months and interest in the project is very high. Businesses have asked about locating in the area and residents are excited about the project. Let us hope the construction will begin in the spring of 2005 and the Portuguese village will have a grand opening in late summer of 2005.

Mr. Speaker, this project is only the beginning. The West End BIZ envisions a community of different villages for Manitobans, and tourists can shop, dine and explore the world right in Winnipeg's diverse West End. I congratulate the West End BIZ, local businesses and local residents in showing, as their slogan says, we are the world. Thank you.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

GOVERNMENT BUSINESS

ADJOURNED DEBATE (Fifth Day of Debate)

Mr. Speaker: Resume debate on the proposed motion the honourable Member for Rossmere (Mr. Schellenberg) and the proposed amendment by the Leader of the Official Opposition (Mr. Murray) and the proposed subamendment by the honourable Member for River Heights (Mr. Gerrard), standing in

the name of the honourable Member for Morris, who has 22 minutes remaining.

Mrs. Mavis Taillieu (Morris): Last week, Mr. Speaker, I left off on speaking about the education taxes, but I would like to move on to health care. I would like to move on to the inadequacies I find in this Throne Speech in terms of health care and how we are to address that. The waiting lists are still very, very long. I know some people who are waiting over two years for hip surgeries and knee surgeries, and I think that anybody that is in pain and is incapacitated and possibly cannot even carry out their daily functions or work, two years is just too long. I think that when you have a delay of two years, you really are denying people access to timely health care.

Mr. Conrad Santos, Deputy Speaker, in the Chair

One young person I know who needed a knee replacement was on a waiting list for a year, and she was told it would be another almost 18 months, probably, by the time she would be able to get to the specialist. Now, she chose her health and her future over her savings, and she went south of the border and got herself a new knee by her own choice. We cannot afford to let those things go on: long, long lists of waiting, and people that have to seek health care somewhere else because we cannot provide them with timely care.

Another thing that I am distressed about is there is no commitment to keep our rural health centres staffed to the maximum and to keep the hospitals open in rural Manitoba. Rural Manitobans deserve as timely an access to care as anybody in the province, and if you think about it you will note that there was an accident of two school buses this past weekend where they collided, and these children, many of these children had to be taken to hospital in St. Pierre-Jolys. It is fortunate that that hospital was open, and these kids were able to get care there. Some of them were having to go to Steinbach. But, if those hospitals closed, what would have happened in cases where there are major accidents and people need access to that timely care?

As one radio commentator put it, and I would like to talk about this; I heard it on the radio the other day, he said, "You can choose to spend your money on any unhealthy activity, but you cannot choose to spend your money on your own health care," which seems very strange to me, that you can choose to

spend money on unhealthy activities but you cannot choose to spend money on making yourself well.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I would also like to say that I am part of the Healthy Kids, Healthy Futures Task Force. I do support the concept of that committee, but I also have to wonder what new information we are going to discover at the end of the day. We know that childhood obesity is a major problem. We know that diabetes and other conditions related to obesity such as heart disease, high blood pressure, some forms of cancer, are all related to the obesity problems that we are seeing these days. Of course, there is also the lack of physical activity. Our young children today are less active because they have other activities that are more sedentary, such as watching television, playing video games, working on computers. As I am told by people that have done much research in the area of chronic disease prevention, one of the problems is when people sit and do these inactive activities, or inactivities, they eat while they are sitting, really, doing nothing which complicates the problem. So there are many, many people and many, many studies that have been done across the province and across the country to tell us that, yes, childhood obesity is a problem. All of the secondary symptoms that are associated with it such as diabetes are a problem. Physical inactivity is a problem. So I am hoping that, by the end of our task force, we have not just written ourselves another report that is going to go on a shelf.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I am quite concerned about the justice system here in Manitoba since the Hells Angels moved in, in 2000. I know they moved in, in 2000, because they moved into my community. I know where they live. They are moving into every community. We have had a record number of murders, 31. That is a record high, and these are murders related to the drug industry. What we are basically talking about here is organized crime. Hells Angels is just a name, but there is a huge sub-organization that is trafficking drugs to all of our youth and our children, and this has to stop.

*(14:50)

I would like to tell you about an incident when I was speaking with a group of young people in their twenties who have a local neighbourhood bar they like to go to, as young kids do. Recently, they said, "We cannot go there anymore, because one in three people is trying to sell you drugs, and they are people

we have never seen before. There are all kinds of different people moving in we have never seen before." They also say, "We cannot go into the washroom. You cannot go and have a drink at the bar and go and use the washroom because there are people guarding the door and not allowing you to go into the washroom unless you are going in there to buy drugs." Then they go outside, because you go outside with these kids, they want to go outside for a smoke, there is worse violent activity going on outside and beyond the view of the so-called bouncers in the establishment.

Now this is a very bad situation. We have heard about the drugs: the crack cocaine, the crystal meth and the marijuana, of course.

I was at a conference down in North Dakota just last spring. The legislators there were talking about the huge problem they have with crystal methamphetamine labs in which they manufacture this product and then move it all over the country. The legislators there and the police force there were suggesting that it would be moving into Manitoba because Manitoba has many rural areas to target. One of the places they target is old, abandoned farmyards and barns. That is why they will be moving up and around to rural Manitoba.

We need more police officers working on the street. We have to have more than just funded positions. We have to have people in those positions. It is one thing to have 40 people on the books as being hired. You have got to have those people patrolling. You have got to have those people out on the streets. There are probably three times as many people dealing drugs on the street than there is an increase in the number of police officers that we can put on the street.

I think one of the things that has to be done is we need to get a little tougher on this crime of dealing because these young people are drawn into dealing drugs because it promises them a lot of money. It promises them a lot of money for doing this kind of work for their dealers. Really, they do not get enough of a punishment if caught. The money is just too good. A little slap on the wrist does not matter. They have got to be tougher on crime to discourage people from dealing the drugs for the big dealers, and then they will not move in here if they cannot get people to work for them.

Agriculture is a major industry in our province, and, of course, we have seen over the last one and a half, two years the difficulties that have been associated with the one mad cow found in Alberta 18 months ago. That has devastated a lot of families, and that is still a very pressing issue. More and more we see smaller businesses in rural Manitoba going out of business. We see people having to move into the city to get other jobs. It is definitely affecting the lives and livelihood of people in rural Manitoba.

Compounding that was the lack of weather we had this summer which, of course, has devastated many crops. Not only that, the prices have decreased for much of the crops. Also, you have to remember, if you go through rural Manitoba and look at the fields, they are left with ruts in the fields that are now frozen with snow and ice. This creates a huge problem in the spring because those fields have to be cultivated and fertilized again in the spring before they are ready to receive seeding for the next season. It is going to complicate and compound next year's crops as well.

Of course, I cannot speak enough about the conditions of the roads in Manitoba and the lack of funding that goes into our roads. I know that this past summer there has been an attempt. It looks like a black paint had been applied to most sections I have seen any work being done on, but, of course, that does not really fool anybody who knows anything about roads. It just makes it look like some work has been done.

I did notice that Highway 59 through the Minister of Transportation's constituency was resurfaced all the way to the border of my constituency, where it stopped. Also, he liked to congratulate himself with a big sign saying that this work had—

An Honourable Member: Manitobans did the work.

Mrs. Taillieu: Yes, Manitobans did the work, but the Minister of Transportation (Mr. Lemieux) took all the credit with the sign he had to put up for himself.

In fact, I have been collecting petitions for a small portion of Highway 200 which is unpaved. This is a small section of road, and it really does not make any sense that this section is not paved. People are travelling down a paved highway, then they hit an unpaved stretch and are not prepared for it. One

person that signed the petition, I had to negate the petition because they wrote right across the petition, "I have not seen roads like this since I left Africa."

I just want to say that, in regard to Culture, Heritage and Tourism, nothing was mentioned on tourism. I am really surprised that there is no vision for tourism in the province of Manitoba except maybe if the government thinks VLTs are going to bring tourists to the province. VLTs are old news. We have many, many wonderful tourism locations in the province of Manitoba, and that is what we should be promoting to our neighbours south and west and east.

I do want to say that I do support the culture and arts in our community. I want to say that I had occasion to speak with a young woman who left me with this thought, and I thought it was very poignant. She said, "When our world of technology finally implodes, what will be left? It will be our music and our art that create beauty in our world."

I also would like to say that, as a new member, I have introduced a private member's bill in regard to privacy legislation. The person I have been working with on this has basically said, "This government has been missing in action on this file." It is in regard to protection of privacy of workers in the workplace, so I am sure that the government will support this bill and will vote for it.

I have to really say that the Doer government has tried to lull Manitobans into a sense of false security here. But here are some of the facts they do not want Manitobans to know. According to StatsCan, the number of new jobs grew only 0.3 percent last year, well below the national average of 2.2. Manitoba ranked ninth out of ten in job growth last year. Manitoba's job growth has been well below the national average for Canada every year since the Doer government was elected in 1999. I am quoting StatsCanada here: In the first six months of 2004, job growth was .07 and the national average was 1.8. The average weekly earnings of Manitobans is \$615. That is behind Newfoundland, New Brunswick, Saskatchewan and the national average of \$690.

Young people are leaving our province to go other places. I can just tell you this from experience because my son just left and moved to Calgary with five of his friends because there are better wages, there are lower taxes, there are better jobs, there is

less crime. Even they said to me, "Mom, there is less crime here. You cannot believe it. We can go to a bar, and we do not have to be accosted by people trying to sell us drugs. There is hope there and not despair like here." That is their words, young people leaving this province. Mr. Deputy Speaker, it is for these and many more reasons that I cannot support this Throne Speech.

*(15:00)

Increased revenues could have been used to completely eliminate education taxes on property. Yes, with newfound monies over the next two years it could be done, but there is no political will to do it. It will be frittered away as usual. It will not take long when you are going to spend \$17,000 on a limo ride.

It is interesting to note that this government has seen the light when it comes to private-public partnerships in some areas. Now tourism is a private-public partnership. The new wind farm is a private-public partnership. There are public schools, and there are private schools, but why will this government not allow private-public partnerships and provision of health care even when six out of ten people support that? What about all these kids who are waiting for dental surgeries who cannot get them? This would be a solution for these families. This government has no vision for health care provision, no vision of job creation in the private sector and is only interested in creating jobs to create more big government. Its lack of vision will not move Manitoba forward; it will keep us as the have-not designation that we are.

The Premier (Mr. Doer) would rather keep his hand out to Ottawa than encourage Manitobans to be the best they can be. Thank you.

Mr. Gerard Jennissen (Flin Flon): Now for another version of reality.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, first of all, I want to thank the actual Speaker for his outreach program because I had the honour of being with him a few weeks ago when we visited schools in Flin Flon, Cranberry Portage, Tadoule Lake and Lac Brochet, where we could teach young people or discuss with young people or dialog with young people about parliamentary democracy.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, the Speaker, who was with me, was a very popular figure, and I was assuming it

was because of political reasons, but I discovered later on, when some young lady phoned me in Lac Brochet, it was because he really is the uncle of Jordin Tootoo. Jordin Tootoo is a bit of a cultural hero, a sports hero, not only in Manitoba but certainly in the North and particularly northern Manitoba.

As well, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I would like to welcome the pages, the new pages. I hope they find their stay in this House profitable. May it be a learning experience. I also would like to welcome the new members, the newly minted members from Minto and Turtle Mountain. I am sure they are great spokesmen for their respective caucuses.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, the Throne Speech is built on past foundations. I think it is a document that is pragmatic. It is practical and it is achievable. There are different views on this, but from our point of view, this speech stands in the tradition of Tommy Douglas, stands in the direction that we charted in 1999. I think that there is a hallmark of this speech, and the hallmark is being inclusive. "Inclusivity," I guess, is the word. When I compare that to the elitist throne speeches prior to 1999, when the opposition was in power, their throne speeches tend to be much narrower. They did appeal to their core constituency, but they left out large chunks of the province, large sectors, particularly northern Manitoba, particularly Aboriginal people, but also very often not much mention about immigrants, not much mention about working class people.

Now, my colleagues on this side of the House, Mr. Deputy Speaker, have given many statistics and reams of information about the good things that this government has been doing and the positive and pragmatic direction that this Throne Speech is pointing. Therefore, I will not bore the House with going through those lists again. Instead, I would like to comment on a few things. One of the things that I have noticed when opposition members are speaking, not only with regard to the Throne Speech but also in asking questions, is the tone. It is not always content; it is tone, body language and tone. The volume tends to be very high as if volume equals veracity. It does not.

The other thing, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I would point out, and I know I tend to be prone to yelling occasionally too, but when you see two people arguing, usually, not always, but usually, the person that gesticulates a lot and screams a lot and yells a lot

is not the winner of the argument. So, when I hear some of these really loud arguers and hecklers coming from this side, it is not saying we are winning. It is we are losing. I hate to couch it in those stark terms, but the tone has been strident from the opposition members. That worries me a little bit.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I am intrigued by the response to the Throne Speech from the Leader of the Opposition (Mr. Murray). I know he is an ethical gentleman. I hold him in high respect but some of his views, and I presume his views are basically a reflection of the views of his caucus. Some of his views I find, to say it mildly, disturbing. Let me take a look at least a few things, say five things that he mentioned in his reply to the Throne Speech, and take issue with them. I guess this is basically a critique of a critique.

The first thing he says, and I am quoting now from Hansard, this is November 23, an excerpt, it is on page 53, and here is what he says, the Leader of the Opposition: "We know historically they have gone in and they have raided Crown corporations." This is in reference, apparently, to money, dividends taken from Hydro and used for our programs in education, in health and social programs, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Now I would say I do not like the word "raid." I will agree with you that that is a very pejorative, that is a very connotative term. I will tell you something. If I had to choose "raid," I would rather "raid" a corporation than sell one.

Notice what they did with MTS. We are only milking the cow when the cow is in full flow. They sold the cow. Not only did they sell the cow, Mr. Deputy Speaker, they then bought a bull, I guess, or a steer, one that did not give any milk at any rate.

