

Fourth Session - Thirty-Eighth Legislature
of the
Legislative Assembly of Manitoba
DEBATES
and
PROCEEDINGS

Official Report
(Hansard)

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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.
JENNISSEN, 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.
MACKINTOSH, Gord, Hon.	St. Johns	N.D.P.
MAGUIRE, Larry	Arthur-Virden	P.C.
MALOWAY, Jim	Elmwood	N.D.P.
MARTINDALE, Doug	Burrows	N.D.P.
McGIFFORD, Diane, Hon.	Lord Roberts	N.D.P.
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.
ROCAN, Denis	Carman	P.C.
RONDEAU, Jim, Hon.	Assiniboia	N.D.P.
ROWAT, Leanne	Minnedosa	P.C.
SALE, Tim, Hon.	Fort Rouge	N.D.P.
SANTOS, Conrad	Wellington	N.D.P.
SCHELLENBERG, Harry	Rossmere	N.D.P.
SCHULER, Ron	Springfield	P.C.
SELINGER, Greg, Hon.	St. Boniface	N.D.P.
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.
Vacant	Fort Whyte	P.C.
WOWCHUK, Rosann, Hon.	Swan River	N.D.P.

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Tuesday, November 8, 2005

The House met at 1:30 p.m.

PRAYERS

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

Bill 9—The Farm Practices Protection
Amendment Act

Hon. Rosann Wowchuk (Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Initiatives): I move, seconded by the Minister of Finance (Mr. Selinger), that Bill 9, The Farm Practices Protection Amendment Act, be now read a first time.

Motion presented.

Ms. Wowchuk: Mr. Speaker, the amendment to this bill will provide protection from liability for the Farm Practices Protection Board, its members and acting members, and any other person acting under the authority of the act. The amendment will replace the current practice of having individual indemnification agreements with each person. The amendments represent standard wording that is being employed in Manitoba legislation.

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

Bill 203—The Health Services Amendment and
Health Services Insurance Amendment Act

Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights): Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the MLA for Inkster, that Bill 203, The Health Services Amendment and Health Services Insurance Amendment Act; Loi modifiant la Loi sur les services de santé et la Loi sur l'assurance-maladie, be now read a first time.

Motion presented.

Mr. Gerrard: The purpose of Bill 203 is to provide for the incorporation of the principle of accountability in the delivery of health care services in Manitoba. This was a principle that was recommended by Roy Romanow in his major report. It is time we implemented it here in Manitoba. This will provide an opportunity to do so.

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

* (13:35)

Bill 200—The Manitoba Public Insurance
Corporation Amendment Act

Mrs. Bonnie Mitchelson (River East): I move, seconded by the Member for Springfield (Mr. Schuler), that Bill 200, The Manitoba Public Insurance Corporation Amendment Act, be now read a first time.

Motion presented.

Mrs. Mitchelson: This bill allows an accident victim who receives an income replacement indemnity to keep any part of a disability benefit that is paid to the victim under the Canada Pension Plan as the result of a division of pensionable earnings. Mr. Speaker, this is the third session I have introduced this piece of legislation. I would like to see it debated in the House, moved to committee and passed. Thank you.

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

Bill 201—The Child and Family Services
Amendment Act (Grandparent Access)

Mrs. Leanne Rowat (Minnedosa): I move, seconded by the Member for Charleswood (Mrs. Driedger), that Bill 201, The Child and Family Services Amendment Act (Grandparent Access), be now read for the first time.

Motion presented.

Mrs. Rowat: This bill provides the court the opportunity and means to recognize the special relationship that exists between grandchildren and grandparents. It requires the court to consider the love, affection and similar ties that exist between the child and a grandparent on a application by a grandparent for access to a child. Mr. Speaker, this is the second time I have introduced this piece of legislation, and I would encourage the opposite side, or the government side, to debate and pass this legislation.

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

Bill 205—The Elections Amendment Act (Number of Voters in Polling Subdivisions)

Mr. Denis Rocan (Carman): Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the honourable Member for Emerson (Mr. Penner), that Bill 205, The Elections Amendment Act (Number of Voters in Polling Subdivisions); Loi modifiant la Loi électorale (nombre d'électeurs des sections de vote), be now read a first time.

Motion presented.

Mr. Rocan: Mr. Speaker, by way of introduction, this bill will decrease the number of voters that are to be included in a polling subdivision area in order to have a better understanding of the election process and to have greater voter participation.

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

PETITIONS

Mr. Ron Schuler (Springfield): Mr. Speaker, I ask leave to have my name withdrawn from the petitions list.

Mr. Speaker: Does the honourable member have leave to withdraw his name from the petition list? *[Agreed]*

* (13:40)

Provincial Road 340

Mrs. Leanne Rowat (Minnedosa): I wish to present the following petition to the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba.

These are the reasons for this petition:

The hard surfacing of the unpaved portion of PR 340, south of Canadian Forces Base Shilo towards Wawanesa, would address the last few neglected kilometres of this road and increase the safety of motorists who travel on it.

Heavy traffic has increased on PR 340 due to the many large farms involved in potato and hog production, agricultural-related businesses, Hutterite colonies and the Maple Leaf plant in Brandon. A fully paved road would support local business and lessen the damages to vehicles.

Annual average traffic volumes on PR 340 are increasing with commuter traffic from Wawanesa,

Stockton, Nesbitt and surrounding farms to Shilo and Brandon.

The arrival of the Princess Patricia's Canadian Light Infantry in 2004 and increased employment at the Maple Leaf plant in Brandon means there has been an influx of new families in the area. Improving the rural highway infrastructure to this location will be an additional reason for these families and others to settle and stay in the area.

Access to the Criddle-Vane Homestead Provincial Park would be greatly enhanced.

PR 340 is an alternate route for many motorists travelling to Brandon coming off of PTH 2 east and to Winnipeg via the Trans Canada Highway No. 1. This upgrade would also ease the traffic congestion of PTH 10.

All Manitobans deserve a safe and well-maintained rural highway infrastructure.

We petition the Manitoba Legislative Assembly as follows:

To request the Minister of Transportation and Government Services (Mr. Lemieux) to consider hard surfacing of the unpaved portion of PR 340, south of Canadian Forces Base Shilo, towards Wawanesa.

Signed by Bev Daymond, Wendy Callahan, Tracy Alden and many, many others.

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

Pembina Trails School Division—New High School

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

These are the reasons for this petition:

Overcrowded schools throughout Whyte Ridge, Lindenwoods, Linden Ridge and Richmond West subdivisions are forcing Pembina Trails School Division to bus students outside of these areas to attend classes in the public school system.

Elementary schools in Pembina Trails School Division have run out of space to accommodate the growing population of students in the aforementioned areas.

Five-year projections for enrolment in the elementary schools in these areas indicate significant continued growth.

Existing high schools that receive students from Whyte Ridge, Lindenwoods and Linden Ridge are at capacity and cannot accommodate the growing number of students that will continue to branch out of these subdivisions.

Bussing to outlying areas is not a viable long-term solution to meeting the student population growth in the southwest portion of Winnipeg.

The development of Waverley West will increase the need for a high school in the southwest sector of Winnipeg.

The government is demonstrating a lack of respect for the students and families of Whyte Ridge, Lindenwoods, Linden Ridge and Richmond West by refusing to provide adequate access to education within the community.

The Fort Whyte constituency is the only constituency in the province that does not have a public high school.

NDP constituencies in Winnipeg continue to receive capital funding for various school projects while critical overcrowding exists in schools in Lindenwoods, Whyte Ridge and Richmond West.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To request the provincial government to recognize the need for a public high school in the southwest region of Winnipeg.

To request the provincial government, in conjunction with the Public Schools Finance Board, to consider adequate funding to establish a high school in the southwest sector of Winnipeg.

Signed by Lisa Kaita, K. Cheung, Scott Moore and many others.

Crocus Investment Fund

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

The background to this petition is as follows:

The Manitoba Government was made aware of serious problems involving the Crocus Fund in 2001.

As a direct result of the government ignoring the red flags back in 2001, over 33 000 Crocus investors lost over \$60 million.

Manitoba's provincial auditor stated, and I quote, "We believe the department was aware of the red

flags at Crocus and failed to follow up on those in a timely way."

The relationship between some union leaders, the Premier (Mr. Doer) and the NDP seems to be the primary reason as for why the government ignored the red flags.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To request the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba to consider the need to seek clarification on why the government did not act on fixing the Crocus Fund back in 2001.

Signed by Bev Leadbeater, Brian Leadbeater, Jess Leadbeater and many, many others.

* (13:45)

MINISTERIAL STATEMENTS

Winnipeg Millennium Library

Hon. Eric Robinson (Minister of Culture, Heritage and Tourism): Yes, Mr. Speaker, I have a statement for the House.

Mr. Speaker, today is a very exciting day for Manitoba as it marks the opening of the Winnipeg Millennium Library, our province's newest and largest public library. The Province of Manitoba is proud to have been a partner with this City, the federal government and many, many private citizens in this exciting venture.

We believe the Millennium Library to be a winning investment on many fronts. It is an exciting destination which will breathe new life into the heart of the city. It is a unique architectural accomplishment promoting environmentally friendly design and building principles. Most importantly, it is a hallmark of both traditional and cutting-edge trends in library service. These are benefits that extend to all branches of the Winnipeg library system, to Manitoba's rural library network and to raise the profile of Manitoba's libraries on a national level.

Our new Millennium Library will offer a variety of enhanced services including computer training facilities, resources for new Manitobans, as well as promotion of our past through a unique local history room. These services have been tailored specifically to Manitobans including the reading-in-the-round concept developed in co-operation with Aboriginal community leaders. The new Millennium Library has inviting accommodations for teens, a unique

restaurant and gift shop concept as well as the Carol Shields Auditorium where we can share and showcase our unique talents and ideas.

The library affords access to a variety of new, on-line formats, and, most importantly, to that cherished format, the printed book, the format that requires no computer, no batteries and fits perfectly in your hands. Once more, this new library offers all of this within an inspiring environment, inviting the beauty of Manitoba indoors, and what could be better.

I wish to congratulate members of all parties for your support of this wonderful new library. The Millennium Library is a special investment that I am sure will reward all of us Manitobans many, many times over. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Jack Reimer (Southdale): I would like to join in with the minister in congratulating the tremendous accomplishment that has been completed downtown, the Millennium Library and the opening of it.

It truly is a unique structure. We have had the opportunity not to tour it yet, but just to see some of the pictures. The time, the effort and the commitment that was put in by the tremendous amount of volunteers and fundraisers is something also I think that we should recognize because it is that spirit here in Winnipeg and Manitoba that brings a lot of good efforts and good venues here to Manitoba.

The library will be a showcase for Winnipeg, but, indeed, it is a library for all of Manitoba and for all of Canada to come and enjoy. The facilities, the books, the entertainment in the sense of the restaurant and the shop for buying things are all something that will add to the ambiance and the credibility of the Millennium Library.

We have to look back on the beginning of the library, and I believe there was an article in the paper just a little while ago about the restoration of the Andrew Carnegie portrait that was found in the bottom of the library and we have brought back to life type of thing. It is apropos that a picture is going to be put back into the library.

A donation from a private entrepreneur that has grown into such a tremendous asset for Winnipeg, \$21 million, I believe, is the final dollar for the library. So we on this side would also like to join with the minister in congratulating the opening of the Millennium Library, and, at the same time, Mr. Speaker, it is Winnipeg's birthday today. What a

wonderful celebration, a new library on the birthday for the City of Winnipeg. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights): I ask for leave to speak to the minister's statement.

Mr. Speaker: Does the honourable member have leave? *[Agreed]*

* (13:50)

Mr. Gerrard: Mr. Speaker, from the Liberal Party perspective we salute the completion of the Millennium Library, and we want to congratulate all those who contributed in one way or another to the building of the library and to the new institution that we are so proud to have here in Winnipeg. I think it is telling that this is a library which will look to the future and use electronic approaches to data, books and so on which are advanced. That is certainly a compliment to those who were involved in the design and the development of the library.

I also want to note with some particular pleasure that there is a display of photography at the Millennium Library depicting scenes from the Orange Revolution in the Ukraine, and that this photography was done by Ruslan Tracz who worked in my office for a period. Thank you.

ORAL QUESTIONS

Brand Manitoba Project Expenditures

Mr. Stuart Murray (Leader of the Official Opposition): Mr. Speaker, welcome to friendly Manitoba. This Premier's Brand Manitoba initiative has cost Manitobans half a million dollars, half a million dollars to find out that we had blue skies, wide open spaces and cold temperatures. This project, the Premier's rebranding project of Manitoba, was to be completed by July of this year. We now find out that this project will not be completed for yet another few months. The Premier stated, and I quote what he said. He said, "I will take responsibility for lateness fees but ultimately the buck stops here."

Well, Mr. Speaker, there are about a half a million bucks that this Premier has to take responsibility for. I would like to ask this Premier: Has he already spent the half million dollars, or how much more is this rebranding exercise going to cost the taxpayers of Manitoba?

Hon. Gary Doer (Premier): Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank the volunteers in the business

community that have participated in and are continuing to lead this discussion on the future of Manitoba and Winnipeg. Some of the people, by the way, that are leading this exercise were some of the very same people that had the vision and persistence to build the new Millennium Library and came to us. They came to us in 1999 and said the former government had said no to the Millennium Library, will you say yes to a positive future. Some of the same people that are leading this discussion are the same volunteers and entrepreneurs that said we had to build a new entertainment complex in downtown Winnipeg to replace the boarded up Eaton's building that we had inherited. They too came to the table with investments for a positive future. The former government had said no to a positive future. We said yes and we proceeded with that.

I think it is important that members of the private sector be given budgetary authority to deal with this issue. It will deal with not only the strengths of Manitoba but some of the challenges, what do business representatives in other parts of the world know about Manitoba, what do we have to inform them of, Mr. Speaker.

Relative to other provinces, I think Nova Scotia recently spent \$1.2 million dollars in-house. We are using the private sector to come develop these ideas, and there is a great deal of support in the business community for proceeding with this project. It is recommended by the business community. It is being implemented by the business community, and I have trust in the business community in this regard.