When they bought Centra Gas, MTS was making us lots of money. They privatized that. Centra Gas has lost us money every year since. Now, if this happens to be the Leader of the Opposition's attempt at a good economic policy, I do not know, I do not like this idea of selling low and buying high. It just does not work. So I have some disagreement with him on that, and I still hurt over the sale of MTS. Seventy percent of Manitobans were against that, Mr. Deputy Speaker. It hurt us up north. My telephone bill which used to be \$12.80 for a monthly subscription has gone up to roughly \$60.

In little communities such as Granville Lake, only two telephones. In a place such as Tadoule

Lake, around 30 telephones, maybe 35. Most people cannot afford a telephone because rate shock has set in, and we predicted that that rate shock would set in. So where telephones are needed most, poor people, underprivileged people in risky areas, in sparsely populated areas, they do not have telephones. It is a bit ironic, Mr. Deputy Speaker, but that is the reality. So, when the Leader of the Opposition talks about economic direction, that certainly was a bad example of the economic direction, selling Manitoba Telephone System.

I think also, I do believe that Rodmond Roblin, the Tory premier of this province would turn over in his grave if he knew that this was what the Tories were doing. It is not acceptable. It still is not acceptable. The taxpayers of Manitoba got shafted, so it is not a raid on a Crown corporation. What we are taking is a dividend in a year or years when Hydro is making windfall profits selling hydro-electricity to our best customers, particularly the United States, and using some of those funds for carrying on business. Mr. Deputy Speaker, that is what other provinces do, too. Not all of them, but many of them do. So why is this so unusual? I think that actually the Tories are smarting because they did not think of it first.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, the second point I would like to take issue with is on page 54, where the Leader of the Opposition says, and let me read this, this is really intriguing: ". . . immigrants are coming into Manitoba, being specific about where they want to be. They are wanting to settle in ridings, constituencies that the Progressive Conservative party is very involved in because that is where the hope and opportunity is." I am an immigrant, six of us on this side are, perhaps more, six that I know of.

We know what immigrants are like. Now, are you trying to tell me that immigrants come to Manitoba and they say to themselves, "I am going to have to relocate only in a Tory riding?" Now get this. Immigration Canada phones you and says to somebody in Africa, maybe in Asia or Europe, "Sir, you are admitted into Canada. The paperwork is done." The prospective immigrant says, "Oh, really? Where are you going to send me? Manitoba? Oh, wonderful, wonderful, but I can only go in Manitoba where we have 20 ridings that are Tory because there is hope and opportunity there. You cannot stick me in those 37 ridings where there is no hope and no opportunity."

* (15:10)

In other words, if this is a miner from Tanzania, let us say, who wants to work in a mine in Flin Flon, he cannot come. After all, there is no hope and no opportunity in an NDP riding. What absolute, errant nonsense. Where do we get this stuff from? We have got to be a little bit more careful when we say stuff like that. I think what the Leader of the Opposition (Mr. Murray) is saying, and in some degree I am sympathetic, he is saying, in southern Manitoba, we have some hardworking folks who have created industries that require immigrants. That is true, and I applaud those folks, but do not get into this stuff about wrapping yourself into a Tory riding and that is why immigrants come. That is not true, so I thought we should straighten the record on that.

An Honourable Member: Have you talked to them?

Mr. Jennissen: Have I talked to them? I am an immigrant, and I deal with immigrants all the time. Immigrants come for jobs. They do not ask about the democratic situation, necessarily, although they obviously want a democracy. They do not ask, "Is this a Tory or a Liberal or an NDP province?" They ask, "Can I get a job?" Let us not go too far on that.

An Honourable Member: Have you asked them?

Mr. Jennissen: I have talked to many an immigrant. I am one myself. I talk to myself frequently, and there is seldom any disagreement.

In 1999, there was something like 2500 immigrants in this province. Now, there are 7500. That is three times as many, so do not just wrap it around the Tory party. How about wrapping it around our party, because obviously we have three times as many immigrants, and we are not going around saying, "Give us credit. Give us credit." Let us be realistic about immigrants.

Let us get away from the partisan politics for a little bit. The third issue is Hansard, Tuesday, November 23. The Leader of the Opposition rambles on somewhat vaguely, and maybe I should read it. He says, "When simply asked the question, what kind of leadership on an economic vision or what kind of economic vision do you see coming from the Premier of Manitoba?" three out of four of them said, these are supposedly business leaders, "There is nothing happening." They do not say they are

somewhat encouraged. They say it is dismal. There is nothing happening.

This is an alleged survey by the Chamber of Commerce. I am not questioning the integrity of the Chamber of Commerce, but I am wondering about this rendition of what they actually did. There is no mention here of sample size. Three out of four business leaders are saying we do not have an economic vision. How does this work? Suppose there are only four people you interviewed. Suppose you said, "Let me see. I am going to interview four business people. I will start with Cubby Barrett, then I will go on to Bob Kozminski, then I will go on to a couple of other Tory business leaders, and then I will see if they like what the government, what the Leader, is doing."

I can already give you the answer. They are not going to agree with us. It amazes me that with this kind of an unscientific survey, the way it sounds, even one out four agreed with us. I am happy they did. It reminds me way too much of looking at TV and seeing the guy in the white coat and the little test tube that is bubbling away. Three out four doctors recommend you have Burpa Oat Flakes for breakfast because that gets rid of gas or indigestion or whatever. How scientific is this poll? I do not think it is terribly scientific. In fact, I do not believe it is scientific at all.

The other thing you have to do with polling, apart from knowing sample size, you have to ask a decent, reasonable, fair question. We all know that. We have dealt with the Québec argument about separation and so on. What is a fair question? I have not seen those questions. The Leader of the Opposition did not give us that question. Suppose the question was labelled this way. Suppose you said, and this is to the same four supposedly mythical business leaders, maybe there were more, maybe there were twenty, maybe there were fifty, I do not know, suppose the question was this: Do you support the present government's economic vision, which includes reducing the small business tax rate from 8 percent to 5 percent? It also includes doubling your taxation threshold from \$200,000 to \$400,000. Do you think those four business leaders would have said that, no, that is not good enough, that is horrible? I think they would have agreed.

What if we had asked them this question: Do you support this government's tax reduction strategy

for individual taxpayers, for small businesses and also for corporations? I do not think they would have said that is horrible. I think they would have agreed with us.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, it all depends on sample size, what the question is like, how scientific that survey really was. I do not think playing with statistics in a very partisan way is helpful because I could have trotted other statistics. I could have said, "Okay, Mr. Opposition Leader, you know of three out of four business leaders who say we are doing a bad job. I know 70 percent of a much larger sample that say this leader is doing a good job." Who do you want to listen to? Seventy percent of the people or three out of four selected business leaders? If they were selected, I do not know.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I will tell you one thing. Those people vote, businesses do not. Individual business leaders do. So I think when you start playing with statistics, you have to be a little bit careful and not be too one-sided.

The other issue, Mr. Deputy Speaker, same issue answered on page 56, if somebody wishes to follow. That is what I would consider to be a bit of an anti-union quote, and I will quote it.

It goes like this: "You can imagine some hard-working Manitoban at home and the doorbell rings late at night. They answer the door and there before you are two members, two burly folks, and there they are, and what they are saying is, 'You know, Fred or Joan, if you do not sign this card, you will be the only person in the workforce. How are you going to get along with your friends?' Well, what do they expect? All they are trying to do is they are trying to do a job, so they sign the card, and then the folks walk away from the door and say, 'We got the first one. Now we got the first one. Now we are going to get the rest of them.' "

Mr. Deputy Speaker, this is a caricature of union organization. This is unfair. This is as unfair as if I were to say big business and corporations, Enron included, do all their business in back rooms smoking cigars saying, "How can we shaft the working class?" We have got to get rid of those kinds of caricatures because they are untrue. I mean, they are very close to being anti-union and sort of leading on toward union-busting kind of ideas.

Working-class people have the right to unionize. Why does the Leader of the Opposition (Mr. Murray) not ask, "Why are there unions?" I will tell you why there are unions, why people organized in the late 1800s. For decent living conditions, for decent wages. That is what we organized for, for a safe work environment.

Unions were not formed just for the heck of it. If the bosses were always wonderful, if they gave us decent wages, if they were not preoccupied with the bottom line and profit, but really with working-class people and their conditions, if they were caring human beings, and some of them are, and some of them were. Then, perhaps, unions would not be necessary.

But I will tell you this is a cruel world and a real world. I would rather take my chances when I have a collective agreement with some of my fellow workers than taking my chance on the boss who could act whimsically, arbitrarily. He could be holding grudges. Who knows? We are looking for fairness and this is certainly the 21st century. Do we still have to go around to convince members opposite that unions are decent, that unions are necessary?

I cannot believe that some of the anti-union rhetoric I hear over there, that the union bosses control our fate. I hate to point out to you that we were the ones that cut the funding from unions to political parties. Not every member, obviously, is happy with that, but there is an historical process. We should not be anti-union. Unions have a role to play.

In fact, I happen to be a Catholic. So, if I go back to the Catholic tradition and teachings, from Leo the 13th on in the late 1800s, we have talked about the right of working-class people. There is not a church, there is not a mosque, there is not a temple, I believe, where people do not support unions, except, I guess, in the dark reaches of the Tory party. That is hard to believe, but we are in the 21st century now.

If the Leader of the Opposition is finding fault with a master labour agreement, let us say, for the floodway or any other large project, let me assure him that these tactics have been tried before and they have worked. There was labour peace, and this argument about we are forcing people to unionize, non-unionized labour is not being forced to unionize.

They are being asked to pay union dues. Why? Because the fights that unions have led over the last 200 or so years, I think it is time, when you take the advantages of what working-class organizers have done, you should also pay for a little bit of that expense. There is nothing wrong with that. We are not forcing unions to unionize, as he alleges. So, I mean, we have got to get that straight. I really do not like the anti-union, almost union-busting sort of innuendos that are coming across, as if unions and union organizers are thugs or goons. I assure you that for every thug and goon, and maybe that does exist in the extreme, there is also a thug and goon on the other side on management's or the boss's side, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

This is not a clear cut black and white. We have the right to exist as unions. This is a right that everybody agrees with. Why are we still fighting for those basic rights now? It is absolutely ridiculous that we should have to do this. This is the 21st century. We are talking like Genghis Khan: prehistoric and antediluvian. Why are we talking like this? Even the most right-wing of Republicans have a little bit of respect for unions.

* (15:20)

Now, Mr. Deputy Speaker, on page 60, the Leader of the Opposition (Mr. Murray) talks about an economic strategy he admires and he has a beacon of hope for. You guessed it, it is King Ralph. At the bottom of page 60 in September 23 Hansard, he said, and I quote, "Which province is always looked upon as that beacon of economic strategy, which province always answers the bell when they talk about growth, when they talk about revenue, when they talk about taxes, which province is it? It is Alberta." Ralph Klein as a beacon of light.

It is very interesting that the most Americanized of provinces should become the beacon of light. It is very interesting that the members are talking so little the last year or so about their usual beacon of light which is south of the border. We have members in the opposition that worship everything American. If it comes from south of the border, particularly if it comes from the Republican Party, particularly if it comes from the extreme wing of the Republican Party, that is just wonderful stuff.

Well, I suggest to you now that they do not have that particular beacon any more in the sense that they

worship at the altar, they now go to the second best, which is Mr. Klein. That is about as close as you get to a Republican right winger. Now, they do not want to admit this, but Mr. Klein is always at war with nurses, is always at war with teachers, always at war with social assistance recipients, always at war with unions. Is this the kind of world we want to look forward to? Is this the kind of world we want? I do not think so.

If that is a beacon of light, that is a beacon of light that is greased very well by 7 to 8 billion dollars worth of oil revenue. Take that away from the equation and you would find Manitoba, Saskatchewan and Alberta in very similar straits. We do not have that oil money. We do have hydro. We are developing hydro and we are developing wind power as well.

An Honourable Member: We used to have MTS.

Mr. Jennissen: We used to have MTS too, as the member rightly points out.

I phoned my sister the other day, just to be clear that in the paradise in Alberta the members opposite so cherish, do they still have health premiums? Yes, they do. If you are an adult 18 years or older and I guess you are independent, then you pay \$44 a month health premiums. That turns out to be \$528 per year per person. That is in Mr. Klein's little paradise.

Do not let me get going on Mr. Klein and health care. I will tell you something. Seven years ago, when my mother had a stroke in Edmonton, I took her to the Grey Nuns Hospital and so did my sister in Millwoods. Do you know what they said? "We do not have room for her. Take her back." She got a lot worse. Finally, they put her in the hallway. She was in that hallway day after day after day. That same hospital had two floors full of beds, but they were closed. Every time I went to a doctor or nurse and said, but this is rich Alberta, surely you guys can take care of this woman, my mother. You know what the stock answer was from the nurses—and they were overworked I tell you—or the doctors? Talk to Ralph Klein.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, 7 to 8 billion dollars worth of oil revenues and you cannot deliver health care to people. You have to privatize health care. You have got to play around with American options. This is

disgraceful, but that is what we faced in Alberta. Members opposite do not want to admit it, but let me tell you that huge oil revenues can cover a multitude of sins. If we had their money we would do one heck of a better job than Mr. Klein is doing, so do not hold that up as an example.

We have bountiful resources, and we are using them properly. We are developing them properly. In the North, I see changes. When the Leader of the Opposition (Mr. Murray) says there are no positive changes, let me tell you about some of those changes. When I go up north and I go into Lac Brochet, I see a new air terminal that was not there before. In fact, there were no airports under the Tory government. The Schreyer government put in the airports. When I go to Brochet, I not only see upgraded terminals, I also see a new town hall. When I go to South Indian Lake, I see a road that the Tories promised for years and years as part of the Northern Flood Agreement.

An Honourable Member: Hydro paid for it.

Mr. Jennissen: We were the ones who made sure that road was built. Hydro paid for it; he is absolutely right. But why did you not push Hydro in the limited time of the agreement? We had two years left under that agreement to build that road. Tories did not build it. I asked for it lots of times in my capacity as critic of Transportation. Tories did not build it; we built it. They have new water and sewer systems in South Indian Lake. We built it, Mr. Deputy Speaker. It was not there prior to 1999.