*(13:55)

Mr. Murray: Mr. Speaker, maybe that is why the Premier has an I Love New York bumper sticker. I am not sure.

The fact of life is this project, the Premier's branding project, is some five months behind schedule. A Freedom of Information that we received today shows that the image task group has not met since May 31, 2005. Yesterday the Premier was silent. Today the Premier is blaming the flooding. The Premier spent half a million taxpayer dollars to create an image task group and to hire a New York ad firm, neither of which should have been affected by the flooding.

I would ask this Premier will he admit today that he spent half a million taxpayer dollars to have a New York ad agency tell us what Manitobans already know.

Mr. Doer: The project is not completed. Obviously, when a project is on time we accept responsibility, and when a project is delayed we accept accountability and responsibility. I would point out that the group of people that made the decision on the agency put forward the proposal, made the decision on the agency and have been working on the process, have included the PEAC economic advisory committee co-chaired with Mr. Silver and Mr. Ziegler, before that, Mr. Moist, when this project was developed. Mr. Modha from Mondetta is one of the individuals that is quoted in the newspaper today talking about the product being released shortly, 60 to 90 days.

I would point out that people like Dave Angus, Harvey Sexter, Barry Rempel, Doug Stevens—

An Honourable Member: Do you know who they are, Gary?

Mr. Doer: Yes, I do know who they are. —and Carole Vivier were involved in selecting this firm. We would say to members opposite stay tuned.

Mr. Murray: Mr. Speaker, I am hoping the fact that this is supposed to be an exercise about on budget, on time, that somehow the Premier is not trying to work in a master labour agreement.

A New York ad agency was hired by this Premier for half a million taxpayer dollars while there exists in Manitoba, we believe on this side, many capable firms that could have done the same job. When you go to the Web site of the firm that this Premier has hired in New York, Interbrand, and you press the word "search," the search results come up no results. Nothing. It appears this New York firm the Premier has hired to rebrand Manitoba has now abandoned Manitoba.

Mr. Speaker, I ask this Premier: Other than blue skies and cold temperatures, what did he buy for half a million taxpayer dollars?

Mr. Doer: Mr. Speaker, I find it passing curious that the members opposite would on the one hand—

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Mr. Doer: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. The members opposite are absolutely apoplectic about the no-strike, no-lockout agreement in the floodway agreement, and then they are very, very upset about a process that took place with the private sector.

The business volunteers who recommended strongly on seven recommendations for Manitoba's future recommended on the whole issue of the image. They also asked us to fund a project to deal with consultations with the total community to have some ideas to come forward. We did not choose for the business community what firm they would in fact employ. The business community, Mr. Modha, Mr. Angus and others chose the firm.

Secondly, Mr. Speaker, we do believe in free trade. We believe that governments in United States should purchase goods from Manitoba. We also believe that businesses in Manitoba have the ability to purchase goods from other provinces and other states. We support free trade. We are not going to put a Berlin Wall around Manitoba like members opposite.

*(14:00)

Brand Manitoba Project Update

Mr. Jack Reimer (Southdale): I think the Premier has to get some new lines. Mr. Speaker, there is only one phase of the five-phase initiative that has been completed.

An Honourable Member: One phase.

Mr. Reimer: One phase. Big blue skies, friendly Manitoba, wide-open spaces, beautiful natural environment, cold temperature. Phase one. Half a million dollars, maybe more. Now the minister is saying they need to consult more focus groups. I ask the Minister of Industry whose viewpoint is he seeking.

Hon. Jim Rondeau (Minister of Industry, Economic Development and Mines): Mr. Speaker, what we are doing is we are working as a government that is supporting a business initiative of the Premier's Economic Advisory Council. What we are trying to do is rebrand Manitoba, not just within Manitoba, but outside Manitoba. If you look, as was quoted in the *Free Press* today, it is important to have a rebrand so people understand, not just Manitobans but all people, understand the wonderful projects within our province. It said in the *Free Press*, and I quote today: We could get five to one, \$5 for every \$1 in tourism if we had additional tourism. We are talking about growing the economy. We are talking about getting new businesses to move into Manitoba, and so what we are trying to do is have an image that sells to everyone.

Mr. Reimer: Mr. Speaker, maybe the minister's idea of rebranding is putting a happy face on the buffalo. The Premier (Mr. Doer) stated, and I quote, "It is there now and will be presented to government shortly." I ask the Minister of Industry again: When will Manitobans see the result of these half million dollars spent on rebranding Manitoba?

Mr. Rondeau: Mr. Speaker, the end results will take some time and we are not going to rush it. What we are going to do is we are going to work with business, we are going to work with industry, we are going to work with the tourism industry, we are going to work with multiple partners to get the right image.

You know, it is passing strange where it says the Canadian Taxpayers Federation, David MacLean said they should leave the marketing to the private sector, which we have, which is exactly what we are doing in this case. Number 2, Rob Warren from the Asper Centre for Entrepreneurship said that if it increases tourism by \$5 million that is not a bad return. What we are doing is we are leaving the businesspeople in this province to work through a process to rebrand the province, to take the time to get it right. What we are doing is we are anticipating a good return for our investment.

Mr. Reimer: The report was to be tabled and, I believe, brought to the government on July 1. Now they are saying that they still need more time, more time, more time. Maybe it even means more money. We learned today through Freedom of Information that, in fact, none of the final four stages have been completed. The FOI dated yesterday states, and I quote, "As the stages have not been completed, there are no final reports for the stages." I ask the Minister of Industry who is correct, the Premier stating that the report is there now, or the department stating there is no final report.

Mr. Rondeau: Mr. Speaker, thank you very much, and I trust the members opposite understand that this is a process working through the business community, working through multiple stakeholders to get the right image. It is people like Dave Angus who is with the Chamber. We have Harvey Seter with the law school, we have Barry Rempel with the Winnipeg Airports Authority, Doug Stevens with the WOW Hospitality, Carole Vivier and many others who are busy. They are the driving force behind this new image. What we want to do is work with them. We are not in the position to say here is a deadline. It is their process. We want to work with them in

partnership and we want to do it right, so we are going to give them the time to talk to the private sector, to talk to different groups and move it forward on a regular basis. Now we have not got the final report, but the process is continuing.

Winnipeg Regional Health Authority Out-of-Province Testing

Mrs. Heather Stefanson (Tuxedo): Mr. Speaker, health care is in crisis in Manitoba. Emergency rooms are closing, patients are being shipped by ambulance and now even tests and biopsies are being sent out of province for analysis. Between July 2004 and September 2005, the WRHA spent more than \$300,000 to send a variety of tests to an American private lab located in Ontario.

Mr. Speaker, I ask the Minister of Health: Why are Manitoba patients' tests being sent to a private lab in Ontario?

Hon. Tim Sale (Minister of Health): Mr. Speaker, it is very interesting. The members opposite are in favour of Maples clinic. It is a private group. We send a great number of our lab tests to private labs in Winnipeg. We also, when it is necessary, use private labs in other provinces. I thought they were the party that was in favour of this sort of thing to speed up tests. We sped up some tests that needed to be sped up by using other resources, and now they apparently are opposed to the private sector.

Mrs. Stefanson: Mr. Speaker, between January 2004 and August 2005, the WRHA spent more than \$360,000 U.S. to send bone marrow and bone biopsy tests to the private Mayo Clinic, more than \$300,000 to a private lab in Ontario, more than \$360,000 U.S. to a private Mayo Clinic and more than \$63,000 to a lab in Edmonton.

I ask again: Why is the Minister of Health sending Manitoba patients' tests out of province? Do we not have the capacity to analyze the tests here, Mr. Speaker?

Mr. Sale: Mr. Speaker, the head of the Mayo Clinic, Dr. Smith, is from Selkirk, Manitoba, and did his initial training here. I am pleased that we have a partnership agreement between Mayo and St. Boniface Hospital and the research centre.

Mr. Speaker, Mayo Clinic is one of the premier diagnostic and research centres in the world, and I am very pleased that Manitobans are served sometimes by having some of their diagnostic tests read by the very competent people at the Mayo

Clinic. The opposition is in favour of private sector work today, public sector work tomorrow. It must be nice to not have to have any intellectual dignity whatsoever—

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Speaker: Order. I would remind all honourable members that the clock is ticking. We have guests in the gallery and we have the viewing public that are trying, I am sure they came down here to hear the questions and the answers. I ask the co-operation of all honourable members.

Mrs. Stefanson: Well, Mr. Speaker, I am glad to hear today that finally this Minister of Health recognizes the added benefit that private clinics add to our health care system. I ask again: Why is the Minister of Health sending Manitoba patients' tests out of province? Do we not have the capacity to analyze the tests here? Is there a problem with a shortage of doctors and technologists to be able to perform the tests here?

Mr. Sale: The budget that we spend on private labs in Manitoba is over \$25 million a year. In addition, DSM Manitoba has a budget of over \$70 million. Mr. Speaker, \$300,000 out of that roughly \$100 million for diagnostic imaging and other tests is not exactly an enormous percentage.

Secondly, Mr. Speaker, the ideologues are over there. We are pragmatic. When we need to contract with the private sector we do. When we need to send patients for treatment we do. I am proud that we have a working relationship for very complex DNA bone marrow testing with the premier institution in North America. The ideologues are over there, not over here.

* (14:10)

Policing Services Funding for Additional Officers

Mr. Kelvin Goertzen (Steinbach): Mr. Speaker, earlier this year after analyzing crime statistics, Manitoba Progressive Conservatives determined that an additional 100 officers were needed in the city of Winnipeg to bring it on par with other cities' per capita crime rates. Yesterday senior officials of the Winnipeg Police Service publicly stated that to truly protect Winnipeg we needed 100 more police officers.

Progressive Conservatives stand shoulder to shoulder with the Winnipeg police and with law enforcement across Manitoba. The Minister of

Justice (Mr. Mackintosh) ignored our call. Is he also ignoring the call of the Winnipeg police?

Hon. Dave Chomiak (Minister of Energy, Science and Technology): Yes, Mr. Speaker, there has been an increase of \$23.81 million that this government has put in to fund 95 more officers in communities across Manitoba. We also made a historical \$9.5-million additional investment to allow police agencies to hire 54 more officers over two years. Every member on this side of the House voted for that initiative. Every member on that side of the House voted against that initiative for additional officers.

Mr. Goertzen: We voted with the Winnipeg Police Service who said they needed 100 more police officers. That is what we voted for. Never was the lack of police officers more apparent than with the tragic death of an innocent bystander who was caught in gang crossfire. The murder suspect was out on a warrant for his arrest, but police said they did not have the resources to go and get him.

Mr. Speaker, the Winnipeg Police Service has joined with Manitoba Progressive Conservatives in saying enough is enough. We stand by our police officers. Why do they stand by the gang members of this province?

Mr. Chomiak: Mr. Speaker, I do not think in any legislature in the country any party would accuse another party of standing with gang members. I find that part of the rhetoric and the overblown rhetoric of members opposite who somehow suggest that their voting against our increase to police officers somehow puts them on a pedestal. They voted against it. They had a chance to have their say in this Legislature, and the record showed they voted against increased police officers.

Mr. Goertzen: The minister has a chance today to stand by the Winnipeg police who say they need 100 new officers. They send virtual police officers to go after criminals. They send a phantom force to go after gang members. We know that people's lives are in danger, and there will be more innocent people who will fall victim because of their lack of action. I say it again. The Winnipeg Police Service have said that the Manitoba Progressive Conservative plan is the right plan. We stand by the police. Why are they standing by gang members, Mr. Speaker?

Mr. Chomiak: Mr. Speaker, I am very pleased that we have a Justice Minister that right now as we speak is meeting with other justice ministers, has

been recognized by the federal Justice Minister as lobbying the federal Justice Minister to make changes and has been recognized at that. I might also point out that on a per thousand basis, in comparison to Winnipeg, Calgary and Edmonton, Winnipeg has more police officers per 100 000. Thirdly, I do not think they would stand up in the Legislature where in Edmonton recently 37 people have been murdered on the street in Edmonton. That is an awful statistic.

Every jurisdiction in this country is fighting the same cause except, I think, members opposite who are trying to make political hay out of something that is very distressing and tragic in our society. We put our money where our mouth is and will continue to do that, Mr. Speaker, rather than words of garbage.

Provincial Debt Interest Costs

Mr. Gerald Hawranik (Lac du Bonnet): Mr. Speaker, the interest costs on the total debt of Manitoba for 2004-2005 was \$767 million. The NDP government takes almost \$3,000 out of the pockets of a family of four in Manitoba each and every year simply to pay the interest on the total debt, our mortgage. In the last five years alone, the annual interest costs on the total debt have increased by almost \$300 million. I ask the Minister of Finance when will he control the exploding interest costs in this province.

Hon. Greg Selinger (Minister of Finance): Mr. Speaker, I only wish the member was as accurate as he is loud. In the year 2000, the total interest cost was \$1,022,000,000. Our interest costs this year are \$767 million. We are paying \$255 million less, more than 25 percent less. The member is just dead wrong on the facts, dead wrong on his allegations and innumerate.

Mr. Hawranik: Mr. Speaker, the total debt of this province is skyrocketing and the member from Elmwood agreed with this statement in this House on November 4, so check with his member.

Mr. Speaker, has the Minister of Finance at all considered the impact of increasing interest rates in Manitoba? A 1 percent increase in the interest rates will cost Manitobans an extra \$200 million a year in interest costs. I ask the Minister of Finance: Will he continue to add interest costs onto the debt that is already skyrocketing out of control?

Mr. Selinger: I know when the member gets the facts he still has to follow his script. He missed the answer to my first question. Interest costs on this

apples-to-apples comparison are \$255 million less. The member should stand up and apologize for the misinformation he has put on the public record.

Highway Infrastructure Renewal Funding Sources

Mr. Cliff Cullen (Turtle Mountain): Mr. Speaker, this government is collecting more than \$100 million in vehicle registration and driver licensing fees. Manitobans believe this money is being used to fix our highways. Judging from his response last week, the Minister of Transportation and Government Services clearly has no idea where this money is being spent. Does the minister have a real answer for Manitobans this week?

Hon. Ron Lemieux (Minister of Transportation and Government Services): Mr. Speaker, we have the second-lowest gas tax in the country and we are very proud of the fact. Also, the gentleman, if the member opposite wants to have an answer with regard to how are we spending gas tax revenues, I can tell the member that we have the northeast Perimeter Highway, maybe he should take a drive out there, take a look at it. Number 1 highway to Saskatchewan, there is Highway 59 to the south, there are many, many projects and, in fact, 25 percent of the transportation budget is spent in northern Manitoba.

Mr. Cullen: Mr. Speaker, I think Manitobans deserve the proper numbers here. This government is collecting \$335 million in fuel taxes and vehicle registration fees. This government is only spending \$187 million on highways. Vehicle registration fees in 1999 were \$48. The annual vehicle registration fee for each and every passenger vehicle now is \$99. We are simply asking will the minister admit that vehicle registration and driver licence fees are simply another tax on the backs of Manitobans.

Mr. Lemieux: Mr. Speaker, we have listened to the members opposite talk about the infrastructure that is being run down. We have heard over the last number of months about hospitals, schools being run down. Not only did that take place in the 1990s, but also our transportation system, our roads, our bridges have been continually run down through the 1990s. Even recently we added another \$10 million into the budget, and who voted against that particular budget? They should look in the mirror. Each and every one of them voted against an increase to the transportation budget.

Mr. Cullen: Mr. Speaker, Manitobans are aware of the crumbling infrastructure in Manitoba. This government is collecting \$150 million more in fuel taxes and vehicle registrations than they are spending on infrastructure. Vehicle registration fees are simply another NDP backdoor tax. Why is this NDP government misleading Manitobans?

Mr. Lemieux: Mr. Speaker, quite frankly, I believe the public of Manitoba are tired listening to their rhetoric and their false accusations. If the member opposite would take a look at the supplementary schedules of public accounts, would take a look that there is \$217 million collected in total revenue and \$299,541,000 spent in transportation, a net \$81 million more than we collect.

* (14:20)

Patient Care and Safety Accountability

Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights): Mr. Speaker, I table recommendations of the critical clinical occurrence review team made in August of 2004. There are 10 recommendations here made after a critical incident in which health care decisions were made that may have contributed to the death of a patient.

On October 13, on CJOB, Dr. Rob Robson, the chief patient safety officer for the WRHA, indicated that it is very tough to implement these recommendations because the incident occurred at Concordia Hospital and they do not fall technically within the WRHA.

My question is: What is the minister going to do about the lack of accountability in the system which means that recommendations for patient safety, some of which are listed as very high priority, have not been implemented?

Hon. Tim Sale (Minister of Health): Mr. Speaker, I made it very clear that I expect any hospital in which there is a critical incident to take very seriously and act on any recommendations that follow from the investigation.

What Dr. Robson was saying was that Winnipeg Regional Health Authority does not have direct supervisory responsibility for Concordia Hospital which has its own board of directors and its own CEO and medical director. That was all he was saying. He was not saying that these recommendations would not be implemented. He was saying he did not have the power himself to do

so. I expect Concordia Hospital to take these recommendations seriously and to act on them, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Gerrard: Mr. Speaker, Dr. Robson indicated most of these recommendations still have not been implemented and it is more than a year after the report. We have here in the gallery Leslie Worthington who has been pushing for more accountability in the health care system.

Now, on that same radio show, Dr. Robson made the extraordinary statement, "We are all somewhat accountable." Either people are accountable or they are not accountable. I ask the minister to tell us what the situation is. Is the minister running a somewhat accountable health care system? How can the system be accountable if high priority recommendations have not been implemented more than a year after the recommendations were made?

Mr. Sale: Mr. Speaker, I expect the recommendations to be implemented. I expect them to be worked on seriously and to be taken seriously. The whole point of the critical incidence legislation, which was passed here last year, was to ensure that staff and all of those involved in a critical incident are protected from being sued for their particular role in making that incident public and making sure that there is work to be done to improve the situation that might have led to that incident in the first place. The House supported that legislation. I support the fact that any critical incident that issues in recommendations should be taken seriously and the recommendations should be implemented.

Children and Crime Reduction/Prevention Strategy

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Inkster): Mr. Speaker, we have a very serious problem in the province of Manitoba. We have a government that has been in power now for six years and has failed in dealing with the issue of our children and our children that are forced into crime situations because of government neglect.

We have children as young as 10, 11 and 12 years old that are getting more and more involved in activities that include crystal meth, child prostitution, break-and-enters, car thefts and you say it, Mr. Speaker, they are getting more and more involved because this government has chosen to stand by and do nothing in dealing with this.

Yesterday I asked the Premier (Mr. Doer) if he would work with all parties of this House and try to

resolve this issue. My question to the Premier today is: Does his government have a strategy that will work, that will deal with the children of our communities and get them out of those crime situations, Mr. Speaker?

Hon. Christine Melnick (Minister of Family Services and Housing): Mr. Speaker, I think that we have to be very, very serious about this issue, and this is why when this government came into power in 1999, one of the first things we did collectively was work on a strategy around child sexual exploitation.

Now this, as I informed the House yesterday, is a multifaceted strategy. It deals with prevention, keeping children out of those dangerous areas, and if they are victims of sexual exploitation, helping them to get out, but then also working on the follow-up and helping them to stay out.

We agree this is a very serious issue which is why we have put a lot of resources and we have worked very closely with our community to build more resources, and we will continue to do so, Mr. Speaker, but this is not a glib issue to be made light of.

Agriculture Organic Farming Initiatives

Mr. Tom Nevakshonoff (Interlake): Mr. Speaker, the Leader of the Opposition talked a lot about branding in his first question to the Premier (Mr. Doer) today. The Member for Southdale (Mr. Reimer) made reference to smiling buffaloes, but what was lacking once again from members opposite was the question related to the topic of agriculture. Therefore, I would like to ask the Minister of Agriculture, organic agricultural production is a growing industry in our province presenting new and exciting opportunities for Manitoba producers in rural communities.

The minister was in Virden on Friday announcing funding that will help this industry expand in our province. Would she please tell the House about that announcement? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Hon. Rosann Wowchuk (Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Initiatives): I certainly want to thank the member for—

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Speaker: Order. I need to hear the questions and the answers. I ask the co-operation of all honourable members.

Ms. Wowchuk: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, and I want to thank the member from the Interlake for raising a very important issue that relates to the agriculture industry. When we took office, we recognized that the members opposite had absolutely no support for the organic industry in this province, and we put in place an organic specialist. On Friday, I announced funding from both the federal and provincial governments, funding of \$225,000 for the organic producers of Manitoba, better known as OPAM, to help expand its infrastructure and to better serve Manitoba organic producers.

Mr. Speaker, organic market trends are growing. This is a growing opportunity for our producers, and we are supporting the industry so that they can expand their existing infrastructure so that they can—

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Lowlands National Park Public Consultations

Mr. David Faurshou (Portage la Prairie): Mr. Speaker, yesterday I asked the Minister of Conservation two questions regarding the Lowlands National Park proposal. The minister was obviously confused or simply refused to answer the question. For the record, the federal government committed \$30 million and opened a dedicated office here in Winnipeg to create this park.

Today I ask the Minister of Conservation once again when will this government hold the public consultations that it committed to, or has it relinquished the \$30 million for this project?

Hon. Stan Struthers (Minister of Conservation): Once again, Mr. Speaker, I will tell the Member for Portage la Prairie that we are not going to sit behind some closed doors somewhere and draw on a provincial highways map a boundary and impose it upon people who live in the area. We signed an MOU with the federal government saying that we would not do that. I do not believe for one minute that the people of Manitoba or the people of Canada want us to impose upon people living locally a national park. I do not believe that. We have been working hard to make sure that the concept of the national park has been thoroughly discussed with the chiefs of the area, their councils, their elders, the mayor and council at Grand Rapids and anyone else who wants to sit and speak with us about this. We are committed to making sure that those views—

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Federal Office Closure

Mr. David Faurshou (Portage la Prairie): Mr. Speaker, not only has this government closed the door, they have also locked it and moved the office to Hull, Québec. Maybe perhaps this government prefers to work with out-of-town offices like they are in the Brandon, Manitoba, proposal as well.

I would like to ask the Minister of Conservation: Why was the Winnipeg office dedicated to the national parks proposal for the Interlake area closed?

* (14:30)

Hon. Stan Struthers (Minister of Conservation): Mr. Speaker, that federal office was moved by the federal government. I do not know if I can make it any clearer than what I just did. I can speak slower if the member would like me to, but I only have a certain amount of time to get a lot of information on the record.

That is a federal decision that was made. I can tell the member that this government will take seriously its signing of the MOU, and this government will take into consideration all of the people who live in the area and their leadership. We will do the right thing when it comes to this park.

Provincial Parks Report Availability

Mr. David Faurshou (Portage la Prairie): Mr. Speaker, does this minister not realize that they broke the agreement that the First Minister (Mr. Doer) signed promising to hold public consultations before March of 2000? Another promise broken was to the people of Manitoba in regard to the tabling of the report about Manitoba's provincial parks.

Will the minister now commit to this House to tabling of the report that cost \$50,000 of taxpayers' money here in the province of Manitoba?

Hon. Stan Struthers (Minister of Conservation): I would not want the Member for Portage to leave unchallenged on the record that the MOU has been broken by anybody, whether it be our government or the federal government.

The federal government and our government, the Minister Stéphane Dion and I have been in close communication about this park. Both levels of government have been in communication with the leadership at the local level. Two weeks ago I met with representatives at Grand Rapids. Over the course of the summer, I met with every single

community involved in this decision that has to live with the decisions we make.

Mr. Speaker, my commitment has been very clear. We are not going to impose a park on people who do not want the park to be imposed on them.

Mr. Speaker: Time for Oral Questions has expired.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

Windstorm Costs

Mr. Jack Penner (Emerson): On July 31 of this year there was a severe windstorm went through the southeast part of Manitoba decimating the village of Sandilands, knocking down 22 000 acres of pine forest land. The Municipality of Piney is estimating that the cost to the municipality will be anywhere in the neighbourhood of \$300,000 to \$1 million to clean up the trees, to restore services to the community, to rebuild the 60 damaged homes that were incurred. Yet, it took 60 days after the storm before even a government minister came to the community of Sandilands and the Municipality of Piney.

To this day we have not yet heard from the Province of Manitoba that they are going to declare that area a disaster area, therefore qualifying that area for clean-up service under the Disaster Assistance plan and the federal government entering into the fold and being paid to the municipality to help them clean up.

We have also asked, in that area, that the minister of highways give a special permit to allow the hundreds of thousands of cords of wood and trees to be moved out of that area before those trees rot next spring. If those trees stay there without being harvested till next spring there will be no wood harvested there and it will rot in the forest. There is a tremendous economic saving to be had by the Province to be allowed to harvest those trees, to haul them to market, make pulp out of them or boards for building purposes. Yet, this minister of highways has refused to issue special permits to allow the trucks to travel on those roadways to get that wood to market in a timely manner.

Mr. Speaker, it is time that this government recognizes it has a responsibility to the people—

Mr. Speaker: Order.

CT Scanner (Brandon)

Mr. Drew Caldwell (Brandon East): Mr. Speaker, it is with great pleasure that I rise today to bring to the attention of the House a number of recent health

care announcements made in western Manitoba. Just last week it was announced that a new 64-slide CT scanner will be installed at the Brandon Regional Health Centre allowing western Manitobans access to this improved diagnostic tool.

As a lifelong resident of western Manitoba, I am keenly aware of how important access to quality health care is to rural Manitobans. Far too often, rural Manitobans have had to make a trip, sometimes a very harrowing trip, to Winnipeg to receive the care they need.

Members on this side of the House, Mr. Speaker, strongly believe that rural Manitobans deserve more than the poor access to health care which was available to them throughout the 1990s. With this in mind, the Doer government has made it a priority to better utilize rural hospitals and to make health care available sooner and closer to home. Whether it is through the development of an acute rehabilitation program at the Riverdale Health Centre in Rivers to help people recover after joint replacement surgery or through the new arthroscopic surgery program in the Minnedosa hospital or through Manitoba's only MRI machine outside of the Winnipeg perimeter at the newly developed state-of-the-art Brandon Regional Health Centre, this government has shown its commitment to provide accessible health care in western Manitoba. These positive changes will free up surgical slates in Brandon and ensure that western Manitobans receive better health care closer to home.

Finally, with the creation of the Medical Transportation Co-ordination Centre in Brandon dedicated to the dispatch of all rural and northern emergency medical services as well as the addition of 160 new ambulances for communities throughout the province, this government is keeping its commitment to rural Manitobans. Improvements, however, still need to be made. Brandon is still experiencing the effects of a North American-wide pediatrician shortage, and Manitoba's health care system is still reeling from the effects of the previous Conservative government's reduction in medical training spaces throughout the 1990s.

I recognize that, while much has been accomplished in health care in western Manitoba, there is still much more to do. In this spirit I would like to take this opportunity to both congratulate the NDP government for the work already undertaken and to encourage all parties to continue to work with the Brandon—

Mr. Speaker: Order. Time has expired. Does the member have leave?

Some Honourable Members: No.

Mr. Speaker: No. Leave has been denied.

Charleswood Broncos

Mrs. Myrna Driedger (Charleswood): Mr. Speaker, early this fall I was pleased to attend the Charleswood Broncos Annual Family Day and participate in a ceremonial kick-off. The Charleswood Broncos Football Club is home to eight contact football teams for children aged 7 to 14 years. Their home field is Eric Coy Arena on Oakdale Road in Charleswood. They lease a small clubhouse from the City and have plans to upgrade.