Let me give you an example. When I drive south from my office in Flin Flon, Manitoba, I drive by a smelter that has been updated since 1999, by a new shaft that has been sunk, Triple 7, since 1999. I drive on a road, 10A, which has been really improved. I drive by a mall that was not there in 1999, three huge stores and more stores coming. They were not there in 1999.

I go past my home town, my home village, my home hamlet of Cranberry Portage, past Buffalo Sculpture Gallery. That was not even there two years ago, right along the side of the road. I drive by The Pas, I see a beautifully twinned road, past Otineka Mall. I see a new casino. I see better roads. I drive the Easterville road until I hit No. 6. I see No. 6 has been resurfaced, repaved. That was not there in 1999.

Then I come to the Perimeter Highway where there is a light. That was not there in 1999. The minister of highways, Mr. Ashton, my colleague from Thompson, that was one of the very first things he did, to put a stop light there. It took us years to get that. Then I drive downtown Winnipeg. Are you trying to tell me that the MTS building has not changed the skyline, or that we are going to build a new Hydro tower, that that does not affect the skyline?

Mr. Deputy Speaker, there are all kinds of things happening in this province. So I do not know where they get the notion from that we are doing absolutely nothing. I mean that is beyond the pale of reason.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, we have new Telehealth facilities up north, or coming up north. We have a diabetes strategy. We have food supports for isolated communities because some of those isolated communities are paying ridiculous prices. It has always mystified me that you can buy a quart of whiskey or whatever anywhere in this province at the same price, but when you have to buy milk in Tadoule Lake or in Churchill or in Pukatawagan, it is an astronomical price. Why can we not work at that? We are trying.

We do have new food supports for isolated communities. We have a Northern Development Strategy. We have strengthened transportation links. When the Tories were in power, they just ignored northern transportation, particularly winter roads. They were toll roads, individual roads. People had to pay tolls to travel them. When food came in, it was subject to tolls. We got rid of that. We got rid of that in an attempt to help lower those food prices. Those are real things happening to real people. I am not making this up.

Having said all that, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I am also willing to admit that nobody is perfect, and when they were in power, they did some things right. When we are in power, as we are now, we are doing a lot of things right, but there is always room for improvement. It is not black and white, as some members would like to spin it. We have our challenges, and I appreciate that. For example, the member from Burrows often talks about speaking truth to power. I am glad he does that. He has the conscience, the gumption to say, "Things need to be done, certain things, even in our own government."

I have no illusions that much more work needs to be done, for example, with immigrants, and recognizing the qualifications that immigrants have when they come to this country. That is very important. I am part of that immigrant group, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I know what they go through. It is somewhat mystifying to me that so many well-qualified people cannot be absorbed much more quickly into the work force. We are working on that, but it is important.

We need to do a lot more work with Aboriginal people. The poverty and the lack of housing in northern communities are astronomical, despite our Northern Development Strategy. We are trying to do a lot, but it is an overwhelming problem we need to deal with. We cannot ignore it, poverty and child poverty, in particular. I attended a symposium a couple of weeks ago on that. It is scary. We have to seriously address that problem, and I know we are, but we have to pick up the pace. There is lots of work to do.

Single industry towns in northern Manitoba, whether it is Flin Flon or Snow Lake or whether it is Leaf Rapids or Lynn Lake, these are single industry towns and at some point, they close down. They need all the help they can get, Mr. Deputy Speaker, whenever tough times hit.

Those are some of the challenges that are left, and there are many of them. I am not saying there are not any, but what I would plead for is that our government be viewed, as I think it really is, in treading a balanced path, in the middle path, not the extremism, anti-unionism of the other side. We want to live in harmony with working-class people. We want to listen to them carefully.

We do not want to ignore Aboriginal people in the North and pretend they do not exist, and never want to have to deal with it, or use the other argument that used to be used in the past, "Well, you only have 4 percent of the population, so you should only have 4 percent of the money." That is a ridiculous argument because people that are in need may need more supports. We want to have people live in dignity, and that includes the dignity of labour.

*(15:30)

Mr. Deputy Speaker, this government is on the right track. It is a track that Tommy Douglas would be very proud of.

I am very proud to support this Throne Speech. I hope that members over there reconsider and take a look at the positive things in the Throne Speech. I also hope that they read their own leader's critique of the Throne Speech and see some of the obvious fallacies, which, I think, may be fallacies inherent in their own party's stance. I hope they will do that, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Thank you very much.

Mr. Jack Penner (Emerson): Mr. Deputy Speaker, it is certainly a pleasure to rise in this House again and put a few words on the record about the Throne Speech and maybe some other issues that have occurred since the long time ago that this Legislature was in session.

I find it interesting that this NDP administration, and the Premier (Mr. Doer) specifically, really do not like to come to this place of business, I call it, to discuss what needs to be done for Manitoba and Manitobans. It is also interesting to note that we have seen one of the longest breaks in the history of this Legislature just come to an end a week ago when we came back to session. What I find more interesting is that the government blamed us, the opposition, for not sitting in the Legislature. The members of the Legislature all know that the government calls the House into session and the opposition decides when the session shall end.

There was, by mutual agreement, an end date to the session called in June last year, and it was agreed that the government would call the date when the next session would begin. We found it extremely interesting that you would sit all summer and virtually all fall into the first stretches of the winter months before we would be called back for 12 days to debate the important issues that have confronted Manitobans in this last year.

I find it extremely interesting to note that many of the articles that we have seen in papers are headlined such as this: family farms on endangered list; our ruminant industry in deep distress; our hog industry in dire straits because of tariffs put on; our borders being closed because of so-called BSE by the American government. And on and on it goes: our crop disasters that we have seen this last year, frost in August—and we still talk about global

warming—frost in August that will kill crops, the likes of which had never been experienced even by my father and my grandfather who said they had never experienced frost in August before. Yet we pretend that we are going to abide by the Kyoto Accord and decrease global warming, while we in the farm community just hope that some global warming happens. If it gets any colder, Mr. Deputy Speaker, if it gets any colder at all, there will not be any food produced in this country to save the lives of all the people. There are going to be massive movements if we are not able to produce food.

I would suggest that maybe we should rethink Kyoto, and maybe we should take a good, hard look at who is driving Kyoto and what is driving Kyoto. Maybe then we should ask ourselves why some of the other countries are not prescribing to the theories that are being put out. I say theories because they are theories. There has been no substantive evidence shown anywhere, in my view, that would lead me to believe that our oceans will flood and that there is enough ice in the Arctic to raise the oceans as high as they say that Los Angeles will be under water, New York will be under water and those kinds of things. It would have to be an absolute miracle. Maybe 40 days of rain might do it as it has happened once before, as we know, according to biblical Scripture.

The reason I said it gave me some pleasure to rise in this House today is because I think it is important that what we should be discussing in this House, and, in my view, should convene right after the Christmas holidays are over into the New Year, we should bring this House back into session. We should deal with matters that pertain to every Manitoban in this Legislature, whether you are in northern Manitoba, in central Manitoba, or in southern Manitoba. I think it is important to note that our transportation system, the roads that we travel on, that we ship virtually all our goods on, are falling to pieces around our ears.

I was listening to CJOB the other day, and Richard Cloutier, who had been in Fargo for a meeting of some sort, had driven out of Winnipeg through Emerson, down 75 highway and into North Dakota. You should have heard his comments when he came back. I would suggest that we should pay very close attention to what others are saying about our road system.

I listened to that same radio station, CJOB, two days after I heard the first comment, and I heard of a

trailer that had been pulled by a pickup truck down Pembina Highway and the hitch fell off. The road from Emerson to Winnipeg is so rough that the motor homes or the mobile homes that these people pull with their cars and their trucks cannot stand the jerking pressures and the hitches break off, and the thing turned sideways and blocked traffic on Pembina Highway. Similarly, I followed a semi-trailer here two years ago into Winnipeg one morning, and the whole trailer popped off and headed into the ditch and the truck kept on going. The wheels were bouncing right off the concrete.

Now, what can be done? What we could do is take some of the dollars that have been, I think, wasted and when you look at the total budget. When I look at what we said five years ago when we ran for our fourth election, we said five years ago that there would be a billion-dollars worth of revenue increase to the province of Manitoba. What did the NDP do under Mr. Gary Doer, the Premier of this province? They laughed at us. They made a joke of that.

Well, the record will show that not only did revenues increase by a billion dollars over the last five years, they increased by \$1.3 billion. Are you still laughing? Is the government still laughing? I think so, all the way to the bank, and they spent every last penny of it.

Did they spend any of it where it counts on infrastructure? Did they spend it on highways? Did they spend it on the roadways and bridges that we travel on? Look at the bridge on No. 201 highway that crosses the Red River on 201. One of these days that whole structure is going to fall into the river because every—

An Honourable Member: The bridge to nowhere.

Mr. Penner: The honourable Member for Elmwood (Mr. Maloway) says the bridge to nowhere.

Now, I will quote the honourable member next election campaign that the bridge to southeast Manitoba, the richest ranching country in Manitoba, leads to nowhere.

You know, Mr. Deputy Speaker—

Point of Order

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Point of order, being raised.

Mr. Jim Maloway (Elmwood): I wanted to point out to the member that back in 1987 the members opposite talked a lot about a bridge to nowhere in Selkirk, Manitoba, and they deliberately misled people into believing that, in fact, the government would build a bridge like that. In fact, the bridge was fully functional, a perfect bridge, but these members discredited that initiative to help people in Selkirk. So the member should not be running down the province of Manitoba—

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Is that a point of order?

Mr. Maloway: —and suggesting somehow we are not keeping the infrastructure up.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: That is not a point of order.

* * *

Mr. Penner: Mr. Deputy Speaker, on the same point of order—

Mr. Deputy Speaker: No point of order.

Mr. Penner: No point of order? Sorry about that. I will then make comments on what the Member for Elmwood (Mr. Maloway) just said. The bridge that was built was a perfectly functional bridge. He is absolutely correct. It had no road to it. We needed to build a road and we did.

An Honourable Member: The road is there.

Mr. Penner: Yes. Now the road is there, you bet. Who built it? I think you can thank Gary Filmon and his administration for building the road to it.

* (15:40)

Now, what I am saying to you, Mr. Deputy Speaker is this, that we have bridges that are ready to fall into the river, not crossing the river. People are afraid to cross these bridges. They cannot take their feed, the bales across that river anymore because it is too low for the high trailers to cross. We cannot take our combines across that river bridge because the new combines are so big they cannot cross that bridge anymore. You have to go around by Emerson to get across it, oh, by the way, over the new bridge the Filmon government built into the town of Emerson.

This government refuses to recognize the infrastructure that our very industries depend on is falling out from beneath their feet, and the trucks and trailers into our best export market need to and have to use that road. It is despicable this government has not recognized how much commerce travels down Highway 75 and what condition Highway 75 is in. When you cross the customs at Noyes and at Pembina, you travel on I-29, and it is as smooth as glass, sir. I would suggest to you that we should take lessons from the Americans. *[interjection]* I know the member is saying it is a federally funded highway. I suspect the \$500 million the province of Manitoba will get this year from Ottawa is going to be used, obviously by his comments, for something other than highways. I would suspect the \$500 million could be designated to infrastructure and highways if this current government chose to do so, yet I know there is no will.

I want to talk a little bit about family farms on the endangered list. We have, in the last five years, experienced a decline in net income in the farm community the likes of which we have never experienced before. I have farmed in this province for 38 years and never before have I seen a 45% decline in net income. That is the only take home pay farmers have is the net income. Which union person, which minister in this building, which staffperson anywhere in this government, which staffperson in any industry would stand for the fact their take home cheques at the end of the month would be cut by 45 percent? Who? Would you, sir? I am sure you would not. Which one of you is going to stand tall and say, yes, farmers deserve a 45% decrease in net income?

Do you know why that net income decrease occurred, because of your government policy. *[interjection]* The Member for Assiniboia (Mr. Rondeau) is sitting there laughing. Well, he might think it is a joke that farmers received a 45% decrease in income, and he is our Industry Minister. What an absolute disgrace. Let me say why. Let me tell you why the farmers received that 45% net decrease in income. *[interjection]* Now he is calling it b.s. I know the minister would like to name it that, but it is a bit different than that. I think the honourable Minister of Industry (Mr. Rondeau) needs to recognize that, when you made a decision not to pay the transition money to farmers in 2003, you did not pay the transition money which would have amounted roughly to about \$40 million, you decreased the net income of farmers by \$40 million.

Why do you think there was a 45% decline? The other provinces picked up on that, and calculated and said, "If we do not do this because of the huge decline in revenues that year, if we do not do this, our farmers will be in a negative loss position for a long time." This government did not understand that. I do not know why the Minister of Finance (Mr. Selinger) did not step in and say, "Hey, we see this coming and we better support this in order to keep our average incomes up." Now, the headlines show Manitoba farmers had the biggest decline in net revenue anywhere in Canada. It had everything to do with government policy and government decision. If the decision is to stabilize income by government policy, such as the Agricultural Policy Framework or the CAIS program, then make the commitments and stand by them.

There is another thing that the honourable Minister of Finance is probably aware of but will not talk about, and that is that his government has made the decision that they will not fully fund the negative margins. Again, a huge mistake. Other provinces are. Why is Manitoba not? Why are Manitoba farmers going to be relegated to the lowest income levels in all of Canada? Why is that? It is by government policy, government decision. If you are going to provide income assistance to programming, then do it. If you are not, then tell the people that you are not going to do it, but tell them up front, before they get involved in putting large amounts of money in their bank accounts just to meet the requirement under the CAIS program, and borrow large amounts of money to put that money into a bank account.

I want to give this House an indication as to what really happened under the Manitoba BSE funding announcement that they made. This government advertised to all of Manitobans, and it was not quite correct what they advertised, that they had put in place \$180 million for the BSE-affected ruminant industry. Our cattle producers were really pleased to hear the announcement of \$180 million by the Province of Manitoba, but what, in fact, truly did happen? What, in fact, really did happen was that the funding was extended through a \$60-million loan to farmers. In other words, they drove farmers \$60 million deeper in debt and through programs that were announced that should have been, amounted to the \$180 million, but were never delivered.