The Broncos have been an integral part of the community for the last 12 years, offering competitive tackle football to youth aged 7 to 14 years. Their successful program has grown from 82 players to over 200 players this year. It is a great program for youth as well as their families. This year the Broncos have added a new element to their games, a cheerleading squad. Twelve girls from Grades 6 to 9 are led by two members of the Westdale Junior High provincial championship squad.

The Broncos participated in championship playoffs at Canad Inns Stadium on November 5 and 6. They were in the final championship game in three of the four age categories. Special congratulations to the Minor Bantam Broncos team who won the city championship by defeating the Greendale Falcons by a score of 30 to 16.

Coaching staff and program administrators are dedicated volunteers who have been recipients of my Heart of the Community Volunteer Awards. As well, they participate in the Charleswood Community Leaders Networking Luncheons which I sponsor. They have a terrific group of parents who really help out when needed, whether it is coaching, helping in the canteen, cheering on the sidelines or filling in where needed. Their dedication to youth and to our community as a whole is commendable.

I would like to recognize the organizers, coaches and parents for their commitment to promoting excellence in sports for our youth, and I would just like to say to the young football players: Go Charleswood Broncos. We are proud of you. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Riverdale Place Homes

Mr. Tom Nevakshonoff (Interlake): It gives me great pleasure to rise in the House today to tell of a very special event which was celebrated at the Silver Hall on the 29th of October.

I am referring to the 25th anniversary of Riverdale Place Homes Inc., a non-profit organization based in the community of Arborg which provides community residential services and independent living with support services for adults who are facing mental challenges.

The organization operates four homes and serves the needs of 19 individuals, two of whom are in independent living with support services. For the most part, funding is supplied by the Province of Manitoba through the Department of Family Services and Housing and reflects the philosophy of this government that, wherever possible, people with this level of need be housed in a community setting.

The highlight of the evening was the burning of the mortgage of Taylor House, one of the group homes, which is now in whole an asset of the corporation. This happy occasion was presided over by Mr. Oli Palsson, the chair of the board of directors of Riverdale Place Homes, and it epitomized that anything is possible when government is aided by determined community volunteers who give entirely of themselves and stay the course over the long term.

Also of special significance that evening was the 50th birthday of one of the residents, Mr. Lorne Johnston, whose accomplishments to date as described to us by his niece, Ms. Jenna Sigurgeirson, prove that any person's potential is unlimited given a certain level of drive and determination.

* (14:40)

In closing, on behalf of the people of the Interlake, I want to congratulate and thank all of the dedicated people who are a part of this worthy enterprise. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Most Generous Manitobans (Kola)

Mr. Larry Maguire (Arthur-Virden): It is my honour to rise today to congratulate the citizens of Kola, a community located in the fine constituency of Arthur-Virden, as the most generous people in Manitoba. Kola, a community of about 150 people, is located on PTH 257 just west of Virden. It has a feed mill, a lumber yard, a large church, a restaurant, a

convenience store, a skating rink and several successful businesses.

Kola has also community members with big hearts. While the average Canadian donated \$1,127 to charity, community members in Kola this past year donated nearly three times as much, \$3,380. Manitobans are known for their generous hearts and continue to give donations to a variety of charities. Since 1995, Manitoba has had the highest proportion of tax filers reporting donations, and the community members of Kola are leading the way with their big hearts.

I would ask that all members of the Legislative Assembly join me in congratulating the persons of Kola, Manitoba. While the community of Kola may be small in size, their hearts are the biggest when it comes to being the most generous donators and among the top caring citizens of Manitoba. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

GOVERNMENT BUSINESS

ADJOURNED DEBATE

(Eighth Day of Debate)

Mr. Speaker: Resume debate on the proposed motion of the honourable Member for The Maples (Mr. Aglugub), that the following address be presented to His Honour the Lieutenant-Governor, and the debate remains open.

House Business

Mr. Speaker: The honourable Minister of Water Stewardship, on House business?

Hon. Steve Ashton (Minister of Water Stewardship): Yes, Mr. Speaker, as Acting Government House Leader in consultation with opposition House leaders, there appears to be an agreement. If you could test the House too, in light of the fact that this Thursday there are many significant events around the province dealing with the fact this is the Year of the Veteran, of course, leading into November 11 when we do not sit. There is, I believe, a willingness not to sit this Thursday. There would then be a sitting next Friday, and there would be agreement not to have quorum calls on the 18th.

Again, I want to stress this is something that, in this particular case, I know certainly, actually, members of the opposition had brought forward as, I think, a legitimate reason not to sit, given how much

we owe to our veterans. So I believe, Mr. Speaker, if you canvass the House, you will find there is a willingness to not sit this Thursday and sit next Friday for a normal Friday sitting with the one exception that there would be no quorum call.

Mr. Leonard Derkach (Official Opposition House Leader): Mr. Speaker, I would just simply like to thank the Premier (Mr. Doer) and the members of the government for allowing this because many of us who live in rural Manitoba do have events in recognition of the Year of the Veteran that are taking place starting as early as noon on Thursday. Therefore, in respect of those people who fought for our country so that all of us can enjoy this wonderful freedom, I want to, on behalf of our party, thank the Premier and the government for allowing us this day. Thank you.

Mr. Speaker: Is there agreement not to sit this Thursday but to sit on the next Friday with no quorum calls, and the sitting will be 10 till 12:30 with Routine Proceedings? Is there agreement? *[Agreed]*

* * *

Mr. Speaker: So now we will resume debate on the proposed motion of the honourable Member for The Maples (Mr. Aglugub), which remains open.

Mrs. Mavis Taillieu (Morris): Mr. Speaker, I welcome the opportunity to respond to the Throne Speech, but just before starting, I would like to congratulate and welcome the pages to the Legislative Chamber. I know that it is a big job that they undertake. They put in many hours, and I would just like to congratulate them and welcome them. I would also like to take this opportunity to congratulate the Minister of Healthy Living (Ms. Oswald) and her husband on the birth of their new son. I think that is a wonderful event as well.

In regard to the Throne Speech, Mr. Speaker, Manitobans deserve a clear vision from this government. We want hope for the future. We deserve better government than this. This is the seventh Throne Speech in a row with no vision, nothing new. In fact, this government keeps reannouncing after reannouncement. We do not see anything in here expect the mention of, since 1999. How many times did we hear that? I think it was 17 times we heard "since 1999," "We did this since 1999." But what about the future? Manitobans do not want to look back. We want a government that is forward thinking, not backward. All we get is empty

rhetoric and broken promises and unprecedented debt. The member from Elmwood even admits the debt is going way up. I can tell you why we would not vote for this Throne Speech. There is no strategy to deal with the growing debt. There is no strategy for economic growth.

We will not vote for a Throne Speech that underresources the police. We will not vote for a Throne Speech that offers no hope to Manitobans who wait in pain on long waiting lists. We cannot vote for a Throne Speech that does not address the crisis in rural health care. We cannot vote for a Throne Speech that offers no support for Manitobans assessed large ambulance transfer bills. This Throne Speech shows that this NDP government has absolutely no new ideas on how to sustain agriculture in this province, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to just comment a little bit on the area of Family Services and Housing and people with disabilities. Young families, of course, need affordable, accessible, available and sustainable child care. It is a very, very important issue, but families we talked to also feel that they would like choices in obtaining their child care for their children.

Surveys tell us that nine out of 10 Canadians feel that in a two-parent situation, ideally, one parent should stay at home to raise the children. We also know what preferences families have for the care of their children. Of course, this is really easy to figure out. The first choice that parents would make is that one of the parents looks after the child. Then the next choice is a relative. The next choice is home day care and the next and last choice is a day-care centre.

We recognize that many families need, and need to choose, accessible and affordable day care, but we also recognize that there are many people that would like to have choice. There needs to be a continuum of child care options. Child care centres with qualified staff who are motivated to stay in the profession by wage parities are part of that continuum.

* (14:50)

Unfortunately, I think the NDP have focussed all their funding on regulated spaces and wages for benefits. We appreciate the fact and want to encourage people to take this profession and stay in this profession, but we do recognize there is a push and a focus on creation of more unionized jobs in child care.

Our focus is what is in the best interests of the child and the family. Parents want options which include things like tax breaks or direct payments to families. We feel, and parents tell us, that parents manage money better than governments. The NDP's philosophy is government knows best. Our philosophy is families know best.

The NDP's focus is on a universally publicly funded system that could be similar to our health care system and our education system, but we feel that by putting money in the hands of parents who can then choose their care options instead of putting money into building institutions for day cares, building huge bureaucracies and creating a system that may not be sustainable in the long term.

Also, even though the federal government has put no strings on the money, this government has chosen to not include for-profit centres. This is restrictive, controlling, non-inclusive and forcing entrepreneurs out of business. Our focus is on entrepreneurship, creation of small business, private-public partnerships. Profit is not a dirty word. It is in fact what drives our economy. We need to have some choices for people who want to choose to open a for-profit day care. Why should they not be included in any federal funding?

The NDP's focus is on institutionalized child care. Our focus is on family and community. We support and recognize the need for affordable, accessible, available and sustainable health care. We support more child care spaces and recruitment and retention of early childhood educators. We recognize the importance of provincial standards and accountability for public funding. A child's care should not be limited to child care centres. We recognize that parents are the ones who choose how to take care of their children, and we want to provide a continuum of options and choices. We recognize that child care is about caring for children and not about creating unionized jobs. We recognize that parents are the best managers of money and make the best choices for their children. We recognize the need for a variety of options for families who work outside traditional hours and for families in rural and northern Manitoba where only one option would be very restrictive.

We support public money flowing into the for-profit as well as the non-profit centres. We support entrepreneurship, creation of small business and recognize successful business adds to the provincial economy. We support tax incentives for families

who choose stay-at-home parenting. We recognize that a universally publicly funded child care system is not sustainable, and we are responsible and visionary and looking at child care which will work for our children and future generations.

I would like to ask the question who cares more about children. Families or government? It is families. Who makes the best choices for their children? Is it families or government? The answer is families. Who handles money better? Families or government? The answer is families.

Mr. Speaker, I have to say also in this Throne Speech that there was not much mention, or any mention at all of the very, very serious problem that faces our province, and that is fetal alcohol spectrum disorders. We know that this is a huge and growing problem in our province. This is a totally preventable syndrome. It is the leading cause of cognitive impairment in the Western world. Individuals living with FASD often experience a lesser quality of life because of their cognitive impairment and secondary disabilities.

Mr. Speaker, there are only three doctors in Manitoba who can diagnose FASD, and the cut-off line for diagnosing children is 12 years old. So many children in this province are not diagnosed, have problems within the education system, have problems within the social services because many of them will be in foster care and within the care of Child and Family Services. Unfortunately, many of them end up in our institutions, in our penitentiaries and jails, because they turn to crime where they have not had the proper supports to help them progress through their daily life.

It is estimated that each child living with FASD will incur a cost of approximately \$1.5 million in care, supports and programming from government departments such as Health, Justice, Education and Family Services.

People living with FASD often have impaired judgment, and this often leads to involvement with alcohol, drug abuse and criminal activity. There are few supports for these young people once they reach the age of 18 other than to apply for income assistance, and really what they need are supports for daily living, because they are not really capable of remembering the activities that they have to do each day.

We saw this with one unfortunate young person whose foster mother had advocated for 24-hour

support for him. He did not receive that. He was left alone. He did go out onto the street in the middle of the night and, unfortunately, he was murdered. So we need to look at helping the people who cannot live without supports on their own. They must have more supports, Mr. Speaker, and I am very disappointed that this Throne Speech did not address this most serious problem.

Mr. Speaker, I want to say that there have been a number of announcements made in terms of low-income affordable housing, made around the province, recognizing that there is a need, and, certainly, I look forward to more announcements on affordable housing but just to say announcing housing does not really look at the plight of the homeless person.

I just would like to mention that I participated in A Hard Night Out through the Harm Reduction Network just a couple of weeks ago, where I spent a night on the street with a homeless person and a guide. I would just like to say that the Minister of Family Services and Housing (Ms. Melnick) was invited to participate, she did not give an answer, which put back the date for having this, and the organizers were very miffed at this because they were waiting to pick a date that would suit the minister's schedule. In the end, they picked a date that would suit her schedule and then she failed to participate. I think that was very, very disappointing.

So I would like to take a moment to just speak about that experience. It was a very, very hard thing to do. I recognize that. I have to say that when I agreed to do this, I felt that I was going out onto the street and I did not feel safe. I did not feel safe on the streets of Winnipeg because it was not very many weeks before that when a young person was caught in the crossfire of gangs warring with each other.

So this made me think that this is a very, very unsafe situation because anything could happen. I have to say that the people that I was with, the homeless person that guided me through the streets of downtown Winnipeg during the day and during the evening and the person that accompanied us as a spotter, I have to say what wonderful people they were. I have been in contact with one of them since then and I hope that that contact can continue.

* (15:00)

It was certainly an eye-opening situation. The person that I was with readily told me that she was an addict. She did crack cocaine. She sniffed pain

solvent. She had not done crystal meth yet, and I pleaded with her not to ever try that drug. She agreed that she would not, but she said her preference was sniffing solvent. She did that every day, and she did crack cocaine. She is 26 years old. She had three children. She has been on the street since she was eight years old. She knows no other life. I asked her, "Would you like to have a job? Would you like to have a home?" She did not really know how to answer that because she did not want to leave her family on the street. She did not want to leave that environment because that is her environment. That is the only environment that she knew. That was her safety net. Those were her friends. I felt that in some way we must do more to help people that really need our help.

I am going on just—*[interjection]* Well, I know that maybe, you know, this is a story that many people do not want to hear, but I think it is important to know that, if you have spent almost 20 years and some people I spoke to had spent more than 20 years on the street, it becomes such a way of life it is very difficult to understand there is any other way of life. I think just the way all of us enjoy our lifestyle, it is very difficult to go into another lifestyle and appreciate how different people live their lives.