I will give you the reasons why. They announced a \$15-million program for Manitoba feeder assist-

ance. They terminated it after they had paid out \$6.2 million. They advertised 15 and paid out 6.2. The Manitoba Slaughter Deficiency Program, which was a \$10-million program, they ended it when 8.9 had been paid out. The Manitoba Drought Assistance Program, we only paid out \$3.9 million out of Drought Assistance, which was a \$12-million program; 3.9 was paid out. The Manitoba Cull Cow Program which is a \$10-million program, paid out \$4.6. The Manitoba BSE Recovery loans program which I talked about before, that is just a loans program, just slightly over \$63 million. The Feeder Financing initiative, again, although I stand corrected on that one, but I believe it was \$15 million extended to where \$1.2 million was paid out. The Stocker Loan Program, \$2.5 million paid, and they advertised it as a large amount of money that was going to be made available.

You can make it available as much as you want, but if you do not qualify, if the qualifiers are such that you cannot access it, and I know that this government knew that the farmers could not access it, then it is no good to the farmer, but it sure made for wonderful reading in the city of Winnipeg, did it not? Because nobody in the city of Winnipeg, or few people in the city of Winnipeg, knew what the real situation was. So was it deceitful? Yes, it was. It was deceptive, and I think it is absolutely unfortunate that governments will try government by deceptive methods and modes of programming.

* (15:50)

That is unfortunate, and I think the current Minister of Agriculture (Ms. Wowchuk) truly needs to apologize to the farmers of Manitoba for the way that these programs were announced and used. I truly feel sorry for many of the people living in rural Manitoba these days and the economic hardships they are facing. Can you imagine what kind of hardship you would be facing, Mr. Deputy Speaker, if you had to live on 50 percent of what you earned today, your net income? Can you imagine what your household would look like? Can you imagine what most of your family's household would look like if you had to do that?

Well, that is what farmers have to do this year. That is what they had to do last year, and you did nothing to help them. You did absolutely nothing. Oh, you did a big ad campaign; that you did. Yes, we have to give you that. It was a big ad campaign, but

the Minister of Industry and trade of this province, if he were a knowledgeable person about what needs to happen in this province, he would become proactive in encouraging industrial development in this province instead of what this government has been up to.

I want to just make one mention of one aspect which I understand is going to happen under the new rule of legislative procedures. I understand that we have now done away with Bill 40. That has been scrapped; it will not be dealt with. There were 80 people, 83 people I believe, that were on the list who were going to come and speak to this bill, present. These were interested people in how we govern, how we make legislation, and how we make laws. Yet this government saw that, and I think they ran out of fear. They said, "We do not want these 83 people in their hallways." They thought these might be raving presenters, for the lack of a better word.

I would suggest to the minister of industry and trade that what you are contemplating now under a proposed amendment to the water act, you will run headlong into trouble with that one. When you are proposing to change the designation of "farm building" from "agriculture" to "commercial," most of you sitting in this Chamber do not know what you are doing. You have no idea of the impact of that decision. I do not think that this has been discussed in Cabinet properly.

I do not believe they have because if you would have, you would know that agriculture has a portioning, that industry has a portioning, commercial has a commercial portioning and so does residential and so do eight other designations, including golf courses. That portioning says that agriculture is today portioned at 25 percent of the assessed value and commercial is portioned, I believe, at 63 percent. You know what that does to agricultural buildings? It relegates farmers to pay one-and-a-half times more the tax that they pay today on their buildings, 150% increase in taxation on their buildings by one word change.

An Honourable Member: Who raised the portioning tax?

Mr. Penner: The interesting part is, the honourable minister of industry and trade said this: "Who raised the portioning?" I think it was raised from 25 to 27, 2 percentage points, and these guys are trying to increase it 150 percent by one wording change.

An Honourable Member: What?

Mr. Penner: Well, look under what is commercial portioned at?

Now if you are going to relegate agricultural buildings to commercial, the portioning will go way up. It is automatic. You will. *[interjection]* Well, you have to because the commercial portioning is 60-some-odd percent. Are you going to pass the bill or are you not? Are you going to pass the amendment? Deathly quiet in this building when you ask that question that way. *[interjection]*

I think the honourable minister of industry and trade says I do not know what I am talking about. I think I do know what I am talking about. The interesting thing is when you look at the Throne Speech and the news release on the Throne Speech, it says the Throne Speech focusses on managing growth and meeting challenges. Well, we can see here how they are managing growth by the legislation that they are proposing to put forward, the regulations they are proposing to put forward. Our industry sector, our industrial sector, our agricultural sector can be tremendous engines for growth in this province if we only allow them to be, if we allow the element of fear to be set aside. But this government has used fear tactics in virtually all their releases.

I want to speak to the first item of new initiatives unveiled in the Throne Speech. It talks about a 33% cut in farmland education property taxes. It does not say a word about the fact that education taxes in rural Manitoba have risen 162 percent over the last four years. A 162% increase in education taxes and they are going to reduce that by 33 percent?

Now, you know how deceptive the wording and the regulations and the news releases can be in the province of Manitoba. *[interjection]*

You say, "Wrong." This is your own news release. If it is wrong, then tell me why you put it out? If it is wrong, then why do statistics show that your education property taxes went up 162 percent? Why is that? Those are your statistics; those are not ours. Why do you put them out? *[interjection]*

It was not the nineties. The last four years they went up.

What I find interesting is the trust that this government has put in its agriculture community

when it announced that it would hire 28 new police officers to police agriculture in industrial development in rural Manitoba; 28 new policemen to police agriculture.

When I look at what is happening in this city and the rest of the province with crime, with our meth-amphetamines, crack cocaine and organized crime, I wonder who should be policed. Our agricultural community has had a 45% decrease in incomes, and we hired 28 new policemen to police them.

We have the DFO, Department of Fisheries and Oceans, that has hoarded the policemen out in rural Manitoba, making sure that we will not make ditches that will affect the fishes that swim up the stream. You hired another 28 to oversee those policemen, I think, to make sure that those 28 policemen will ensure that farmers will not be able to operate the way they used to operate.

There used to be a time when on my farm—that was years ago when my dad started farming—that manure was the most valuable asset that he had on the farm. I know the Minister of Industry and trade does not understand, but manure was seen as an organic fertility product. We were able to use it to grow what we called organically grown crops. Today, they think it is poison, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

I think that this government has done a disservice to rural Manitoba. I think it has done a disservice to its industries. I think it is doing a disservice right now by many of the approaches it is taking.

But, above all, I think its approach to dealing with water and clean water issues is an approach that really needs to be examined. How do you get people to co-operate with you? By coercing them into co-operating with you. Not working against you or you working against them. Not by putting in place hard legislation and regulations that will force. Not by hiring 28 new policemen.

*(16:00)

What you do is bring them in and co-operate with them and build programs and initiatives that will help them do what should be done, and that is to protect the water. If you would have really looked over the last two decades, the farm community has spent billions and billions of dollars buying different

equipment, buying zero-till equipment, buying equipment that will leave the straw on the land to protect the soil and to protect the water. They have spent billions of dollars on equipment and processes. Yet what does this government do? It chastises them and wants to police them at every turn, again.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I wish I had more time to put more words on the record, because this government simply does not know what it is doing.

Ms. Bonnie Korzeniowski (St. James): Mr. Deputy Speaker, it is indeed a pleasure to rise today to respond to the Speech from the Throne at the opening of the Thirty-Eighth Legislature of the Province of Manitoba, read by the Honourable John Harvard, Lieutenant-Governor of the Province of Manitoba.

I would like to take this opportunity to congratulate the Honourable John Harvard on his appointment and new role as Lieutenant-Governor. I had the pleasure and privilege of working with him this past five years as the M.P. for my constituency of St. James. We enjoyed a very reciprocal and collaborative working relationship on many issues, and I look forward to continue to enjoy his company and support in his new role. As his predecessor, Peter Liba, did, I am sure he will serve this province with distinction and dignity. *Bon chance* to him, his lovely wife and family.

I would also like to thank the Speaker for your very patient and fair manner in handling the works of the Chamber. In times of crisis in our province, real and apparent, that requires great discipline and forbearance.

My thanks, as well, to the Clerk and table officers, as well as the Sergeant-at-Arms, without whose direction and support many of us would flounder. The Hansard staff needs to be recognized for their critical job of ensuring all words spoken in the Chamber are kept accurate.

To our new people, the pages, whose energy and enthusiasm contribute to their value as assisting in keeping our House running smoothly. We hope your experience enriches your lives as much as you do ours. To our interns, whom we rely so heavily on to produce whatever we need, on often an instant's notice, we hope you realize how much we appreciate you in case we fail to let you know regularly.

Finally, to the new MLAs representing Minto and Turtle Mountain, congratulations and welcome to our world of every day is an adventure. Enjoy the moment; I still do.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I will keep my remarks brief, as we need to ensure that as many members who want to speak have that opportunity. I want to add my words of support and praise our government so well deserves. Our Premier is the most popular in Canada, and for good reason. I am proud of what he and my colleagues have done to enrich and expand the opportunities for all Manitobans to improve their quality of life. I emphasize "all," as I know that we are the most inclusive government in developing our economic and social strategies.

The Speech from the Throne addresses the diversity of needs of Manitobans. It has been exciting to watch our government push forward steadily and sure-footedly in fulfilling our commitments made each election.

I feel privileged to have been elected in the year our party became government, as I have enjoyed being at the ground level of the building of a province that believes education is essential to a good economy, and focusses on a full strategy that commits to lifelong learning in enabling all citizens to reach their potential through making opportunities as available and accessible as possible. In education, this means access through affordability had to be addressed.

It was in 1999 when tuition was reduced and has been frozen ever since. This has resulted in 13 000 more students enrolled in post-secondary institutions and net gain and youth retention numbers; 170% rise in bursaries and scholarships in Manitoba helps keep and attract students here.

With education being the key element in our inclusion strategy, the Aboriginal Education Action Plan targeted early childhood programs, school retention initiatives, and links to the workplace throughout Manitoba and Aboriginal communities. Campus Manitoba, directed out of Brandon, and University College of the North allows Manitobans access to education closer to home.

I was recently at a university fair at Silver Heights Collegiate and was so impressed by the opportunity provided for students to make informed decisions on their choices after graduating. There

was a multitude of booths set up offering opportunities from institutions and organizations across the country. This fair moved to several high schools to provide access to this information to as many youth as possible. Providing options in the link to the workforce is invaluable in encouraging further learning.

Apprenticeship training and specialized training is a goal of our government, to support the growth of key knowledge-based centres such as aerospace and biotechnology and meet the demand for skilled tradespeople. With a significant part of the aerospace industry in my constituency, I can appreciate this initiative.

Speaking of aerospace, I also have the International Airport in my constituency. I realize that in the response to the last Throne Speech, I wrote about the impact of 9/11 and the delaying of any plans for the future development of the airport. It is heart-warming to note that they recently unveiled very exciting and ambitious plans, including a new terminal. This is a positive indicator of the rebound of the economy and the resiliency of our Winnipeg Airport Authority. As well, following 9/11, our Boeing plant was selected to work on the new 7E7-passenger jetliner, and Standard Aero's \$300-million engine servicing deal with SkyWest Airlines certainly indicates a renewed growth.

Our government is committed to retaining and enhancing culture in Manitoba, both for economic reasons and quality of life, and will continue to invest in the stability of arts organizations and education.

I have a personal appreciation for the preservation of historical buildings and was pleased to attend the launching of Heritage Winnipeg's new Web site, a virtual library and interactive guide. The keynote speaker, an architect from Toronto, was very impressed, as he has never seen anything like this, even in Toronto. Manitoba is indeed progressive and visionary. I would also like to thank our government for local support in my efforts to save and restore a heritage building in St. James. The Women's Memorial Tribute building is a memorial to not only the World War 1 veterans, but to the women who worked to have it built. Saving this glorious building is a tribute to our government.

While I am on veterans, I would like to take this opportunity to clarify for the record a misunderstanding in regard to the veterans' licence plates

recently announced. I realize that the member from Morris is still a rookie, so I will concede that she believes that the bill put forth by the Member for Lakeside (Mr. Eichler) was passed. I would point out that the member barely introduced it, but it was not passed, and I certainly hope he has cleared up this misunderstanding. I spoke to it, thanking him for his intent and support for our veterans, but that it had been nominated more than a year before by the MLA for Assiniboia and myself, and was in process of a regulatory change to allow MPI to work on a design with the Legion and others. In addition to there being no need for a bill, I would point out that it was unacceptable in its presented form, as it was exclusive in that it did not include our servicemen and women currently engaged in theatres of conflict who have faced and still are facing life-threatening situations, and in fact many have died. As much as we appreciate the sentiments offered, I would not be offering congratulations to a member for the passing of a bill when it did not. This is false credit and misleading. Instead, congratulations should go to our Minister of Transportation (Mr. Lemieux) and MPI for the timely release before Remembrance Day.

On the topic of servicemen, I would like to mention our ongoing support of our military forces. 17 Wing is in my constituency, and I would be remiss in not pointing out our efforts to welcome and include them as valued members of our community. Most come to Manitoba not of their own accord, but nonetheless contributing enormously not only to our economy, but to the community in terms of quality of life. Family members bring work skills for business and professional job vacancies. There are also volunteers as well in community-centre and school activities such as coaching. They deserve and get our full attention in making their stay in Manitoba as fulfilling and comfortable as possible. Our government has done this through legislation addressing driving, voting, and taxation injustices, as well as supporting projects like the recent peacekeeping cairn erected on Memorial Boulevard.

* (16:10)

I would like to touch on our government's commitment to work with local governments, community groups, and our federal partners to meet the growing needs for housing. St. James has the highest population of seniors in Winnipeg, so the housing problem affects them, perhaps, more than others.