I can tell you that it was a very scary evening walking down the streets with a group of five of us, all women, and having cars drive by with threats of people throwing things at you. I can also say that, when we were to go to sleep, I was not prepared to sleep on the ground, but many people do sleep on the ground. This person I was with showed me where people sleep and the shacks that they manage to make and sleep in. She said to me, "Watch out for the needles." They are littered with needles and packages of alcohol for sterilization, swabbing the arm before the needle.

Watching people walking on the street with a rag around their hands and sniffing as they walked along was very disheartening. We need to address the problem of addictions with people before we can address a lot of other things. My heart went out to many of the people I met on that evening, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, I just want to move on, I think, a little bit into other areas. I would like to speak a little bit about the finances in the province. It is very dismal that we are the highest taxed province in Canada. We have not addressed this. We have not addressed this. We want to see that the education tax

is eliminated from property tax and funded fully by the government. In fact, I was listening to a program on the radio about that this morning and how there are a number of people within the real estate industry that would agree with that and think that that is the right thing to do. I know the Province thinks it is the right thing to do as well.

There is nothing in the Throne Speech to show that this government is making economic growth and job creation priorities. There is no long-term economic vision. We have one of the lowest average weekly wages in Canada, and we rank nine out of 10 provinces in job growth over the last two years. Any growth that the Province talks about is in the public sector. So, when you are just employing people in the public sector, you are just hiring people to prop yourself up. But what we would like to see is more strong economic growth in the private sector, because it is the private sector that drives business.

Mr. Speaker, I was just talking about being on the street, and I would like now just to talk about the gang issue. This is a big, big disappointment. This government has not been able to address the issues of gangs. In fact, they embrace gangs moving into the province. They have really done nothing to address this issue. Here we have innocent people who are caught on the street in the crossfire of bullets intended for gang members die innocently. Then we learn that these people, the gang members, were out on bail. That is just shameful. The police say, "Well, we cannot chase all the people that are supposed to be on conditional sentences that are supposed to be in their homes. We do not know if they are in their homes or not." Then things like this happen and innocent people die.

They talk about more funding, talked about that today, more funding for police officers. But those are virtual police officers somewhere in cyberspace, because the Winnipeg police department is saying "We need more officers on the street because we cannot respond to the number of calls we are getting." They need more administrative help as well, so they do not have to be putting the time in behind the desk and they can be on the street doing the job that they are best capable of doing.

Manitobans do not feel safe. We have the Hells Angels. We have the Bandidos. In fact, we had the Hells Angels very close to where I live. We have managed to uproot them. They are not there right now.

I would just like to talk a little bit about this government's non-strategies in terms of crystal meth. I was at a seminar in North Dakota almost two years ago now, 18 months, where the politicians and law enforcement people were talking about the extreme dangers of crystal meth and how at that time it was moving up to Canada because there is a natural corridor to move up this way.

They also talked at that time about methamphetamine labs, how easy it was to produce methamphetamine. One of the ingredients in methamphetamine being anhydrous ammonia, which can be found on any farmer's land because it is a fertilizer that the farmer uses on his land at the end of the year to prepare the soil for the next year. It is very simple to make this drug, very, very simple. There are very few ingredients necessary. Methamphetamine is the first step, and then it can be converted to crystal meth with just one more step.

So the idea was these meth labs were being set up in abandoned farm houses or abandoned barns, which we have in abundance in southern Manitoba because our rural economy has suffered so greatly that many people have had to leave their farms and move to towns or to cities. But we do have abandoned farms in southern Manitoba, and they became prime locations to set up methamphetamine labs, and the availability of the anhydrous ammonia, one of the ingredients necessary, was close by.

So this was 18 months ago, Mr. Speaker, and certainly we recognized and pushed the government at that time to get involved because our neighbours to the south had a strategy that provided for monitoring, in hardware stores and pharmacies, for unusual purchases or group purchases of the ingredients necessary to make crystal meth. They had a huge campaign, awareness campaign, watching for this to happen.

*(15:10)

Well we have now seen that crystal meth is here in our province, in our towns, in our city, and it is here in a big way. I just had one of the RCMP officers come and do a presentation to my community. My community was absolutely shocked at what he had to tell them, and the visuals, the pictures of crystal meth addicts and what it had done to them in a very short time, were absolutely horrific. My families were very, very thankful that they saw this and would be able to alert their children and their families to the very real dangers of crystal meth.

Mr. Speaker, many people in my constituency and many people that I speak with in the variety of places that I go to say one of the biggest frustrations they have with this government, there are many, but one of them is they are increasingly frustrated over the proliferation of drugs, the gangs and the violence in the province. When we say enough is enough, we are only saying what many, many Manitobans have reiterated to us. We need to fund more police officers, not just make announcements of funding. We actually have to have bodies in those funded spaces. We need to have a gang strategy. We need to deal with this because this is a very real issue.

We need to expand police in school programs. The children in schools are quite vulnerable too because, as this RCMP officer was saying when he made this presentation in my community, it is not the people hanging out at the edge of the school yard beckoning the poor young innocent kids to come over and buy drugs through the schoolyard fence. It is not like that at all. It is the average kid from the average house selling the drugs right in the classroom. It is not outside the school; it is right in the classroom. Well, the Minister of Education (Mr. Bjornson) is shaking his head, but he has not been in a classroom for a while. The RCMP officer was saying that this is a very real issue and they support that idea.

Well, let us go to health. Manitobans deserve timely access to health care services. But we want to see a clear plan here for reducing waiting lists, and we want to see a restoration in rural Manitoba. What have we got? We have got Arborg, Deloraine, Boissevain, Brandon, Ashern, St. Pierre and now Gimli where there are less services available in rural hospitals.

I am disappointed in my own area, St. Pierre Hospital on Highway 59, which is a very busy highway, particularly in the summer because it leads to St. Malo Provincial Park. There are a lot of tourists that travel that highway to go to St. Malo. Having the emergency room closed on weekends in the St. Pierre Hospital is a real problem for the people in the area. What has happened that they have to close the emergency room on the weekends in St. Pierre is they do not have enough doctors. Their doctors have left there. They have gone; one of them went to The Pas. Now, you might think that rural doctors might just want to go to the city, but that is not the case. The reason the doctors were leaving is because the call hours were so long and there were not enough of them to share the hours, and after a

long period of time that becomes very hard on families and personal relationships if you are always working and always on call.

We do need to address the shortage of physicians and nurses and health care providers in our province, Mr. Speaker. This government has had six years to do that and they really have failed. There are still long waiting lists. We still have people in the hallway. We still have people waiting for surgeries, and we need to build a better system. We need better care and we need it sooner.

We need closer-to-home treatment. I do not think that rural Manitobans should be separated from urban Manitobans and given a lesser quality of health care because it is not available. Why would we want to make services to rural Manitobans less available?

This government has to take responsibility for the failures in health care. It is a very, very serious issue. We know that as the population ages, we are going to need—

Mr. Speaker: The honourable member's time has expired.

* * *

Mr. Drew Caldwell (Brandon East): Mr. Speaker, I wonder if the member—*[interjection]* No? Okay.

Mr. Speaker, I previously requested leave to finish my member's statement. I understand that the members opposite have granted leave.

Mr. Speaker: What we will have to do first, we will have to revert to Members' Statements. First, is there leave to revert to Members' Statements? *[Agreed]* And is there leave for the honourable Member for Brandon East to conclude his comments? *[Agreed]*

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

CT Scanner (Brandon)

Mr. Drew Caldwell (Brandon East): Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and I would like to thank the members opposite for their courtesy.

Mr. Speaker, in concluding my remarks, I recognize that while much has been accomplished for health care in western Manitoba to develop better health care in western Manitoba, there is still much more work to do. It is in this spirit that I would like to take the opportunity to both congratulate the New Democratic Party government for the work already undertaken and to encourage all parties in the House

and in the province to continue to work with the Brandon Regional Health Authority and the Assiniboine Regional Health Authority in serving the health care needs of western Manitobans. Thank you.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

GOVERNMENT BUSINESS

ADJOURNED DEBATE

(Eighth Day of Debate)

(Continued)

Mr. Speaker: Now we will move back into Orders of the Day. On the proposed motion of the honourable Member for The Maples (Mr. Aglugub), the honourable Minister of Family Services and Housing, are you wishing to speak?

Hon. Christine Melnick (Minister of Family Services and Housing): Yes, I am asking leave of the House to complete my response to the Throne Speech.

Mr. Speaker: The honourable member has already spoken once, so is there leave of the House for the honourable Minister of Family Services and Housing to speak?

Mr. Peter Dyck (Pembina): That would be then for the duration of the time left, right? Or is it for a total of 30 minutes?

Mr. Speaker: For the clarification of the House, Manitoba practice has been if you have spoken on the subamendment or the amendment, whether it is one minute or 15 minutes or whatever, that is recorded as spoken to the motion. She is seeking leave to speak again, so she would have 30 minutes remaining, because she is asking leave to speak again to the Speech from the Throne. Is that granted?

Some Honourable Members: Yes.

Mr. Speaker: Okay, it has been granted that the honourable Minister of Family Services and Housing to speak again to the Throne Speech.

Ms. Melnick: Mr. Speaker, I would like to start by thanking the House for leave to continue my remarks in support of the Throne Speech.

I was talking about child care yesterday, and I think it is very important to note that the child care plan that we have in Manitoba is the only one that actually exists in Canada, and it was developed post-1999 with input from over 24 000 Manitobans. We took their responses to how they would like to see the not-for-profit child care system grow, and they

told us that they wanted to continue with a not-for-profit, community-based system. We honoured that. We then worked with the regulatory review committee to put together an actual five-year plan, and it is that plan through which we are rolling out the monies that we are receiving from the federal government, and it is those elements of the plan that I have been announcing portions of over this last while.

I think it is also important to note that the OECD report which came out approximately 15 months ago talked about what were the elements of a truly successful child care system, and some of the elements that they named were not-for-profit. In Manitoba our children are not for sale. We want every cent to go into the child care system, to go into the care of our children and not into profit for others.

Mr. Conrad Santos, Deputy Speaker, in the Chair

* (15:20)

The international child care movement is also very supportive of our plan. In fact, there was a woman here from Australia not long ago who talked about the fact that she had travelled across Canada before coming to Manitoba and had stated that everyone in Canada is talking about how Manitoba is showing the leadership that people feel proud of. I feel very proud to be the minister at this time, and I would like to thank the child care community. You know, we have a tremendous community here in Manitoba, and they have been building this system for a long time. It is a real privilege to work with them, and it is a real privilege to be their minister at this very exciting time for child care and for our children in the province of Manitoba.

This past week as I was speaking the other day, we had announced some \$5.75 million to create over 3000 spaces. In the Winnipeg area we have 1600, in Brandon 700 and in the North, we have the remainder of the 68. Now this announcement also included 750 spaces that are to be created throughout the year of 2006, and they will be working with our community not-for-profit groups. They will be letting us know the spaces they need, whether they are infant spaces, whether they are preschool spaces, after-school spaces, and we will do our best to meet those needs and to honour those requests. We are a government that sees all of Manitoba and sees the North, and so I have directed the department to ensure that at least 100 of these new fully funded spaces will be placed throughout northern Manitoba.

This is not only part of caring for our children, but this is part of growing the economy. When we really invested in child care from '99 on, we saw that double-parent families who were on income assistance, once they were able to acquire affordable, reliable and quality child care, we saw the welfare rolls drop by about 50 percent, which tells us that investing in our children is a good investment for our economy. In fact, reports have stated that for every one dollar that we invest in child care there is at least a two-dollar return into the economy. So this is good for our kids and it is good for our communities as well.

We have received some quite good responses from the community. Don Giesbrecht, who is the past president of the Manitoba Child Care Association, said he recently returned from a Canadian Child Care Federation meeting in Ottawa and that Manitoba is seen as being a leader across the area. In Minnedosa, Karen McDonald, the Community Child Care Co-operative chairperson, said, "We are actually in a very good position now. We have peace of mind." In Brandon, the Dudley's Day Care chair board president, Debbie Barkley, said of our announcement for Brandon: "This has now given us the security to go forward." So, all over Manitoba, Manitobans are responding and responding very positively.

Now there is the child care system and the nursery school system. We are working with the nursery school system as well. In fact, I just announced support for up to \$140,000 to more deeply fund 200 nursery school spaces around the province. Again, we will work with the not-for-profits to identify areas of greatest need. We work on the criteria of is there community support for a child care, for the spaces; what is the proportion of low- to middle-income families who can most greatly benefit from child care; is there already a movement to build or develop a new centre or to continue to support a centre. We will use those criteria to determine where these more deeply funded nursery school spaces will be placed around our system.

Also, with the funding that we are rolling out now, currently there is a \$9.40 maximum cap for a nursery school space. We have been able to reduce that to a \$5 cap, Mr. Speaker. That means that more low- and middle-income families will be able to access this. We have also removed the need to demonstrate for a subsidy based on work or school. Quality of care is very important, and, of course, one of the pillars of that care is to have trained and

professional staff. This government recognizes that early childhood educators are professionals in their own right, and they must be regarded and respected and paid as such. Which is why, Mr. Speaker, on July 12, I was very pleased to announce that our first announcement with the new monies would go toward the wages and benefits of these workers. Child care workers in Manitoba, early childhood educators too, now earn an average of \$30,000 a year compared to the \$18,000 average found across Canada. We know that we have people here who are contributing to the well-being of our children, and we want to make sure that they stay in the child care area and that they feel comfortable and welcomed by this government.

I would like to talk a little bit about housing in Manitoba. Coming back in 1999, we were very acutely aware that in '93 and '94 the federal government walked away from social housing saying that social housing was not a responsibility for the federal government, and it is very unfortunate that the government of the day here, who are now members opposite, decided to walk with the federal government.

So, for almost 10 years, we saw no growth of social housing; even maintaining the current units was a real struggle. When we came in in 1999 we realized that social housing was very, very important. I credit my predecessors, the Honourable Tim Sale and the member from Brandon East, with working with the federal government and our colleagues across the country to build and develop and roll out the Affordable Housing Initiative.

This initiative has worked very well in the province of Manitoba. There are two phases. The first phase that rolled out in, I believe it was, 2002 was targeted at affordable housing for seniors, for persons with disabilities and others who would have acute housing needs. Now, affordable housing means, the phrase most often used is median market rent, that is a rent that is sort of an average rent for an apartment or a unit of one-bedroom, two-bedroom, et cetera.

We found that there really is an acute need for low-income units. When we were negotiating Phase 2 of the Affordable Housing Initiative, I worked with the Honourable Joe Fontana, the federal Minister of Housing, and we agreed that it is important to have monies targeted at low-income individuals so that people who are unable to afford what would be the MMR, or the median market rent, would be able to access safe, clean low-income housing.

So we have targeted the Phase 2 monies at the low-income market, and we are working with Aboriginal groups, we are working with groups that are community-based, the neighbourhood renewal corporations. We are doing a lot of work through the Neighbourhoods Alive! program, which, as I mentioned in the House the other day, I was very pleased to see that the Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs (Mr. Smith) has extended the boundaries of that program, and we will work with those communities. We work with people, again, throughout all of Manitoba.

I am wondering if I could share with the House just some of the more recent announcements that we have been making. I will start with an announcement made yesterday by the MLA for Fort Garry. She was kind enough to go to the announcement for me. This announcement dealt with low- to moderate-income residents in Winnipeg's Daniel MacIntyre, St. Matthews and Centennial neighbourhoods. They will soon have more access to quality affordable housing with the major renovation of 14 homes, and the construction of one new energy-efficient home, of up to \$572,000 from, again, the tri-level agreements that we have here, the Winnipeg Housing and Homelessness Initiative. Again, we are the only jurisdiction in Canada to have that model, and it is really a very effective way to get housing built in our city of Winnipeg.

*(15:30)

So this was an announcement by the Province, by the City and the government. But, also, Mr. Speaker, this was an announcement in partnership with HOP, which is a neighbourhood group that works around the inner-city area. This announcement was particularly exciting, because it was the first announcement of the WHHI in the Centennial neighbourhood, which is one of the new neighbourhoods to be receiving funding through Neighbourhoods Alive!. This just shows the community spirit that exists in the inner city of our city of Winnipeg.

I, also, in mid-August traversed up to Arborg and made a very nice announcement with the member from Interlake. He had worked for quite a while with members of his community around more affordable housing for seniors not needing the services of a personal care home but needing more intermediary services. So I was very, very happy to announce with the group from Arborg, the Arborg senior housing group, and the local MLA that we are

building an Arborg seniors housing complex that will be relatively adjacent to the personal care home.

This means that people will not have to leave the community of Arborg. In fact, this is located right in the centre of Arborg. It is located close to shopping districts, close to the medical facilities, and I was very, very happy that we had worked hard on this and that it is now coming to fruition. My understanding is that they have already put the shovels in the ground and that they are hoping for an early spring actual opening. I would be very honoured to go back there to celebrate that with them.

In August, a week earlier, I went down to Morden and celebrated with the town of Morden a very unique housing development that they have. This is Phase 1 of what I understand will be three phases in their initiative, and it is housing for new Canadians. It is 30 units per phase, so it will be 30, 60, 90 units for new Canadians. About 10 percent of the units are being built accessible for persons with disabilities, but every unit can be easily converted into an accessible unit. So this is a unique model that we have seen in Manitoba and one that I very much support, and I was very, very pleased to be at this announcement with this creative model. I am hoping that we will be able to roll more of these out throughout the province of Manitoba.

In October, just a few weeks ago, I was unable to be at the announcement, but we did have the member from Burrows attend on my behalf the Indochinese Association of Manitoba affordable seniors rental housing project. This is located on what is not—well, soon will not be, but what is now a vacant lot on Cumberland Avenue. This will be housing for the Indochinese senior population in Manitoba. This is revitalizing the area. It is giving it an industrial base with having housing so close, and on the first floor of the complex, Mr. Speaker, there will be stores. So there will be housing on the upper levels and actual retail which, of course, is revitalizing the area. Again, this is a not-for-profit group who had a vision of how to make things better for their seniors and worked with the department and now will be building safe and affordable housing for their senior population.

In late June, I was again very thrilled to join with the St. James Kiwanis Manor and the local MLA, the Member for St. James (Ms. Korzeniowski), who attended—again, the St. James Kiwanis folks are well known for many decades for providing affordable

housing to seniors. I was there to acknowledge their funding and to congratulate them as they announced that they will be building—they are actually going to be tearing down some cottages and building—it is actually already built—new apartment units, again, accessible and, again, affordable and, again, revitalization for their community, for their seniors.

Another announcement that we made for low- to moderate-income residents in the William Whyte and North Point Douglas neighbourhoods are more affordable energy-efficient housing with the construction of 15 new homes and the rehabilitation of six rental units. This was through the North End Housing Project and the North End Community Renewable Corporation. We announced that in July and that was a very, very positive announcement. It was right across from the North Point Douglas Women's Centre.

There is a very vital community group there, people who refused to leave, but who are instead taking up the challenge to revitalize their community.

Not too long ago I also joined the HALS group which is housing for assisted living project. They attempted to get this project underway through the nineties. Unfortunately, the provincial government of the day was not supportive. But they have now seen through to renovate and rehabilitate seven newly designed accessible apartments at 340 Princess Street. In fact, I toured one of the units, and they are beautifully done. I toured with David Martin, who is the executive director of the Disabilities Issues Office. He in his wheelchair was able to move in a very relaxing mode through the entire building including into this unit. I asked David how it felt, and he said this indeed was a very positive renovation and a very well project for us to have funded.

In Dauphin, the local MLA, the Minister of Conservation (Mr. Struthers), announced low- and moderate-income seniors projects in the Dauphin area, 23 units of the 27-unit development which will be built through the Canada-Manitoba Affordable Housing Initiative. I thank the minister for attending on my behalf. Again, this was working with a not-for-profit group. The local MLA was involved, as were myself and the department, and this was more good housing for the people of Manitoba.

An Honourable Member: And Dauphin in particular.

Ms. Melnick: And Dauphin in particular.

I then went up to Woodlands in August and joined the good folks from Woodlands there as they are building 10 units of a 12-unit apartment, which will be, again, supported by the Affordable Housing Initiative and which will see housing for seniors so that they can stay in their community, they can continue to be active in their community and they can live in safety and affordability.

In my closing remarks, I would like to reiterate an announcement that was made some weeks ago. We had the first ever accessible housing forum, or visitable housing forum, in the history of Manitoba. We joined partnerships with the Faculty of Architecture, the University of Manitoba and the City of Winnipeg accessible community. Jenny Gerbasi was a tremendous leader in that. We put together the first visitable housing forum here in Winnipeg. I was very pleased to see that over 100 participants came, and these were people from all levels of government. These were people from the private sector. These were people who had just read about the forum who are actually building their own homes or renovating their own homes and are wanting to learn more about accessibility.

At that event, I was announcing that Manitoba will be hiring, and we are the only jurisdiction in Canada who is doing this, we will be hiring a visitable housing consultant, an accessible housing consultant, a universal design housing consultant. I use those three titles because people sometimes interchangeably use those words. But this housing consultant will be hired by the Department of Housing, and his or her services will be available to all Manitobans at any layer of government, in the private sector, in the not-for-profit sector, in the volunteer sector and even to individuals who are wanting to build accessible housing.

When we started to receive proposals for the Affordable Housing Initiative, we had to help people understand what accessible housing was. I am very proud to say now that 90 percent of the proposals that we get, if not all, have a substantial proportion of their units accessible and visitable. I congratulate the community of Manitoba for rising to the cause of needed social housing and being so wonderful to work with as we continue to rebuild Manitoba. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

* (15:40)

Mr. Leonard Derkach (Russell): It is a pleasure to rise today to respond to the Throne Speech. But, before I do, I want to welcome our new pages to this Legislature, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I also want to welcome Mr. Speaker and yourself as the presiding officers of our Legislature because I know how impartially you attempt to do your jobs as Speaker and Deputy Speaker. Sometimes we do get into issues, Mr. Deputy Speaker, but hopefully, with the start of a new session, we are turning a new page as well.

To the table officers, the Clerk and her staff, I want to say welcome to this new session, as well, from our side of the House and also to wish them well as they preside over the day-to-day chores that they have to do here in the Legislature to keep us on track and make sure that the business of this House is recorded properly, is indeed appropriately dispatched as it should be.

Also to the Sergeant-at-Arms and his staff, we have a wonderful tradition in this province, and every day that the Sergeant-at-Arms brings the Mace into this Chamber I stand proudly because it is a symbolic gesture, if you like, from all of us that we respect the democracy that has been given to us, and, indeed, we respect Her Majesty and her representatives. That is so important in a democracy so that, indeed, we can pass on this wonderful tradition that we have in this province to future generations as well.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I also want to address the Hansard staff who very carefully record our comments in this Legislature. They do a wonderful job. There is always a quick turnaround on Hansards, and, indeed, when we sometimes are misquoted, they are very obliging to make sure that, indeed, what it is that we have said is recorded properly. So I want to thank all of the Hansard staff, those who are working here today but also those who work during the night to make sure that the transcripts are done for us in the next session.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I am sure there are other assistants to this Chamber who need to be thanked, because without them this Chamber and this Legislature would not work as smoothly as it does. Now, we sometimes question that, but, indeed, in an overall sense it works pretty well, I think, in everybody's estimation.

Now to the task of addressing the Throne Speech. This is the seventh Throne Speech that we have received from the government, and of all of

them I would have to say that this one offers very little to Manitobans. It is very weak in its approach to how it addresses issues, and it does not offer Manitoba a vision for where this government is taking it. There is a lot of rhetoric in it, as there always is, but there is very little action that is signalled in this Throne Speech, as there has been in other throne speeches as well.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, every Throne Speech is supposed to provide a vision for where our government is taking the people. It is supposed to reflect the promises that a government has made to the people through the election campaigns and in its addresses, but we have seen that the promises of this government have been broken time after time. No matter what it is the government says, you can rest assured that that promise will not be fulfilled.

We can go back to the first promise that was made by this Premier (Mr. Doer) to this province, and, Mr. Deputy Speaker, you will remember it, I know. I remember it, and that was that we would fix health care with \$15 million. Now, he said, "If we need the nurses, we will hire them. If we need the doctors, we will hire them. We will do what it takes, but for \$15 million we will cure the ills of the health care system."

An Honourable Member: And in six months.

Mr. Derkach: And he was going to do all that in a period of six months.

Well, Mr. Deputy Speaker, he hoodwinked Manitobans, because Manitobans said, "Wow, if this is all that it is going to take to fix this health care system, and if it is only going to take six months, we had better give this man his mandate and let him free." Well, I think even the member from The Pas had some questions about that promise, but Manitobans went along and they said, "We are going to give this man the mandate to do that."

Well, six years, more than six years later, Mr. Deputy Speaker, Manitobans are still waiting for that promise to be fulfilled. Even if we forget about the \$15 million, it is the other part that we want to see fulfilled, and that is that our health care system be addressed and the ills in our health care system be fixed.

But what have we observed since this government has taken office on that important issue of health care? Well, Mr. Speaker, today waiting lists are longer for hip and knee surgeries. Today we have converted hallway medicine into highway medicine.

Manitobans today are being transported from all parts of the province in ambulances for the most routine types of procedures that could have been done in their local communities and their local hospitals. But what has happened is the government has failed to ensure that those resources are present in those hospitals to fulfil those tasks. We have seen emergency wards, emergency departments of hospitals closed, hospital after hospital after hospital, and especially on the west side of this province.

Now, Mr. Speaker, I have to tell you, the population is not as dense on the west side of the province as it is here in the city of Winnipeg or in southern Manitoba, but those people still deserve services. Those people still deserve to have a hospital. They still deserve an emergency ward to take their loved ones to if unfortunate circumstances occur. But, today, if you have to travel to an emergency ward, you have to travel for miles and miles and miles.

I want the Premier (Mr. Doer) to listen to this example that I am going to give him. When we had a volunteer ambulance system in our community, I could rest assured that an ambulance could travel six miles or 12 miles within 15 minutes. Just two weeks ago, a friend, a gentleman who was 70 years old or thereabouts suffered a stroke in his neighbour's house. The neighbours recognized what the problem was immediately and called the ambulance. Now, I cannot fault any individual who drives that ambulance or who responds to that call. But, because of the bureaucratic system that has now been set up in the regional health authorities, it took that ambulance 45 minutes to get to that patient. Do you know what the result is, Mr. Speaker? That patient has suffered enough brain damage, because it took so long, that he will never speak again and that he will never walk again. He is a casualty of the health care system that we have in our province today.

There are more travesties, Mr. Speaker, that I could speak about: a child who dies because there were not the services available in her local hospital and had to be transported to another hospital. The passage of time caused that child to die. That is where we are today in our health care system in the rural part of our province.

Mr. Speaker in the Chair

Mr. Speaker, I live seven miles from my hospital. If I have a heart attack, the standard that has been adopted is that it is 40 minutes to get to me. If I have a heart attack, in 40 minutes I will probably be

dead. In 40 minutes, there is no sense in sending an ambulance; send a hearse. I would rather be thrown in the back seat of a car or in the back of a half-ton truck and rushed into that hospital so that an attendant, whether it is a paramedic, whether it is a doctor, whether it is a nurse can attend to me who might know how to save my life.

* (15:50)

I want to show the Premier another example. My son and I came upon an accident 12 miles, 13 miles from the town of Russell. We came upon an accident when an elderly gentleman flipped his truck and he was inside the vehicle. I had a cell phone. We had to make a decision. Were we going to try to get this man out of the vehicle before it started on fire or should we not even touch him? My son made a decision that he was going to get this man out because this vehicle was going to catch fire. I tried to phone Emergency Measures. The phone cut out; 911, the phone cut out. When I finally did get through, it was to Winnipeg. They did not know where I was. They had dispatched the ambulance, dispatched the police, dispatched the fire trucks, but they were running around the country looking for us. They had no idea where we were.