It is with great pride that I speak of a recent housing initiative announcement made at the St. James-Assiniboia bay sites where the St. James Kiwanis are building an affordable, 51-unit apartment complex to which our government contributed, in partnership with the City and federal government, funding 24 of the units for lower-income seniors. Across the province, we are quickly moving on meeting this commitment. Twenty-one hundred housing units have also been built or refurbished in Winnipeg, Thompson and Brandon.

As our children are our future, our seniors provide an immeasurable contribution to our society with their past experience and time in the present to share. Our government is ensuring their value is recognized by the restoration of the seniors' property tax credit, expansion to home care services to keep them at home longer and the construction of new personal care homes when the need arises.

The Seniors Directorate has been restructured and is expanding services. Community resource councils are being formed to assist living services in rural Manitoba. In keeping with inclusion, our province has targeted immigration with the goal of 10 000 per year. We have welcomed over 7500 already. I have seen the face of St. James changing, with greater diversity. I was delighted to see the response of this community to our refugees from Sudan seeking housing. Many came to their aid to make them feel welcome.

Mr. Speaker in the Chair

As in many other communities, a diversity fair was also recently held in St. James. This WRHA neighbourhood resource network initiative was highly successful in meeting the needs of our newcomers and identifying those resources available to help, as well as sharing information among service providers.

I want to touch briefly on Healthy Living as an exciting new portfolio and its Healthy Kids with the Healthy Futures Task Force. This task force seeks to improve fitness and healthy eating among youth. This and the Healthy Baby initiative may be the most significant things we do as a government for our future generations. I know of one program here in St. James, funded by Healthy Living, that provided courses on parenting in the evening. To the surprise of all, the result was that the majority of attendees

were men. This is an indication of affirming the need for expansion of this program. There is endless potential for assisting and preventing problems for families in this program.

Finally, before I conclude, I must praise our government on our Green Strategy and our energy sector. I link them together because I heard people in construction industry just recently commenting on how they have never seen such swift and dramatic change in this province in regard to the use of environmental and sustainable products and systems in building design and construction.

The recent announcement of wind farm at St. Leon is but one in a continuing trend toward the preservation of our environment. The protection of our parks, legislation to make it easier to create and maintain walking and hiking trails, improved standards to protect our treasured network of lakes and rivers are all contributing to a legacy our government will leave to generations to come. It is our duty to proceed in this direction. We shall not shrink from that duty. Even this morning the *Free Press* features evidence of our Premier's commitment to further pursue a sound and ecological resolve to the serious Devils Lake issue.

I am proud of our commitments as outlined in the Throne Speech and wholeheartedly support it and encourage this Chamber to do so as well. Thank you.

Mr. Gerald Hawranik (Lac du Bonnet): I take pleasure in debating the Speech from the Throne on behalf of all residents of the constituency of Lac du Bonnet.

Before I start, I have to indicate that I, too, offer my sincere congratulations to John Harvard, who, of course, delivered his first Throne Speech on the 22nd of this month. I offer my very sincere congratulations on behalf of all residents of the constituency on his appointment as Lieutenant-Governor.

As well, I would like to mention that I offer my congratulations to the member from Turtle Mountain and the member from Minto who were elected to the Legislature. I welcome them to the Legislature. I know it is going to be a steep learning curve for both of them, but after a period of time they will learn the process and I feel will be very good contributors to the Legislature of this province.

I have to say at the outset, Mr. Speaker, that I intend to vote against the Throne Speech. That may come as a surprise to some members here, but I want to say a few things about why I will vote against the Throne Speech. What the Premier (Mr. Doer), the Finance Minister, and all the members opposite have done in the Throne Speech is they have tinkered with this province. They have tinkered with the economy. There is no real change. There is no real economic plan. There is no direction. There is no vision for this province in the Throne Speech.

To give you an example, Mr. Speaker, the elimination of education taxes on residences and farmland is what we stand for. We have done it. We had it in our platform in the last election. We continue to support that initiative. Instead, what this government has done is just to tinker with that particular initiative, and that is to reduce the education taxes simply from farmland by 33 percent. That is not very much. It is not very much in the sense that since 1999 the education taxes on farmland have increased in rural Manitoba on an average of 162 percent, 162% increase, and all they are doing is taking off 33 percent of what they have already increased since 1999.

I believe that we have to eliminate all school taxes on residences and farmland in the province, and we have to make substantial progress toward that. We cannot just continue to tinker with it, Mr. Speaker. On top of all this, we know that the government has had hundreds of millions of dollars of new revenue this year alone, and those hundreds of millions of dollars could have easily eliminated the school taxes from residences and farmland. Instead, they chose to tinker only with that initiative.

I am concerned, as well, with the fact that there is no commitment, no real commitment on transportation infrastructure within the province in this Throne Speech. We have had record rainfalls across this province, as you know, Mr. Speaker, and because of those record rainfalls I have had many, many calls, as I know that my colleagues have as well, both on this side of the House and on that side of the house. They have had numerous calls about the conditions of our roads. The amount of rainfall that we have received in the province this last year has certainly contributed to that.

I have to say at the outset, Mr. Speaker, that I have been in constant touch with our maintenance

engineer for the northeastern Manitoba area, Trevor Curtis, from the Steinbach area. He is a maintenance engineer, and whenever I did speak to him, he offered a lot of encouragement in the sense that he did follow through on all of my inquiries and all of my concerns. I owe him a debt of gratitude for that.

Provincial Road 304, though, I have to mention, Mr. Speaker, because, in fact, I presented two petitions to the Legislature last week, and, as well, I made a member's statement to this Legislature with respect to 304. I want to again draw attention to Provincial Road 304 because I believe that it is the priority road within the constituency to be reconstructed on a priority basis. Through that member's statement, through those petitions, I drew attention to that particular road to the Minister of Transportation (Mr. Lemieux). Provincial Road 304 is the main connector road between Provincial Trunk Highway 11 and 59 for residents in Pine Falls, Powerview, St. George, Great Falls, Manigotagan and Bissett. Those people travel in a southwesterly direction from Powerview to Selkirk and to Winnipeg. Provincial Road 304 from Provincial Trunk Highway 11 in that southwesterly direction is travelled by about 1000 vehicles every day, which includes residents, tourists and those travelling north to service the First Nations communities along the winter road.

Travelling on Provincial Road 304 to Selkirk and Winnipeg, as opposed to using the other route, which is Provincial Trunk Highway 11, shortens the travel time by at least 30 minutes, so it makes sense in terms of traffic volumes to improve Provincial Road 304.

* (16:20)

The other complicating factor, Mr. Speaker, is that if you travel down No. 11 through the Sagkeeng First Nation reserve, you are, in fact, travelling right through the community. You are directing more than 1000 vehicles daily through that community. The community is situated directly on Provincial Trunk Highway 11. Many children are playing on that road and the increased traffic volumes on No. 11, if you were, in fact, to redirect traffic from Highway 304 onto Provincial Trunk Highway 11, it would result in almost 1000 vehicles more in traffic daily through Sagkeeng First Nation. That is not what we want to do, because of the safety issues for the children and the people who live along that road.

The 14 kilometres of Provincial Road 304 to the south of No. 11 is in very poor condition, Mr. Speaker. It has no shoulders, it winds among granite outcroppings, it goes through swamps, it creates very dangerous and very treacherous conditions for the travelling public. As I pointed in the petitions and in the member's statement, at least six people have died on that road needlessly over the last eight years on that 14-kilometre stretch of that Provincial Road 304, south of Powerview. During that time, there have been countless accidents due to the deterioration of the road and the terrible condition of the road. These accidents have caused millions of dollars of property damage to vehicles and personal injuries, and as a result of that, there has been a great deal of lost time from work and personal pain and anguish. I ask that the Minister of Transportation make every effort to travel on Provincial Road 304 and I undertake, in fact, to give him a tour if he likes, just to point out that 304 does need reconstruction.

I believe that Provincial Road 304 is the first road that should be reconstructed in Lac du Bonnet constituency because of those safety concerns, Mr. Speaker, safety concerns of constituents and tourists who travel that road, and I can advise the minister, and I have advised the minister that if he does not build that road I can tell you that when we are in government, we will.

Another reason why I do not really want to support the Throne Speech is there is no real commitment on drainage infrastructure, Mr. Speaker. We see that, year after year after year, there is about \$2 million allocated every year for drainage maintenance and the drainage maintenance budget is the budget that actually moves the earth. It hires the bulldozers, it hires the equipment, and it moves earth to enhance drainage. What we see is no commitment for drainage infrastructure and that is a big concern to me because in the Lac du Bonnet constituency, a great deal of the water that drains from the east, south, and the west travels through the constituency, and because of the hydro dam construction and the dikes that are built near the hydro dams, that drainage needs to be enhanced. The drainage patterns were changed in the 1930s and 1940s because of the construction of those hydro dams and because of the dike system. Those drainages need to be maintained and they are not currently being maintained. I have a concern about the lack of attention drawn to drainage infrastructure within the Throne Speech.

Mr. Speaker, we are and we will continue to be a have-not province if this government does not get its act together. We will be soon the only province in western Canada that will be a have-not province. I note that Alberta never has been a have-not province, and as well, Alberta has never had a NDP government. I note that. It is very easy, and it will be debt free next year, and that speaks volumes, I think, about the state of our economy here in Manitoba.

I know, Mr. Speaker, that in the Throne Speech it indicates, it is a government statement, the statement says that Manitoba is booming. The Premier (Mr. Doer) says that times are good and he wants to know how to manage all this growth. Well, according to Statistics Canada, that is not exactly the fact. According to Stats Canada, the number of new jobs in Manitoba grew only by 0.3 percent last year, and the national average in job growth was 2.2 percent.

What kind of growth is he talking about managing, a 0.3% increase from one year to the next in terms of job growth? The year before that, Manitoba's job growth was only 1.6 percent, again, below the national average of 2.2 percent. Manitoba's job growth was well below the average for Canada every year since this government was elected in 1999.

Mr. Speaker, I note the Premier was also boasting a while ago about how much more Manitobans are earning today. In 1999, Manitoba ranked seventh out of ten provinces in average weekly earnings. Since that time, since 1999, we have fallen to eighth place. Where is the increase in earnings that the Premier has been talking about? Despite all the hype about how Manitoba's economy is doing well, Manitoba's economic growth has come in below the national average every year except once since 1999.

Manitoba's population has been touted as booming. If you consider annual population increases of 0.4 percent a year booming, then so be it. I guess we are booming at 0.4 percent increase per year. Manitoba's population was 1.14 million in 1999. Last year, it was 1.16 million, a total of 20 000 people in population growth in four years. Is that something to be proud of? No, it is not. There is much more work that has to be done with respect to our economy, and it is no secret.

The BSE crisis certainly was mishandled by this government. We have waited since May 20, 2003, for a killing plant in this province, and there has been really no progress. All we heard from the other side, from the members opposite, was let us wait for the border to open. That is all we have heard over the last year and a half. We do not have a slaughter plant. We do not have the slaughter capacity. They admit we do not have the slaughter capacity, but what have they been doing about it, Mr. Speaker? For over a year and a half, we still do not have increased slaughter capacity in this province. A year and a half. How long is it going to take? Farmers cannot wait any longer.

With respect to our area, Mr. Speaker, we do not have a great deal of cattle in the Lac du Bonnet constituency. What we do have is grain and oilseed farmers, people who are in the grain and oilseed business. I can tell you this summer has been horrendous to those farmers within the constituency. We have had an incredible amount of rainfall at the wrong time, and many of them are struggling. They are struggling as those who are struggling in the BSE crisis. They are struggling to get their crop off and after they get their crop off, they are finding either the yields are very poor or the prices are poor for the grains and oilseeds. The corn and the sunflowers, in fact, are a write-off. They are, of course, suffering. I am on their side on this one. I am very concerned about that. I would urge the government to do more for those kinds of situations so they can survive for another year.

I would like to speak a little bit, Mr. Speaker, about the Justice Department. I note that in a 60-minute speech, the priority of the government is very low in terms of justice. In a 60-minute speech it took 60 seconds to deliver his statement on justice. That really speaks volumes about the priorities of this government with respect to justice. We are suffering in Winnipeg with 31 homicides, the highest record of homicides in Manitoba's history, second only to 1987 when Howard Pawley was in government and the year is not complete yet. Thirty-one homicides, and who knows where it is going to climb to?

* (16:30)

That number is almost as high as three cities, Calgary, Ottawa and Québec, cities with the combined population of 2.5 million people, four times the population of Winnipeg and almost the

same number of homicides as the city of Winnipeg. We are again becoming the murder capital of Canada, and a great deal of it is due to the fact this government has a very poor plan with respect to gangs and criminal organizations.

I can tell you, Mr. Speaker, I know they are very sensitive about it. I have heard it before in this Legislature, but make no question about it, the Hells Angels came to Winnipeg in the year 2000. I know they dispute that and they are very sensitive about it, but the year 2000 is when the Hells Angels came to Manitoba, and they came to Winnipeg. It is a well-documented fact. In fact, I know they disagree with that, but I can tell members opposite that I was at, about a month ago in Winnipeg, at a conference, Winnipeg Police Association conference for big cities. One of the officers in the gang control unit, in fact, announced to all the members that were there, and to all the representatives from the big cities police association members, that the Hells Angels came to Winnipeg in the year 2000, right in front of the Justice Minister (Mr. Mackintosh). The Justice Minister heard it; he was sitting right next to me.

An Honourable Member: What did he say?

Mr. Hawranik: He said absolutely nothing. All I heard was silence from the Justice Minister, yet in this House when we talk about it, he immediately jumps to his feet and disputes that fact. My question to the Minister of Justice is this: If he, in fact, was correct in his assertion that they did come earlier than 2000, why did he not correct the police association? Why did he not do that? Why? Because he knows himself that the Hells Angels came to Winnipeg in the year 2000, but he will never admit that in public, and he will never admit that to the city of Winnipeg police as well.

So, with respect to that, I can tell you, Mr. Speaker, that the Justice Minister is not giving us all the facts, and that, in fact, he is trying to spin it his way time and time again, but it is not working. We see, time and time again, the *Winnipeg Free Press* and the *Winnipeg Sun*, in fact, agree with the fact that the Hells Angels did come to Winnipeg under the watch of this Justice Minister.