Mr. Speaker, after an hour, the first people to come—I was 14 miles away from Russell, and the first person on the scene was an RCMP officer from Roblin, 50 miles away. We finally got connected and I said, "Please call off the firetrucks. Please call off the other vehicles because this gentleman is okay. He is sitting in my vehicle right now but please send an RCMP." "Oh," they said, "we cannot stop it. The system has been dispatched."

Well, this was like the Keystone Cops, Mr. Speaker. Because of the bureaucratic system that has been established, you cannot call off a firetruck; you cannot call off an ambulance. So, at the end of the day, we had two ambulances, three firetrucks, emergency vehicles, four RCMP vehicles arrive at the scene about the same time, about an hour and 15 minutes after we had come up on the scene.

Now I say, "Is there not a better way for us to do things?" You cannot blame the government for this perhaps, but it is a system that has been set up, a system that does not work. It might work in Winnipeg, and I know it does because anywhere in the city, five minutes, ten minutes, you can have an ambulance. You can have paramedics and they will transport you. But in rural Manitoba, Mr. Speaker, there has to be an examination, a review of the

system that is in place, and there has to be an examination of how we are going to fix that system because it is not working.

Mr. Speaker, I want to address another issue as it relates to health care. This government was going to fix it. It was going to fix it in six months with \$15 million. Now, the Premier (Mr. Doer) laughs about it, but those were his words, not mine. Those were not my words. Those were his, and we have them on tape. I still have the image implanted in my brain when he was on television. I have the clip where he says, "\$15 million, six months. If we need the nurses, we will hire them. If we need the doctors, we will hire them."

Well, Westman right now is 27 doctors short, Mr. Premier. Why have you not hired them? You said you were going to do it. Now, that is a simplistic question. A simplistic answer could follow, but I say to you, Mr. Speaker, that those are real problems that people in rural Manitoba are facing.

Mr. Speaker, I want to also address the issue of transfers. I asked this government whether or not they would license not ambulances but the halfway service between an ambulance and a car which is called stretcher service in Manitoba, operating only in Winnipeg, whether they would license stretcher services in rural Manitoba because there are people who cannot go in a vehicle but can go by a stretcher service to get diagnostic tests, to get different procedures in hospitals in Yorkton, Brandon, Dauphin, wherever it may be.

They do not need an ambulance, but today the bureaucratic system that we have developed forces the individual to go in an ambulance. He does not have the choice because it is the doctor who says, "You have to go in an emergency vehicle," instead of its being a stretcher service which would cost about half of what an ambulance costs. Today those people would have the services of a stretcher service if the government were to allow for them to operate in this province privately. Oh, that is a terrible word. "Private" is a terrible word to this government.

What would be wrong with a stretcher service operating anywhere in rural Manitoba to provide services for people who have to pay for it? These people have to pay for that service, but, you know, we have developed a system that says it has to be self-sustaining, so those ambulances have to keep running. But the government is not paying for it. It is poor Manitobans that are forced to pay for those services who live outside the perimeter.

Now, we have a two-tier system in this province, whether you like to admit or not. People who live in the North can hop an air ambulance, be down in Winnipeg and not have to pay a penny, not a single penny. As a matter of fact, I can even take my family, if I were in the North, load them up on the air ambulance and away I go. Right? That is right, because it happens. *[interjection]* Because it happens. *[interjection]* Oh, yes, it does.

An Honourable Member: What about family?

Mr. Derkach: Oh, escort is a family. No, you are wrong, because the escort is a family.

Now, what do I know about the North? Probably more than the Minister of Education (Mr. Bjornson) because I have spent a lot more time up there than he has. I spent a lot more time up there than he has. So, Mr. Speaker, let not the Minister of Education try to tell me that I do not know anything about the North. I spent years up there.

Now, Mr. Speaker, the government said when it came in, "We have to create a level playing field. We are not going to charge people to ride the air ambulance from the North because that is discrimination." Okay, that is fine, do it. You are the government, do it. So they have done it. But, now, rural Manitobans, aha, no, no, no you do not deserve that kind of treatment. You do not deserve that kind of treatment.

An Honourable Member: Who set that system up?

Mr. Derkach: Who is the government? Who is the government?

An Honourable Member: Who set that up?

Mr. Derkach: Well, Mr. Speaker, he says, "Who set that up?" I can tell him that, when we were in government, my father had to be transported by ambulance between hospitals and that was paid for. Today it is not. Today the individual has to pay for it.

An Honourable Member: That is right, because you set it up.

Mr. Derkach: No, we did not set that up; this government did, Mr. Speaker. This government set it up.

Mr. Speaker, I want to tell the honourable Premier (Mr. Doer) something else. You know, the community of Russell has an airstrip for the air ambulance. However, the government directive has come out that you cannot use the air ambulance in Russell if, in fact, the patient can be transported to

Brandon. So when an accident occurs, you do not call the air ambulance in, you put the patient on the road ambulance, and instead of him being transported at no cost to a Winnipeg hospital, he is now transported to Brandon, and who pays the bill? The patient pays the bill.

Now is that called equity? Is that called equal treatment? Is that called really having the system respond to the needs of the clients? There is no answer for that. There is no legitimate response for that because there is not one available. There is no justification for doing that to any of our citizens, Mr. Speaker.

We have addressed the issue of inter-facility transfers and who should pay for it, Mr. Speaker. If I can be transported from Russell to Winnipeg in an air ambulance, why can I not be transported from Russell to Brandon in a road ambulance in the same way? You know what the rationale is for taking the road ambulance from Russell to Winnipeg? It is because it will take longer to transport you by air ambulance from Russell to Brandon than it will by throwing you in a road ambulance and taking you to Brandon. That is the rationale. But nobody told you that the cost is going to be borne by you if you go by ground; the province will pay if you go by air.

Now, Mr. Speaker, I can go on and on about our health care system and where the shortcomings are. I acknowledge, and the Premier is listening here, and I will acknowledge that it is not an easy system to fix. Anybody who thinks they have got a quick fix for this system is not really understanding what it is all about. I acknowledge that. The Minister of Health (Mr. Sale) is here. I acknowledge that, and I would have to say he is probably doing everything he can. But there is time for us to review the system. We need to review it. I plead with the government because, on behalf of patients, on behalf of Manitobans, it is time for us to review that system because there are parts of it that are just not working.

An Honourable Member: Better off to go to the veterinary clinic.

Mr. Derkach: Many people have said that, too. They have said you might be better off to go to a vet clinic, you will get service quicker than you will in our hospitals.

Now, enough said about the health care system because I know my time is limited, and I know that the Premier does want to have some time to address the Throne Speech as well. But, Mr. Speaker, I want

to talk about the economy. The economy is the fundamental part that is going to determine how our lifestyles and our living standards are vis-à-vis the rest of Canada, the rest of the world if you like.

* (16:00)

Well, look at us, look at us. Look at our income tax rates. We used to be, last year only, we were, I think, the highest west of Ottawa, or west of Québec. Today, our taxes are the highest in all of Canada. Now, there is something that the Premier (Mr. Doer) might want to put on that branding project that he initiated over a year ago that was supposed to have been completed six months ago. Well, I hope that they do not put that on the branding of Manitoba because that is not something we want to brag about.

Mr. Speaker, we had, in 1999 and before, a thriving economy in this province where people were paying less tax than they are today. *[interjection]* Oh, yes, they were. When the Premier talks about land taxes, I just had the misfortune of realizing what my land taxes and my building taxes were, and his rebate last year has just been eaten up by everything that they want back in taxes this year, because they have done a reassessment in the province. Now, he knew that was coming. We are not talking to somebody who did not know that was coming. So, in essence, our taxes are higher now, the personal income tax. The personal income tax for a family of four is higher than it is anywhere in Canada, anywhere in Canada.

Other provinces have been lowering their corporate tax, their business tax, all of their taxes. What has this province been doing? Well, we will lower them just a tiny little bit here and we will see how it goes. Well, Mr. Speaker, we had companies clamouring to come into this province, companies like Maple Leaf wanting to come into this province, setting up in this province, employing people, wanting to open up a second line. What have they done now? "Oh, Manitoba, you are not quite that competitive. We are going to take our second line and move it over to Saskatoon." So they are gone.

Mr. Speaker, what private-sector initiative has this government really gotten involved in since they have been in government? Well, they will tell you that the cranes have come back to Winnipeg, but these cranes should have big signs on them that say, "at taxpayers' expense." Every crane in the city of Winnipeg should have "at taxpayers' expense. This is public, this is your crane, folks. This is the one you are paying for."

An Honourable Member: What about the airport?

Mr. Derkach: Oh, what about the airport. Bad example. Oops, better try again. Better try again.

Then we have the Minister of Industry (Mr. Rondeau). Now, this is the Energizer bunny. He got so excited about giving loans out that he did not even bother to think about whom he was giving them out to. Six months after he gives the loan out, the business is gone. It has kind of disappeared.

I wonder how many other loans like that he has given out, Mr. Speaker. He is also the man who has been charged with the responsibility of branding Manitoba.

Now, Mr. Speaker, if, in fact, he gets involved in any more initiatives, we could be in real trouble in this province because we could have a great big hole because of his involvement. So I say if any business wants to operate in the province, stay away from the Minister of Industry because it is just going to cause greater problems for all of us.

Well, Mr. Speaker, jobs. Jobs are important, but the only jobs that we have in this province are all at taxpayers' dollars. But the Premier (Mr. Doer) says, "Not only are we going to create jobs through taxpayer dollars, now we want the union dues too. So we are going to dig a big ditch around Winnipeg. We are going to expand it so that we never have a flood here again, but we are going to do it at taxpayers' expense and we are going to force taxpayers now to pay union dues."

That is the Premier's approach to everything. "We are going to have a great big Hydro building too, great asset in the city of Winnipeg, great asset for the province, built with taxpayer dollars. We are going to do it the union way though. That is the union way to do it. We want those dollars to flow to our coffers too."

Then the Premier has found a way of how you can get those dollars into the NDP party. You go tap an employee on the shoulder, you get the shop steward, the foreman to tap the little worker on the shoulder and say, "Now, you know what? We want you to contribute because the leader of the government who is an NDP Premier needs a little bit of assistance. So we want you to contribute, but you know what? You give us the money and we are going to write a cheque to the Premier because that is how we get acknowledgment and thanks, you see."

Now, Mr. Premier got caught. Mr. Premier got caught, and after six years of abusing the law, he has now decided that he is going to bring a law in to fix this. But then he says, "How am I going to get at those Conservatives, because they are causing me a bit of a heartache too?"

So I am going to address the issue of loans. Oh, yes. Now, a loan is legal. Go to Elections Manitoba. They tell you, yes, a loan is legal. Go to your friendly banker. Go and get a friendly loan. As long as you pay it back, it is okay.

Now, Mr. Speaker, I ask you, what are we getting to when we say that kind of activity is not appropriate? This is nothing more than Gestapo tactics. This is nothing. We are going back to the Communist era, you see. A friend of mine used to call the socialists Commie-socialists because there was kind of a union between them and the Communist Party. Of course, I think we are getting back to that now, Mr. Speaker, because now the leader is trying to find ways of how you tramp on the rights of other people. That is unfortunate in this province. So I look forward to that legislation that he is going to be bringing forward because it once again will demonstrate how deceiving the Premier's (Mr. Doer) intentions really are with this kind of legislation.

Well, Mr. Speaker, we have got to keep going because there are so many issues to address. I want to talk about the agriculture issue because that is one that is near and dear to me.

Mr. Premier, how much time do you need? I will take five minutes. I will give you five more minutes.

Mr. Speaker, I want to talk about agriculture. Agriculture is the backbone of our economy in this province. It has always been and will be. There are other industries that are growing in our province like tourism that should be growing even faster than it is today, but agriculture has been in trouble for three years. In my area, last year there was zero crop. Zero because the frost took it all, and the only assistance we got from government, the only recognition we got from government was to go to the crop insurance program that was paid for by the producers.

Mr. Speaker, the government said, "Go to CAIS." We told the government CAIS is not working. CAIS is not working. Farmers who are in desperate trouble have been applying for CAIS and nothing is coming to them because the program does

not work. This Premier, his government has not fixed it.

Mr. Speaker, this year we had a flood, the greatest flood of the century for farmers. The Premier said we have got flooding insurance. Well, he now put that program in so that producers have to pay premiums on that program. When we were in government, we paid for it ourselves. Government paid for it. The taxpayer paid for it. The Premier says that was not a good enough approach. We are going to force the farmers to have insurance and they will pay the premiums. It will be their program.

Mr. Speaker, there are so many issues to address. I have got so much to say and so little time to say it in, and I know that the Premier has to make the closing remarks. I respect that and I offer the floor up to him.

Hon. Gary Doer (Premier): Mr. Speaker, it was very curious to listen to the previous speaker become almost a political pretzel in terms of the positions he was articulating here. It is too bad he did not have the courage of those convictions when he was in the previous Cabinet for 11 years. I could go on and on and on about some of those opportunities that he had that he failed to deliver on, but let me just list three of them just now that I have—do not have his attention, but I just want to point out that they swagger into the coffee shops, put their hands on their belt buckles and say, "You know, we care about farmers. We are the Conservatives; we care about farmers."

They raised the tax on farmers when they were in office. They raised the tax. What is that, hooley? Would they not call it hooley? Of course, who is the party in this Speech from the Throne that is again lowering education tax on farmland?

* (16:10)

You know, he is now talking about ambulances. He had a revelation on the road to Russell on ambulances. Well, I seem to remember in 1995 when he was sitting at the right hand of the former Premier they delegated and moved all ambulance policies and fees to the regional health authorities. Who had established the regional health authorities? His little buddy, Darren Praznik, and all the other little gang. You know, frozen food, regional health authorities and user fees for ambulances in rural Manitoba, why did he not speak up then, Mr. Speaker? Why did he not speak up on just one of those items, one of those items?

Of course, he talks about the Hydro building, and I will go into that in a moment. Their plan when we came into office was to build a new Hydro headquarters, get this, in Waverley West, you know, in Waverley West. Our plan is to build houses in Waverley West and headquarters in downtown Winnipeg. That is the difference.

Mr. Speaker, again, I know members opposite are really upset when we talk about the endangered species, the building crane, being returned to Manitoba. They are so worried about it they repeat it in their speeches. I would like to thank the member from Russell for mentioning the building cranes again in Manitoba. You know, imitation is the finest form of flattery, and we thank him for acknowledging that the building crane is back in Manitoba.

Look at the Millennium Library. I congratulate the Minister of Culture (Mr. Robinson) on not only the Millennium Library, but again on library literacy policies right in Manitoba. Do you realize there was not one increase in library funding to rural Manitoba from members opposite when they had 11 long, dark, dreary years in office, not one increase. The member from River East, who was a former Minister of Culture, did nothing for rural libraries, did nothing for rural libraries. They did nothing for northern literacy programs, Mr. Speaker. They spent more time in Monaco than they spent in northern Manitoba. *[interjection]* I will end up in a positive way, just hang tight. You give me too much ammunition.

Mr. Speaker, I would point out that the Millennium Library proposal, when the volunteers, the Friends of the Winnipeg Public Library came to us in 1999, they said that the former government said no. In fact, my briefing note said that the former Filmon government said no. My MLA said no. I cannot believe it. You know, and we said yes to a new Millennium Library. We were positive. I am proud of the fact that we have done so. Every day, every day another crop, based on the vision that we have had in office for the last six years, another crop is being harvested by the people of Manitoba, being harvested by the people of Manitoba.

Now, members opposite, also, they were not as bad as the Liberals on the True North MTS Centre. Remember the Liberals? They wrote a letter to Mark Chipman because, you know, they thought he was a

friend. "Oh, Mr. Chipman, you are so good to build the new arena, and we support you completely." Then they get four protesters, and they run around the old Eaton's building with yellow ribbons trying to protect the asbestos that was located in the old Eaton's Centre. What absolute hypocrites.

You know what? That is why when the former member from Fort Whyte, who has now joined the Liberal Party, whose national government is funding the new MTS Centre, I do not know how this happens, Mr. Speaker, but the former member who voted against the new arena, now is running for the party that helped fund the new arena as opposed to their junior members from the provincial party, that is why when he moved the motion on the arena, we had a motion up or down for a new arena in Manitoba and in Winnipeg, and the Tories, to a person, voted to keep the asbestos museum, and we said yes. We said yes to a new arena in Manitoba.

I was proud this weekend to be with the member from St. James—*[interjection]* Mr. Speaker, the member from McDonald's Big Mac hamburger, you know, he is a really good example to youth fitness here in Manitoba. If cardiovascular exercise included flapping your gums, you would be doing really, really well; you would be really, really doing well.

Mr. Speaker, there was a military tattoo at the new arena, speaking of yellow ribbons. There was a military tattoo at this new MTS Centre and were we ever proud to have military bands, military cadets, reserve corps, the 17th Wing marching with the Winnipeg ballet in the new beautiful MTS Centre. People in Manitoba are proud, and if you do not think you are going to be accountable for your vote, your opposition to the new MTS Centre, you have got another think coming. We are going to hold you accountable.

Mr. Speaker, a new Asper building in downtown Winnipeg, a new Red River College being built, and, yes, a new Hydro building, not built in the suburbs but built in downtown Winnipeg. I would point out that part of the reason why that building is being built—and I pay tribute to the Millennium Library; just wanted you to know that. Everybody clap. It was also part of the fact that we took Winnipeg and Manitoba Hydro and merged them together, just like we had the guts to do with some school divisions. I know members opposite are the status quo party, but we are a party of innovation and in terms of making decisions for the future. *[interjection]*

Members opposite want more superintendents running around in offices. We want more teachers in the classrooms. That is the difference.

Now, Mr. Speaker, I can always tell by the faces of members opposite what they really think is going on. Did you see how long their faces were when the same day as the Speech from the Throne was being introduced in this Chamber we finally had the announcement of \$500 million-plus in hydro-electric sales to Ontario? *[interjection]* Well, again, the member opposite talks again from his seat. But he had 11 long years. What did he do? Mothball after mothball after mothball was placed on hydro development. We are the builders; they are the mothballers. The public know that.

Mr. Speaker, the Conawapa project is extremely important for the future of Manitoba. Members opposite, you know the last dam they built was in Grand Rapids, and it created 500 miles of flooding. It was a dam that was planned by the Liberals and built by the Conservatives. We are using a new way of building our future: the Limestone hydro-electric project is primarily in the bank hydro-electric development. Wuskwatim is being developed and planned with Aboriginal people at the front end, not dealing with the impacts of flooding that was based on the previous dam at the back end. We will be building Conawapa in consultation with all Manitobans, including First Nations people that reside in the area, in the traditional areas that they have been part of for 6000 years. We will be building partnerships for the future with people in the area, not on top of them.

* (16:20)

That is why, Mr. Speaker, we have no difficulty meeting with the 18 First Nations communities on the east side of the lake and not doing something over top of them, but working with them on their traditional lands and territories. I am proud of the six Cabinet ministers who have been meeting for the last two or three years to make sure that people who live in those areas have the opportunity to plan their future for their lands, and not have somebody else in Winnipeg do it for them, Mr. Speaker. I am proud of that.

So the long faces of members opposite got even longer when we announced the 10 times development of ethanol here in Manitoba, with the expansion of the—I know members opposite were opposed to ethanol. They seem to have an interest in

old, traditional gasoline, but we are going to be putting ethanol in a lot of gas companies and putting it in your gas tanks and benefiting farmers and the environment, Mr. Speaker. We are going to be jumping to the pump with ethanol soon, and that is a good thing.

Mr. Speaker, now that we got your attention, you know, what about wind energy? How many windmills were built by the Conservatives for 11 years? None. You know, I have to admit something. We the NDP did not invent wind in Manitoba. We did not invent it. You know what? We are just harnessing it. You could have. You did not. We are going to do it.

Mr. Speaker, biodiesel, another positive program and, yes, organic farming. You know why? Consumers are buying more and more organic food. Members opposite guffawed when they saw the new developments from the Minister of Agriculture (Ms. Wowchuk): food development, nutraceuticals, organic food. That is the future. You are the past. She is the future. We are the future.

"Oh, oh. We are going to raise your farm taxes. Oh, oh. Vote for us. Oh, golly be, golly willy. We really care about farmers." Oh, you had your 11 years, folks. You have a record. You have a record, and the former president of KAP should never have sat with the Conservatives when they raised the portioning on farmland. Shame on you. Shame on you.

I have already talked about ambulance policies in health care, and in the few short minutes I have ahead of me, I already talked about the policy and the timing. I would say that the new ambulances have better technology, but, you know, it is not that complicated. Less doctors in the nineties; more doctors now. You know, 250 more doctors now; less doctors under the mean Conservative years. It is not that complicated. Less nurses in the nineties; more nurses in this decade. People have figured it out. Mr. Speaker, 1200 more.

Mr. Speaker, we believe now that the very important priority besides the excellent wait list strategy that the Minister of Health (Mr. Sale) has unveiled that builds upon the successes of lowering the cancer care waiting lists today. I mean, where was the opposition? They asked the question today about the United States health care services. The first thing we did was send patients to the United States because you were putting them in a life-and-death situation by not moving it south. Shame on you.

Mr. Speaker, the other priority for us is, of course, Aboriginal health, and we are very committed to having prevention, primary health care, needed health care services, sewer and water, transportation, economic development, language and culture, K-to-12 completion rates and post-secondary education for Aboriginal northern residents. Was it not shameful that the only alternative to save some \$400 million in the alternative budget prepared by the Tories in the last election campaign, the only thing they could say that they would cancel is the University College of the North? The only thing, Mr. Speaker. You know what, along with zero percent for Justice and zero percent for other things, we believe that the government must build bridges of opportunities for all citizens of Manitoba. We are proud of the University College of the North.

Mr. Speaker, in terms of the future, we are dealing with all Manitobans: Minimum wage every year; poverty policies that make sense for low-income people; minimum wage increases; child poverty credits and the clawback all reinstated; child care centres now expanded by 33 percent since we have been in office. Stay tuned, there is more coming.

We also have hired more police officers. The members opposite, you voted against police officers last year. We are going to hold you accountable.

We have three times more people working per year in Manitoba. Our population is three times greater per year in terms of growing, Mr. Speaker. Our house values have gone up every year since we have been in office, and education taxes have gone down 5 percent. Education taxes went up 68 percent when members opposite were there in government. They are down 5 percent since we were in office. House values up, taxes down. Under the old regime of the Tories, it was the opposite.

Mr. Speaker, post-secondary education is a very important priority for us. I have said it before and I will say it again, the symbol of Tory economic policy in post-secondary education was an engineering building where the roof leaked, and we have reversed that. There is a new roof and a new building at the University of Manitoba, symbolizing a new economy.

I could talk about a lot of other issues that are in the Speech from the Throne, transportation, economic development, but I want to end by talking about a couple of other points. I would point out, though, that the number, the enrolment in Manitoba's

colleges and universities, the policies have changed from the Flat Earth Society for members opposite to a more intelligent investment strategy. The enrolments are up 33 percent, Mr. Speaker.

I want to say a couple of things. One, this is the Year of the Veteran, and I know that many of you have participated in and will participate this week in many, many events to commemorate the work of the veterans. I am proud this Legislature has recognized, in this Year of the Veteran, the contributions made by all veterans. We have designated activities for Aboriginal veterans that were not recognized years ago and we have participated in those activities. I was pleased to see the Aboriginal veterans with the new Governor General on Juno Beach in commemorating their activity and their sacrifice on behalf of our citizens.

I just think all of us in this Legislature should be proud of the fact that we have named Highway 8 Veterans Memorial Highway to Hecla Island, and the road from Shilo to Brandon as Veterans Way. We give thanks to our veterans. We give thanks to the fact that they fought for our democracy. We give thanks to the fact that they have provided, in some cases, the ultimate sacrifice, so that we in this Legislature can participate in a Speech from the Throne, so that we in this Legislature can disagree with each other without bloodshed, so that we in this Chamber can participate in democracy in the most effective way that we know possible.

I also know that in the last week since the Speech from the Throne has been introduced there has been a little bit of an elephant in the political room. I think sometimes we have to acknowledge the fact that all of us, whether we go for a nomination, whether we go for a seat, whether we win or lose, everyone in this Chamber has put their name on a lawn sign and has had the guts to run, the guts to get criticized by each other, and each other in our own teams and other teams. Democracy is a very, very sacred, sacred profession that we are in and vocation that we participate in. I just want to say in closing in the Speech from the Throne, that anybody in this Chamber that puts their name on a sign, I respect. I do respect every member in this Chamber. We all go through different debates in our political parties, but I respect everyone. Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: Order. The hour being 4:30 p.m., pursuant to Rule 45(5), I am interrupting the proceedings in order to put the question on a motion

of the honourable Member for The Maples (Mr. Aglugub), that is, the motion for an address in reply to the Speech from the Throne.

Do members wish to have the motion read?

An Honourable Member: Dispense.

Mr. Speaker: Dispense.

THAT the following address be presented to His Honour the Lieutenant Governor:

We, the members of the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba, thank Your Honour for the gracious speech addressed to us at this Fourth Session of the Thirty-Eighth Legislature of Manitoba.

Mr. Speaker: Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the motion?

Some Honourable Members: Agreed.

Some Honourable Members: No.

Voice Vote

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

Some Honourable Members: Yea.

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

Some Honourable Members: Nay.

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

Mr. Leonard Derkach (Official Opposition House Leader): Well, Mr. Speaker, you know, I think we should do this on division.

Mr. Speaker: On division. Agreed? *[Agreed]*

* * *

An Honourable Member: Five o'clock.

Mr. Speaker: It is the will of the House to call it five o'clock? *[Agreed]*

Order, please. I want to take this opportunity to address the House. When we are adjourning, it is proper for members to be in their chairs, and we have a procedure that when the Mace comes up and the Speaker leaves with the Mace, that is when the members depart. That is respect for the institution of this House.

Is it the will of the House to call it five o'clock? It has been agreed to, so the hour being 5 p.m., this House is adjourned and stands adjourned until 1:30 p.m. tomorrow (Wednesday).

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Tuesday, November 8, 2005

CONTENTS

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS			
		Provincial Debt Hawranik; Selinger	266
Introduction of Bills		Highway Infrastructure Renewal Cullen; Lemieux	267
Bill 9—The Farm Practice Protection Amendment Act Wowchuk	259	Patient Care and Safety Gerrard; Sale	267
Bill 203—The Health Services Amendment and Health Services Insurance Amendment Act Gerrard	259	Children and Crime Lamoureux; Melnick	268
Bill 200—The Manitoba Public Insurance Corporation Amendment Act Mitchelson	259	Agriculture Nevakshonoff; Wowchuk	268
Bill 201—The Child and Family Services Amendment Act (Grandparent Access) Rowat	259	Lowlands National Park Fauschou; Struthers	269
Bill 205—The Elections Amendment Act (Number of Voters in Polling Subdivisions) Rocan	260	Provincial Parks Fauschou; Struthers	269
Petitions		Members' Statements	
Provincial Road 340 Rowat	260	Windstorm Costs Penner	270
Pembina Trails School Division—New High School Driedger	260	CT Scanner (Brandon) Caldwell	270, 277
Crocus Investment Fund Lamoureux	261	Charleswood Broncos Driedger	271
Ministerial Statements		Riverdale Place Homes Nevakshonoff	271
Winnipeg Millennium Library Robinson	261	Most Generous Manitobans (Kola) Maguire	271
Reimer	262		
Gerrard	262		
Oral Questions		ORDERS OF THE DAY	
Brand Manitoba Project Murray; Doer	262	GOVERNMENT BUSINESS	
Reimer; Rondeau	264	Adjourned Debate (Eighth Day of Debate)	
Winnipeg Regional Health Authority Stefanson; Sale	265	Taillieu	272
Policing Services Goertzen; Chomiak	265	Melnick	277
		Derkach	281
		Doer	286