I make note of the fact, Mr. Speaker, that the minister has spent \$2 million to defend the members of the Hells Angels during the recent Hells Angels trial. Just last week he made an announcement, he

spent a million dollars to fight organized crime through the organized crime task force, \$2 million for the Hells Angels and \$1 million against. So that again shows me the priority of this Minister of Justice.

The constituency of Lac du Bonnet really is a reflection of the province itself. Many of the issues that affect the entire province also affect our constituency. I note that, in particular, I would like to draw the government's attention to the situation in Pinawa. They were devastated by the loss of many of the jobs that were there before with Atomic Energy of Canada Limited. I have to commend the mayor and council of the LGD of Pinawa for their efforts to attract economic development to the community. They work tirelessly to do that and they ought to be commended. In fact, I know the mayor, Len Simpson. He may get paid part time as a mayor, but in fact, he is spending full time in his commitment to his community to make sure that Pinawa does survive and it does do well. Some of those efforts, in fact, I would say most of those efforts are paying off.

We are seeing new housing starts in Pinawa over the last couple of years, and we have seen a change in that community in terms of the optimism that is out there. I would like to draw the attention of that community to the government because certainly they can do more to help the community itself as well. Deep River Science Academy will be coming, Mr. Speaker, this Thursday to the Legislature and to the legislative dining room to speak about their summer science program that they have. I, along with a few other constituents, have sponsored that lunch, and I invite all of the members of the Legislature to attend and to hear more about the Deep River Science Academy and the good things that they are doing within the community.

The Pine Falls-Powerview amalgamation is a concern that I have within the constituency. It is a good thing. I have been 100 percent behind the amalgamation. I think it will make a substantial difference to those communities. I recognize the work that the merger group in the Pine Falls council has done to promote and to facilitate the amalgamation and to ensure that it works. I commend them for all the work that they have done. I hope to work with them in the future, as well, with respect to the amalgamation.

Again, in summary, Mr. Speaker, I know that there are others that are waiting to debate the Speech

from the Throne, and they would like to keep my remarks short.

Therefore, in conclusion, as I mentioned earlier, I will not be voting for the Throne Speech. I will be voting against it. There are specific reasons why anybody would vote against it. I just wanted to outline a number of issues that were of concern to me, and the fact that it lacked the attention that it should have in terms of tax relief, particularly with respect to school taxes on residences and farmland. Thank you.

Hon. Steve Ashton (Minister of Water Stewardship): It is a great pleasure to speak again on the Throne Speech. Having had the occasion to speak in the past on a number of throne speeches, I want to say that I am actually really surprised this time by the comments coming from members opposite. I recognize at times that, when a government puts forward its vision and its plan for Manitobans through a Throne Speech, there is going to be an opportunity for some disagreement on that vision and plan, but I have actually had the opportunity, not only to speak, but to decide to vote on a number of throne speeches in opposition. I can tell you that you do not always have to vote no. In fact, on a number of occasions when we were in opposition—

An Honourable Member: Twice.

Mr. Ashton: Well, twice I am reminded by the member opposite, the Member for Carman (Mr. Rocan). We actually sat there and said, "You know, as much as we would like to criticize what was not done, there is enough in the Throne Speech this time around, enough in terms of budgets even, that we would support specific measures."

Mr. Speaker, if ever there was a Throne Speech that deserves support, I think from all members of this Legislature, this is it. Now, I think I understand why members opposite are stuck in the situation of saying that they have to oppose this Throne Speech because what I suspect are probably the criteria that most Manitobans would use to judge whether you supported a Throne Speech or not are probably not their real criteria. I want to get into that in a few moments, but I want to start with what this Throne Speech does. It outlines, I think, the continuing plan that we have as a government to represent all Manitobans. I want to put that on the record because I would say most Manitobans, the 57 MLAs

representing in this Chamber the 1.1 million Manitobans, would consider that to be the No. 1 requirement.

Is there something in this Throne Speech that reflects the reality of, say, urban Manitoba, that represents rural Manitoba, that represents northern Manitoba? Mr. Speaker, it is clear, right from the beginning of this Throne Speech, that this government has listened. It has listened in terms of the major struggles that many of the people in rural Manitoba are facing, listened in terms of the BSE crisis. I want to put this on the record. We are now moving in a way that never happened in the nineties in terms of school taxes on farmers. It has taken an NDP government to start to take the farm tax load off Manitobans, the farm tax load in terms of school taxes, not a Tory government, but an NDP government.

I look in the Throne Speech and I see all sorts of references to northern Manitoba, and not the least of which is in terms of health care. We are faced, Mr. Speaker, with an explosion of diabetes. Again, it is an NDP government that front and centre has put in the Throne Speech the need to have a focus on diabetes, particularly for our First Nations citizens, our Aboriginal citizens across Manitoba but particularly in terms of northern Manitoba. I see recognition very clearly of the urban reality, the many challenges that are in place in terms of our urban areas.

* (16:40)

I want to put on the record how proud I am as a northern MLA that it has taken this government to turn around the implosion of much of our capital city and many other areas of the city. Mr. Speaker, one question I ask anybody from the City of Winnipeg, and, I tell you, this is a good barometer of how things are going in this city. I used to ask them this 10 years ago when in opposition: What is your house worth? The No. 1 investment that most Manitobans have is in terms of their home.

No one wanted to talk about it 10 years ago, but we are seeing, across the city, and, particularly, I am proud of this, in some of the areas that had imploded in terms of Tory policies in the nineties, we are seeing now 10% and 20% increases in the value of people's homes. That is a statement of confidence in the economic future of this city.

You know what else I see in this Throne Speech? I see a government that does not just talk the line, but actually is investing in terms of our infrastructure of highways, an area that I know something about. I have got to admit, Mr. Speaker, we started to rebuild our highways when I was minister. I know that the Member for Brandon West (Mr. Smith) continued that, but I have got to say that I am jealous of the current minister. He has got another increase in his budget. He has got another increase in his budget schedule, and when I see those Ron Lemieux highway-construction signs throughout Manitoba, I am reminded again it has taken an NDP government to rebuild roads throughout Manitoba.

Mr. Conrad Santos, Deputy Speaker, in the Chair

I want to talk about affordability. I must submit this may sound strange coming from a New Democrat here, but which government reduced corporate taxes and small-business taxes? Was it the Conservatives under Gary Filmon? No. An NDP government brought in the first reductions in corporate taxes and small-business taxes since the Second World War. Not bad.

Now we also did some things that are pretty traditional from the New-Democratic standpoint and, again, I think this thing needs to be noted.

What happened in the 1990s to tax credits, the property tax credit? At a time when we saw an explosion of property taxes because of underfunding of our schools, the previous government cut those tax credits. When they vote those tax credits by the way, they go to all Manitobans, particularly seniors who are facing the brunt of those kinds of schools taxes in the 1990s. Again, it has taken an NDP government to reinstate, in fact, to go to \$400. Again, an NDP government has provided affordable government.

Now I want to talk about a couple of other areas as well. One thing I am proud of, by the way, after erosion of what in terms of minimum wages in 1990s, is the fact that this NDP government has brought, and I checked with the Minister of Labour (Ms. Allan), four increases in the minimum wage. The minimum wage in Manitoba is now the equivalent, in fact, has a higher purchasing power than in 1988 when the NDP was last in power. That makes a real difference for a lot of people, a lot of young people, a lot of single parents. I am proud of the fact that it has taken an NDP government to get

minimum-wage increases that are actually starting to catch up and exceed the rate of inflation.

I am really proud, because this goes to core what an NDP government is about, the fact that we do not just look in terms of those who have. We look at our society in terms of those who need the kind of supports that we can put in place. I tell you, when I saw us in our last budget, and reinforced again in this Throne Speech, the fact that we took away the clawback of the child credit that was put in place in the 1990s, I say, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I am proud that it has taken an NDP government to understand there are many Manitobans, many poor Manitobans who look to that credit and now receive it because of an NDP government. That is something we are proud of as an NDP government.

I could look at much more in the Throne Speech. As I look ahead, the University College of the North, the dream of northerners for generations. I could look at the clear references to our environmental record, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Our support for the Kyoto Accord. It makes sense that in this province we should understand the potential impacts of climate change. We were one of the few provinces to stand along with the federal government and support the ratification of the Kyoto Accord that is now, because of the final ratification of Russia, going to be an international reality. We are part of the solution in terms of that. Dare I say—as Minister of Water Stewardship, I do not think I can leave this out—I am particularly pleased with reference in the Throne Speech to the fact that protecting our water quality, our vision is not just to protect it, but to improve water quality in this province. But that is a major priority for this government. It has taken an NDP government to do that.

Now, I could run through the rest of the announcements in the Throne Speech. I could go and speak at length in terms of much of what is in there. I get to the point where I really do wonder why members opposite would not support it. You noticed what I referenced, I hope you will keep a check list, Mr. Deputy Speaker: health care, the major improvements we have made in terms of health care throughout the province; education, more funding for post-secondary, more funding for our public school systems; highways, more support, a plan, a five-year plan; the environment, supporting efforts in terms of climate change, the water protection agenda this government has; affordability, reduced taxes to

benefit not only those who are paying those taxes but also in terms of the minimum wages, the stopping of the clawback. Then I realized, now I am talking here in the language that most Manitobans would understand to be a fair Throne Speech, something that represents the entire province, but let us understand one thing here. The opposition, I think, has recently revealed its true colours.

I want to tell you I think for about five years, if you were to sum up their approach on issues, and we are probably going to see it again in Public Accounts tonight, they basically have been criticizing us as a government for not cleaning up the Tory mess fast enough. Mr. Deputy Speaker, I invite you to the Public Accounts Committee tonight. You will hear it tonight. Money spent on Cadillacs. Money spent on Audis. Money spent on appliances for, guess what, 1995, 1996, 1997 and then they get up and after they fired the branch that had accountability, they are howling in the committee saying there was some kind of scandal. Well, the scandal took place when, in 1994, they took out the branch that kept an eye on those kinds of things. That has been their plan for five years. I think there is another agenda that is really starting to emerge here.

Mr. Speaker in the Chair

You may notice a short time ago, everybody else in the country was sort of being asked that question: Who would you vote for in the U.S. election if you had a vote? Well, I did not have much doubt whom I would vote for. I do not think most Manitobans did. This is not being anti-American here. Some of us do not agree with the George Bush agenda, and I can say that is part of our great democratic society.

The Leader of the Opposition said if he could vote, he would be voting for George Bush. Okay, that is great, but keep that in mind that we now know the Leader of the Opposition is a George Bush Conservative. Okay, but you know what I thought was kind of the headline of the year was when the Conservatives had their convention and their fundraisers, the last couple of events, and there was this headline in the *Free Press* and it was entitled "We Are Family."

Remember that song, "We Are Family." I hope members do not get too carried away and start singing it here—[interjection] Joy Smith, you know. Actually, I looked at it, by the way, the federal

Conservative caucus looks like the alumni of the provincial Conservative caucus, but you remember when the Leader of the Opposition and the Tories, they can hedge their bets. They had two right-wing parties. They could kind of pretend they were not sure which one they supported. The Leader of the Opposition never did say which one, but now they are saying, "We are family." What does that mean? That means they are Stephen Harper Conservatives. All right, you could even call them Bush-Harper Conservatives really if you—[interjection]

That may sound like that is unfair to label members opposite in terms of that. We saw in the federal election where, I remember there was the cover issue of *Macleans* where it said, Prime Minister Stephen Harper. Do you remember when they had a transition team? You know I actually said at the time the words that probably scare Canadians the most are called "majority Conservative government." We saw the end result of that election. But I want to suggest it was not just a convenient label, it is not just a coincidence that Stephen Harper was their guest speaker and the Leader of the Opposition supported the George Bush vision of the world.

* (16:50)

I want to take you through what I think is the real Conservative agenda here and see if it does not look remarkably like a Bush-Harper Conservative agenda. I will start with health care. You know, it was interesting in terms of health care. Do you know what the members opposite ran on in the last election? Two things: A 1% increase for health care. I ask the former Minister of Health, I want to get my figures straight to sort of put in some contrast what that would mean. Now, a 1% increase on a \$3-billion base, let us call that 30 million. What did this government invest in health care this year? If you take a 6% increase, that is a 5% difference. Now, you do the math, 5 times 30, that is the gap in funding between what the Conservatives would have invested in health care and what we have invested. That is a huge difference, \$150 million. How many hospitals would they have closed? One hundred and fifty million dollars is almost the entire budget for Pharmacare. How many more nurses would they have laid off? That is a \$150-million gap.

I was going through education, by the way because, I will get back to health in a moment, but education, we have increased the rate of funding to

support public schools at the rate of inflation, not zero, not 2 percent. I remember the Minister of Education saying that their record of funding in the nineties was like a CNN weather report, certainly not for Thompson. We have increased it. I was actually calculating just recently, if you were to take the difference in terms of the capital budget, we probably put in a good \$30 million to \$40 million more than the Conservatives with the rate they did, nearly double. In fact, I may be even lowballing. So that is another difference.

I was running through, by the way, in terms of other issues, I mentioned the Kyoto Accord. Let us talk about water quality. In 1992, the City of Winnipeg waste water treatment facility was supposed to go to the Clean Environment Commission. Did they go? No. It took the NDP government, in 2002, to send it. We now will have, for the first time, waste water treatment that is going to remove nutrients and stop the effluent ending up in the Red River, raw sewage, 25 to 30 times a year. So, again, nothing under the Tories. We have made a huge difference.

University College of the North, of course, they opposed that. There are other issues. I want to talk about this real agenda here. So we know they do not support investment in health and education, highways I mentioned earlier, environment. But I want to run through some of the issues that you see, that Bush-Harper agenda. I remember when we had the vote on adoption legislation in this House. They voted against it. Compassionate leave, that is a no-brainer, right? They voted against it. So when it comes to social issues, you see again what the Conservatives stand for. It is, basically, to take their views and impose them on other Manitobans. Is that not the Bush-Harper agenda?

If you think that I am just putting forward a vision that does not quite fit in with reality, you want a reality check? The Conservatives just had a convention. Now did they debate BSE? Did they debate any of the pressing issues of the day? What was the number one thing that came out of their convention? Private health care. Bush, Harper and the Leader of the Opposition (Mr. Murray), same failed agenda.

I do not know, maybe my blood is a little bit pumping today, but, as I watched last night on CBC when they were having the final showdown in terms

of the greatest Canadian, I sure felt proud to see that Tommy Douglas is right in there. I actually got to hear Tommy Douglas speak, and over the last number of days I have got to vote for him. Boy, have I had a chance to vote for him. You are allowed to vote five times. You know what struck me about it was, I really liked, with George Stroumboulopoulos, when he took out his health card and said, "You want to talk about legacy? It is called your health card. That allows you to walk into any facility anywhere in this country and receive public health care, universally acceptable." That is our vision.

I would suspect that if the Leader of the Opposition were to have his symbol, it would not be your health card. It would be your VISA card because, do not let anybody kid you, that is where the private delivery of health care leads, into the privatization of health care. It leads, surprisingly enough, to what they have south of the border. I tell you, we will never let the Conservatives privatize health care. Manitobans will never let them privatize health care.

I look at it this way. You have a clear choice in this Throne Speech. We are in our second term; we are now on our second Throne Speech. If anybody would say that, maybe, we are just going to coast a little bit here. We were well-supported in the election, just over a year ago. This is not the Throne Speech of a government that is coasting. This is a Throne Speech that has new initiatives, that is rededicated to health care and education, that is rededicated to building rural infrastructure in terms of our highways, northern infrastructure in terms of our highways, that has a clear vision for the environment in terms of climate change and water protection, that is committed to affordability, minimum wage, the concerns of those who are living in poverty, and we have to do more. I think we all have to acknowledge that, but we are making some significant differences: affordability in terms of the tax side, support for our farmers in terms of BSE. You run through the list; this is not a government that is coasting. We are re-energized, Mr. Speaker.

What I want to suggest is, through prospective changes, when I was minister of highways I used to talk about two forks in the road; the last little while I think of two forks in the river. There are two choices ahead for Manitobans. I have outlined the one, a re-energized NDP vision that is committed to all Manitobans. Every region in this province, every

income, every socio-economic background, our caucus represents this province. I do not just mean in a passive sense. I think if you look at the NDP caucus, you see increasingly the kind of diversity that this province represents. But that is the one vision. That is the one fork.

The other one. Well, we have been down that river before. We have been down that set of rapids. We saw it under the Filmon government. We saw it under the Sterling Lyon government. It is a vision that basically starts on division. That really is the shame of the Bush agenda in the U.S., or the Harper agenda in Canada and this Conservative agenda. The first thing you do is you write off whole areas of the province. We know they did that when they were opposed to the establishing of the University College of the North. They attacked money being spent on northern highways. We saw that when they were in government, when they cut funding. Who did they cut funding for the most? Aboriginal organizations. You know what? They have a social agenda that I respect, but you know they have a social agenda that they want to apply on all Manitobans. Again, not in the spirit of tolerance that this province represents, when you come down to it.

I will not say today, whether Tommy Douglas wins a vote on CBC or not, you know what? I was reminded a couple of weeks ago when someone said, I was meeting this Sunday and I was talking about The Water Protection Act, and they said, "You sound like you are preaching." I was reminded of the fact that 60 years ago Tommy Douglas was preaching about medicare and it is a reality today.

Well, maybe, just maybe, we are preaching a future vision. Those forks in the river that say the way you build a province is by including everyone. The way you build a province is by protecting our environment. The way you build a province is not to get into divisive politics, is not to get into the business of social agendas that members opposite wish to. They may wish to be Bush-Harper Conservatives. We are a party that is re-energized. Our vision is, to my mind, a timeless vision, and it is, and if I can just finish on what Tommy Douglas always used to say, by the way, he said in his many years of public life, and I share this feeling. He was more of an idealist as time went on.

* (17:00)

He used to tell people when he first got elected, and remember he got elected in a bankrupt province, Saskatchewan, and you know why? Because he understood how much you can accomplish in public office. That vision, the Tommy Douglas vision, lives today in this government, and we will see in generations to come—

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Speaker: Order. The hour being 5 p.m., pursuant to Rule 45(3), I am interrupting the proceedings in order to put the question on the motion of the honourable Member for River Heights (Mr. Gerrard), that is, the subamendment to the motion for an address in reply to the Speech from the Throne.

Do members wish to have the subamendment read?

Some Honourable Members: Yes.

Mr. Speaker: Yes, okay. It has been a request,

THAT the amendment moved by the honourable Member for Kirkfield Park (Mr. Murray) be amended by adding thereto the following words:

That this House further regrets:

- (1) the government's failure to provide Manitobans with accessible health care leading to concern among patients and health care providers;
- (2) the government is not accountable or transparent to, the people of Manitoba;
- (3) the government has no plan to address child poverty in Manitoba, the second highest in Canada;
- (4) the government has failed to adequately address education taxes on residential property and farmland;
- (5) the government has failed to implement an effective strategy to address the growing problem of crime;
- (6) the government has no economic plan to move Manitoba out of the ranks of the have-not provinces;

(7) the government has failed to take action to clean up lakes like Kissinging Lake; and

(8) the government has failed to take action with respect to the long waiting times for testing for sleep disorders.

Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the subamendment?

Some Honourable Members: Agreed.

Some Honourable Members: No.

Voice Vote

Mr. Speaker: All those in favour of the subamendment, say yea.

Some Honourable Members: Yea.

Mr. Speaker: All those opposed to the subamendment, say nay.

Some Honourable Members: Nay.

Mr. Speaker: In my opinion, the Nays have it.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Inkster): Mr. Speaker, I wonder if we could request Yeas and Nays.

Mr. Speaker: Does the honourable member have support? You need four members to have a recorded vote, so members that support a recorded vote, please stand.

I do not see the support, so we will not have a recorded vote.

* * *

Mr. Speaker: We will move to debate on the amendment as proposed by the honourable Leader of the Official Opposition (Mr. Murray).

House Business

Mr. Speaker: The honourable Government House Leader, on House business.

Hon. Gord Mackintosh (Government House Leader): Mr. Speaker, I would just like to advise the House that in order to accommodate a scheduling

conflict with the Speaker, the meeting on the Standing Committee on Rules of the House scheduled for Wednesday, December 1, is rescheduled to Tuesday, December 7, at 6:30 p.m.

Mr. Speaker: I would like to advise the House that in order to accommodate a scheduling conflict for the Speaker the meeting of the Standing Committee on the Rules of the House scheduled for Wednesday, December 1, 2004, is rescheduled until Tuesday, December 7, 2004, at 6:30 p.m.

Point of Order

Mr. Speaker: The honourable Member for Burrows, on a point of order?

Mr. Doug Martindale (Burrows): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker, in Hansard as recorded on page 168 of November 26, 2004, I said inadvertently "When the Member for River Heights (Mr. Gerrard) was the Minister of Family Services." I meant to say the Member for River East (Mrs. Mitchelson), and I would not want to burden one member with the mistakes of another, so I wanted to correct the record.

Mr. Speaker: That is not a point of order, but the information is there for Hansard to do corrections.

* * *

Mr. Speaker: Now I am calling debate on the amendment.

Mr. Kelvin Goertzen (Steinbach): Mr. Speaker, I am certainly pleased to see such a full house to hear my Throne Speech here today, and I know the members opposite will want to stay in their seats and hear my comments on the Throne Speech as we go forward. Clearly, they will be listening and taking notes and trying to glean good advice from the comments and the suggestions I have received from the residents of the Steinbach constituency made up, of course, of the residents of the Hanover municipality, the town of Niverville and the city of Steinbach.

It only seems like half a year ago we were here, half a year ago that the House was sitting. In fact, I guess, Mr. Speaker, it was half a year ago. I think that, in and of itself, is disappointing. The members opposite wanted to talk about the things that were

contained within the Throne Speech, but they did not want to talk about the fact that for six dark months, for six months, this Chamber remained dark because there was no business of this House taking place because the government refused to call the House back. I know there were members on this side of the House in the Conservative Party that were asking for the Legislature to resume to debate a number of important issues like the BSE crisis and a variety of other things that were happening that were important to Manitobans. I think that Manitobans would have been well served to have that debate here in the Legislature.

I also know that the Member for Inkster (Mr. Lamoureux) had called for the House to be resumed over the course of the last number of months. *[interjection]* I know it is pointed out that the member of Inkster has slept overnight here outside the doors. That might have been an extreme way to make a point, Mr. Speaker, but a point was made. It is a point that the majority of Manitobans would look at and say, "Why was it, why was it that the NDP government refused to come and have these issues debated?"

It might be instructive for new members of the government caucus to know that it was the Premier's own words, when he was in opposition, who called for more sitting days of this Legislature. He wanted this government, or the government in whichever stripe it would be in power, wanted them to be more accountable. Instead of more accountability, he decided that, when he was Premier, we would sit less than had ever happened before in the province of Manitoba. Certainly, I think that is one of the reasons perhaps that members of the public become cynical, cynical about politics and about politicians, because of an example that the Premier has done, by saying one thing when he was in opposition, and doing something completely and diametrically different, when he was in government.

Mr. Speaker, a lot has been said about the Throne Speech and who will be voting for and who will be voting against. I think it is important to point out that this was a Throne Speech that had a very short-sighted vision. The discussion about vision as it happened, I know the Minister of Water Stewardship (Mr. Ashton) wanted to talk about vision, but he was not talking about a long-term vision. He was not talking beyond his nose in terms of a vision. It was a very, very short-sighted vision that the NDP government has become known for. I think that Manitobans

expect better, Mr. Speaker. I know Manitobans that live within my own constituency expect better.

I think it is an appropriate time to note that we have joining us in the Legislature today two pages who are from the constituency of Steinbach. I want to specifically note Julene Buys, who is a new page from the town of Niverville. I think that Niverville should be very proud of her. Her family has been strong contributors to the community and to the growth that has happened over the last number of years in Niverville. I think that Julene, by being here and showing an interest in politics and showing an interest in the legislative process, is sending a signal that she, too, is going to be a strong contributor, not just to Niverville, but indeed to all Manitobans. *[interjection]*

The Member for Inkster (Mr. Lamoureux) says that I should be careful and should be looking over my shoulders. That perhaps she too will want to represent the great constituency that contains Niverville. I say that is great. It is great to have young people who are interested in politics and looking to advance themselves.

I also note that Amos Wiebe who is not here today, but Amos Wiebe is a page in the Legislature for this particular session. He comes from the community of Grunthal. Grunthal, as well, is a developing community, a growing community, with great Manitobans who contribute to our economy, who contribute to the development of our province. I think all of Grunthal should be proud of Amos Wiebe that he is taking an interest in the legislative process, taking an interest in the development of his province and of his community. I wish Amos well, not just during this legislative session, but I wish him well in his future career as he goes about deciding what he is going to do.

It has been a few years since the Grunthal community was represented in terms of having somebody in the Legislature. Of course, members opposite will remember that Albert Driedger, the former member from Steinbach, was a resident of Grunthal. It has been said around the House that he was a good man, and indeed he was, and he is. I would like to report that Albert is doing well with his wife, Mary. It is great to see that we have a representative from the community of Grunthal here, again, in the Legislature. I want to commend Amos and wish him well, here and in the future.

* (17:10)

I wanted to set the record straight because it is important, I think, as legislators, we have factual information on the record, and that in the future, when Manitobans are reading Hansard, they are clear on how things really developed and important initiatives happened.

I heard one of the members opposite talking about the recognition for veterans on licence plates, Mr. Speaker. Certainly, there have been a few members of the government who tried to take credit for this initiative, who tried to say that somewhere within the bowels of government, over the last five years, the ministers of the day, whether it was the current Minister of Transportation (Mr. Lemieux), or the former Minister of Transportation, were working up this great elaborate scheme to recognize the veterans. Is it not ironic that it took the Member for Lakeside (Mr. Eichler) to bring forward a private member's bill to give due recognition to the veterans of our province by assuring that they are able to get these special plates?

Now we do not hear that from the government, because they want to think that any good idea that has ever come up has come from their side. The Minister of Water Stewardship (Mr. Ashton) was talking about division and these sorts of things, but is not that divisive, that when a good idea comes forward like the idea from the Member for Lakeside, and I get him full credit for bringing that private member's bill in the House, they decide they want to take credit for it? They do not give credit where credit is due.

Mr. Speaker, the record has been set straight. I know that members opposite will want to get up and apologize, just like the Member for Burrows (Mr. Martindale) did, to set the record straight. He will want to ensure that his colleagues do that honourable thing and stand up and say, "Yes, it was the Member for Lakeside who brought forward that initiative, and credit where credit is due." *[interjection]*

The Member for Pembina (Mr. Dyck) brings up also a good point, and while we are on this theme, I will just continue on about giving credit where credit is due. The Minister of Labour and Immigration (Ms. Allan) has been standing up in this House day after day and wants to talk about the Provincial Nominee Program. Again, credit where credit is due. I know I

was working in the Department of Culture myself when the Provincial Nominee Program came forward under the then Minister Gilleshammer. I know that his predecessor, Mrs. Mitchelson, I believe, was working on that initiative as well. What a great legacy they have left for the province of Manitoba.

So I am glad that the current Minister of Immigration has taken up the charge and continued that on, Mr. Speaker. I have no problem in saying that. I wonder why it is, though, that the Minister of Immigration of the day does not want to give credit where credit is due. Certainly, the communities in my area, in Steinbach, Niverville and Hanover, and the Member for Pembina and the Member for Emerson (Mr. Penner) have all benefited from the program that the former Conservative government put in place, the Provincial Nominee Program. Credit where credit is due.

I want to talk about a couple of things that were brought forward in the Throne Speech, and, particularly, I want to talk about policing. The Minister of Justice (Mr. Mackintosh), with some amount of fanfare, wanted to talk about 20 police officers for Winnipeg attached to gambling. As long as people stay addicted to gambling, those 20 officers might come to fruition, and 20 officers for rural Manitoba.

Is it not interesting, Mr. Speaker, because Steinbach is a good example? We lost our highway detachment. Not even two months ago, it got shut down and under the promise that, hopefully, some time in the future, it will open again. But right now we do not have highway traffic services coming out of the community of Steinbach. I know that the same happened in Selkirk. I wonder where the Member for Selkirk (Mr. Dewar) has been on this issue. He has not discussed it in the media. He has been very quiet about the issue and has not brought it forward that these RCMP traffic services, the division has been shut down. You would think that he would stand up for his community. You would think that he would stand up and say loudly and proudly that we need to have these services in place, not just let the detachment close down.

I heard from the Member for Lakeside today that their highway detachment closed down, not last month and not last year, but four years ago. The building is still there, but there are no police in it. The people drive by, they probably see it. Maybe it is still marked as a police building—*[interjection]* The

Member for Lakeside says that the building is still marked as a police building, but there are no police in it.

Mr. Speaker, it is like an empty shell. It is like this government is an empty shell. They bring forward policies, but there is nothing contained within it.

Here we are, the Minister of Justice makes his grand announcement, and we are two weeks out from it, and my detachment is closed. I understand Selkirk is still closed.

An Honourable Member: Vote for it.

Mr. Goertzen: They say, "Vote for it." The Minister of Water Stewardship (Mr. Ashton) says, "Vote for it," because we are talking about 40 new officers, but we have not seen one of the officers. You can drive down the Trans-Canada, and, I venture to say you will not see a police officer. I have not seen one for two months out in the area.

What kind of work should they be doing? I mean, not just speed control, although that is an important issue. I am not going to deny that, but they should be looking at border patrol. They should be watching the Ontario border to see what is coming across the border. We talk about drugs today in the House, in Question Period, and we are asking the very legitimate question about patrolling now. Who is doing that important function now that they have closed down the detachment in Steinbach, now that they have closed down the detachment in Selkirk, Mr. Speaker?

I wonder why the Minister of Water Stewardship would think we would support a Throne Speech that is holus-bolus and trust us. Oh, yeah, we plan to have these officers in there, but we have seen nothing. We have seen nothing in terms of getting this forward. It is very instructive, because I understand, a few weeks ago, when the detachment in Steinbach was closed, when the detachment in Selkirk was closed, it was asked in the federal House of Commons, in Parliament, it was asked of the Deputy Prime Minister, Anne McLellan and the Minister of Security whether or not the Minister of Justice had asked for more RCMP officers. The Minister of Justice puts out news releases virtually every day about things he is lobbying for in Ottawa and hoping to get this and hoping to get that. You think he asked

the Deputy Prime Minister Anne McLellan? Do you think they asked the Minister of Security for more officers?

Well, it is interesting. I see the Minister of Advanced Education (Ms. McGifford) nodding her head, yes, yes, yes. Well, I think she needs to take up her argument with the Deputy Prime Minister because the response she gave in the House of Commons was that many jurisdictions, many provinces, many communities have asked for more RCMP officers, but not Manitoba. The Deputy Prime Minister turned then to her staff who were there and she asked the question, "Do we have a request from Manitoba?" And the staff said, "No, no request from Manitoba."

The Minister of Advanced Education can nod her head there and sanctimoniously say we have asked the question, but not an e-mail, not a letter, not a phone call has gone to the Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Security. Well, now she is quiet. We do not hear much any more. Maybe she wants to stand up and correct the record. If she has evidence, I would say, Mr. Speaker, if she has evidence to show that, in fact, that request has gone to the Deputy Prime Minister, the Minister of Security, I would invite her to stand up on a point of order. I will just sit down. Let her stand up and table that evidence because I would like to see it.

Let the record show that I waited, and we waited in silence because there was no response from the Minister of Advanced Education. She got a little flushed, and I know it is not that hot in here, so maybe she is properly ashamed that she would try to make an accusation or make some kind of reference that did not actually happen. But is it not the way this government always is? Make an announcement and nothing happens. Make another announcement and nothing happens. Say something and hope that maybe nobody would check it out. Say this happened and hope nobody is going to say anything.

I think that is what the Member for Wellington (Mr. Santos) was talking about when he said there was an illusionary sense of what was going on. Perhaps he was talking about his own government, about the illusionary announcements that happened here, but there is no follow-up. About the illusionary police officers. About the illusionary police officers that apparently reside in Lakeside. Well, you are going to walk into an empty building and there is not

a police officer there. Oh, but let us leave the building up because it might give some appearance that something is actually happening.

One of the things that were discussed over the last number of months was the increase in the hydro rates. I thought maybe the Member for Rossmere (Mr. Schellenberg) would raise this issue when he was moving the motion on the Throne Speech because I know he has a lot of seniors in his area, a lot of seniors who are on fixed income, Mr. Speaker. Did he raise the issue of the 10% increase in hydro rates and what effect it must be having on those seniors, on those people living on a fixed income? Not a word. He did not say a word because that would be pointing out something that would be important for these members on a fixed income. Would not want to talk about that, but I raised it. I raised it within my own community, and what did I get? I got a response back from the former minister, now Minister of Health (Mr. Sale), the former Minister responsible for Manitoba Hydro. He wrote to my local paper and he said, "I want to clear the record." He said, "I want to make sure you know why there was an increase in hydro, why there was this 10% increase on—" *[interjection]*

* (17:20)

The Member for Pembina wants to know what the reasons were. They are fascinating reasons, because first he said, "Well, it had to do with the drought. God did not give us enough water, so that is the reason." But, if you do not believe that, he said, "I have another reason: transfer payments have gone down." Oh, blame the federal government. So, if you do not want to blame God, blame Ottawa, blame the federal government. They are responsible for the increase in the rates. That is why we had to drain the money out of Manitoba Hydro. But he was not finished. In the same letter he says, "Oh, but if you do not want to blame God, and you do not want to blame Ottawa, I have another reason why we had to take the money out of Manitoba Hydro."

An Honourable Member: What could that be?

Mr. Goertzen: The terrorist attacks of 9/11—al-Qaeda, blame al-Qaeda. So there we have in one letter, the former and the current Minister of Health (Mr. Sale) said the reasons for the increase of Hydro, the reason we took the money out of Hydro is you can blame God, you can blame Ottawa or you can blame the terrorists. Pick your choice, Mr. Speaker,

but do not blame the government. Do not blame the government. It is absolutely ludicrous.

Well, I hope that is something. I know today the Premier is on his way to Ottawa, or in Ottawa, because he is going to get, I think, three seconds with President Bush, or maybe he is going to watch President Bush from the podium give a toast or something along that line. I know that he will put out a press release saying that through osmosis, or through some kind of telepathic powers, he raised the issue of BSE, he raised the issue of Devils Lake. I wonder if he is going to blame the president for the increase of the Hydro rate because of the terrorist attack and 9/11. That is how ludicrous this government will go in terms of bringing and blaming people for things that certainly should not be their fault.

Mr. Speaker, we heard a lot today about education tax. The Minister of Water Stewardship (Mr. Ashton) wanted to make a big hullabaloo about the fact that a drop in the bucket has apparently happened in terms of the reduction of education on farmland. Certainly, I do not think there is a member of the House here who would not say it was a step, a tentative step, a small step, kind of a baby step, kind of put the finger in the pool, but did not want to jump in, a kind of put a step in terms of, well, maybe we should go this way. Maybe the Tories were right in 2003. Maybe we should just see and nudge in that direction to test it out and see if they are going in the right direction.

Well, Mr. Speaker, Manitobans do not want to hear about a baby step and a nudge and a finger in the pool. They want that tax eliminated. They want the tax eliminated from farmland. They want the tax eliminated from residents, and I say to you they do not just want the tax eliminated; they deserve to have that tax eliminated.

You know, I was talking to a senior in my area a couple of days ago, and I am glad the Member for Rossmere (Mr. Schellenberg) is listening, because he will want to hear about the fact that I talk to seniors, and that I actually want to bring back their concerns to the House, and I do not ignore the issue of a hydro increase. I am glad he is listening. He is getting his earphone on, that is important. But, Mr. Speaker, when I talked to the senior, and he said, "Why would you not take the education tax off of my residence?" he said. "I worked my whole life," he said, "and all I have is my residence. That is what I have."

You know, I think that it is important for many of the members opposite to understand that is the reality for many, many Manitobans, that their major asset that they own, the major asset that they own at the twilight of their career, at the twilight of their life, would be their home. There is no relation between the value of their home and their ability to pay the tax that is on the home. Yet somebody comes in, and they say, "Well, you know, you have this home that is worth so and so much, and now we are going to go and tax you on it." But, on the other hand, they might be on a fixed income; it might be all that they have worked for in their lives. So what a regressive tax, what an inequitable way to tax people, to look at the value of their home, something that they have worked for, for their entire lives.

Oh, but you know, the Minister of Water Stewardship says, "Let us not think about that. Let us not talk about that. We are going to talk about Tommy Douglas and we are going to talk about the federal level of government." It was an interesting comment. I wonder if the Member for Thompson (Mr. Ashton) also agrees with his federal leader who wants to legalize marijuana, who wants to say, "Oh, yes, marijuana should be completely legalized."

Well, maybe that makes sense then, maybe I understand now. I want to thank the Minister of Water Stewardship because he brought clarity to me because I could not understand why the Minister of Justice (Mr. Mackintosh) was not taking action on drugs. I could not understand why the Minister of Justice did not want to bring in real measures to ensure that those people who are selling crack cocaine and who were doing those sort of illicit drug activities are not cracked down on. It is because the Member for Thompson agrees with the federal leader that drugs like marijuana should just be legalized. Well, now it all makes sense, so I want to thank the Minister of Water Stewardship for helping me, in terms of getting clarity on that issue. He certainly has been beneficial from that regard.

The Member for Lac du Bonnet (Mr. Hawranik) touched on the fact that in Manitoba we are about to be the last have-not province in western Canada. I am glad that the minister of highways is here because maybe he wants to change the licence plates. Take off "Friendly" and put "Welcome to Manitoba, last have-not province in western Canada." Would that not be something, eh?

We can put it at the border, at the Saskatchewan border and the Ontario border. At the Saskatchewan border you can say, "Welcome to Manitoba, you are now entering the last have-not province," which is Manitoba, and at the Ontario border we can say, "Thank you for visiting the last have-not province in western Canada." Maybe as they leave, that is the last thing that the young people who are leaving the province will see as they are leaving the province. It will be a good reminder for them why they are going, why they are leaving the province. I guess that is the legacy. *[interjection]*

Now I have got the attention of the new Minister of Industry (Mr. Rondeau), and I am glad that I have got his attention. The Premier (Mr. Doer) referred to him as the Energizer bunny, I think, of his caucus, right? The slogan for the Energizer bunny is still going, still going, and that is what is happening to Manitobans. They are still going day after day after day; they are still going.

So I would challenge the Minister of Industry to listen to what people are saying, to listen to the fact that they do not want some kind of tentative finger in the pool to see, shall we reduce this one little tax, should we maybe take a little bit off the farmers? No, that is not what they are looking for, real tax relief. Well, throw them a little pebble, throw them a bone, perhaps. Then we can stand up and wave our fingers at the Tories and say why are you not going to vote for this speech? It is very simple. It is a very short-sighted vision, very shallow and short-sighted. That is not what a Throne Speech is supposed to be. *[interjection]*

I am sorry, I have awoken the Member for Rossmere (Mr. Schellenberg), and I was not trying to do that. I know he was enjoying his sleep there and probably dreaming about all those seniors who are paying the extra 10 percent on hydro in his riding. I think that is unfortunate that he has not brought that issue forward but we will do it for him. We will make sure that when we are campaigning in Rossmere, I was going to say in the years ahead, but maybe in the weeks ahead, we will bring forward that issue and ensure that his residents know that seniors are paying more, 10 percent more, for hydro, and they should not be. There is no reason for it. There is no excuse for it. *[interjection]*

I am glad that I have also got the attention now of the new Minister of Healthy Living (Ms. Oswald).

I kind of felt bad for her here earlier in the day, when she had to rise on her feet to defend her Minister of Justice (Mr. Mackintosh) because, when we asked the question about the increased numbers of people using crack in the province, the Minister of Justice had kind of a befuddled look on his face and he looked around to say who is going to answer this question. It should not be me who gets up and answers this question on Justice. It should not be me who gets up and answers this question why more young people are using crack in the province.

So the poor new Minister of Healthy Living (Ms. Oswald) rose to her feet to protect her Minister of Justice, and I appreciate that. I think that, I guess, that is an important thing for her to do as a new minister, to try to shield the poor record of the Minister of Justice.

I appreciate her honesty by saying that they had reduced funding to the Addictions Foundation of Manitoba. It is interesting that it would take a new member to be honest and to come forward and say, yes, yes, we reduced the funding to the Addictions Foundation of Manitoba. Maybe that is why the Minister of Justice got up to answer the next question, because he was scared that more honesty would come from the new Minister of Healthy Living, but I hope that she will continue to be honest

and I hope that she will continue to have that kind of—

An Honourable Member: One of the few.

Mr. Goertzen: One of the few, the Member for Fort Whyte (Mr. Loewen) says, and I think that we all appreciate that kind of honesty in government as the cuts continue to these important programs, the most vulnerable in our society. The Minister of Water Stewardship (Mr. Ashton) talked about Tommy Douglas. Well, maybe he can point out where Tommy Douglas was making cuts to the most vulnerable in society. Is that what he is trying to emulate? Was that the Tommy Douglas way? I doubt it. I do not know. I am appealing to the Minister of Water Stewardship to bring forward to me evidence. Maybe that is what happened under Tommy Douglas. He was trying to make cuts to the most vulnerable in Canada. Was that his way? Because that is the way of this government, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: Order. When this matter is again before the House, the honourable Member for Steinbach (Mr. Goertzen) will have four minutes remaining.

The hour being 5:30, this House is adjourned, and stands adjourned until 1:30 p.m. tomorrow (Tuesday).

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Monday, November 29, 2004

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