

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

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MANITOBA LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
Thirty-Ninth Legislature

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Wednesday, November 21, 2007

The House met at 1:30 p.m.

PRAYER

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

PETITIONS

Neepawa, Minnedosa and Areas—Local Hospitals

Mr. Stuart Briese (Ste. Rose): Mr. Speaker, I wish to present the following petition to the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba.

These are the reasons for this petition:

Residents of Neepawa, Minnedosa, and the surrounding areas are concerned about the long-term viability of their respective local hospitals. Impending retirements, physician shortages, and the closure of many other rural emergency rooms have caused residents to fear that their health-care facilities may also face closure in the future.

Local physicians and many residents have expressed their support for a proposed regional health-care centre to service both communities.

It is believed that a new regional health centre would help secure and maintain physicians and would therefore better serve the health-care needs of the region.

The success of other regional hospitals, such as Boundary Trails Health Centre, has set the precedent for the viability and success of a similar health centre for the Neepawa and Minnedosa area.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To request the Minister of Health (Ms. Oswald), to consider the feasibility of a joint health centre, including an emergency room, to service Neepawa and Minnedosa and the surrounding area.

To urge the Minister of Health to consider sustaining health-care services in this area by working with local physicians and the Assiniboine Regional Health Authority on this initiative.

This petition is signed by Bernard Enns, Sylvia Juskowiak, Amanda West 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.

Provincial Nominee Program

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

The background to this petition is as follows:

Immigration is critically important to the future of our province, and the 1998 federal Provincial Nominee Program is the best immigration program that Manitoba has ever had.

The current government needs to recognize that the backlog in processing PNP applications is causing additional stress and anxiety for would-be immigrants and their families and friends here in Manitoba.

The current government needs to recognize the unfairness in its current policy on who qualifies to be an applicant, more specifically, by not allowing professionals such as health-care workers to be able to apply for PNP certificates in the same way a computer technician would be able to.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To urge the Premier (Mr. Doer) and his government to recognize and acknowledge how important immigration is to our province by improving and strengthening the Provincial Nominee Program.

Mr. Speaker, this is signed by Felix Sangalang, Lourdes Policarpio, E. Torres and many, many other fine Manitobans.

Introduction of Guests

Mr. Speaker: Prior to Oral Questions, I'd like to draw the attention of honourable members to the public gallery where we have with us from Red River College Language Training Centre 14 Adult English as an Additional Language students under the direction of Linda Schroeder. This group is located in the constituency of the honourable Member for Fort Rouge (Ms. Howard).

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

ORAL QUESTIONS

Conawapa Dam Status of Project

Mr. Hugh McFadyen (Leader of the Official Opposition): On a completely non-partisan note, I want to take the opportunity to wish the Winnipeg Blue Bombers well in this weekend's Grey Cup. The Premier has made similarly non-partisan comments, I know, over the past couple of days, and we look forward to a great day on Sunday. It's always good to be Blue and never more so than this coming Sunday, Mr. Speaker.

We also want to take the opportunity to wish the University of Manitoba Bisons every bit as much success in the Vanier Cup.

It does promise, Mr. Speaker, to be a great week for Manitobans.

Mr. Speaker, I want to just now turn attention to yesterday's Speech from the Throne. We know that this is a government that has a record of re-announcing initiatives time and time again. Throne Speech after Throne Speech is a rehash of old initiatives, recycled from speech to speech.

The one noticeable difference that we see from one speech to another year after year is that they usually drop off the failures from one year to the next. There was lots of reference last year to Wuskwatim; nothing this year. Transmission capacity; barely any reference this year other than the east-west power grid which we all support and which Sterling Lyon campaigned on in 1977, and we certainly look forward to seeing that move ahead, Mr. Speaker.

I also would note, Mr. Speaker, that the speech fails to make reference to the biggest capital projects of our generation. Last year, seven references to Conawapa in the government documentation; this year nothing. Last year reference to Wuskwatim; this year nothing.

I just want to ask the Premier: We can understand why he doesn't want to talk about Wuskwatim, why he doesn't want to talk about bipole Nos. 2 and 3 out of the major capital projects. We're now curious though, Mr. Speaker, about Conawapa. Can the Premier indicate whether Conawapa has now gone from the recycling bin to the garbage bin?

Hon. Gary Doer (Premier): I'd like to thank the honourable member for his non-partisan question.

We certainly will continue to support the Winnipeg football club and the University of Manitoba. In fact, we have a bet with the premier-elect, who's being sworn in in a couple of hours in the province of Saskatchewan, who, unlike members opposite, campaigned on more nurses and more doctors—a much more successful campaign.

I would point out, Mr. Speaker—

An Honourable Member: Come to Virden and we'll put the sign up.

* (13:40)

Mr. Doer: Mr. Speaker, I will enjoy putting up the sign in our new four-lane highway to the Saskatchewan border with Welcome to Manitoba—Home of the 2007 Grey Cup Champions, and after the Bisons have won, we will leave enough room on that sign for 2007, 2008, 2009. I will put one on the Yellowhead Highway for 2011 and 2012. You know, sunny skies for Manitoba football, and we look forward to that.

Mr. Speaker, I note that there wasn't a great deal of fanfare also on the new downtown Hydro building in the Speech from the Throne, but I guess he thinks we're cancelling that as well. Oh, oh no, we didn't, we just topped up that building today. The last storey is now complete and you know, it actually represents the difference between members opposite—

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Mr. Doer: The member from Brandon is chirping already again. Give us a few questions, be patient.

Mr. Speaker—

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Speaker: Order. I need to be able to hear the questions and the answers, please.

The honourable First Minister has the floor.

Mr. Doer: Yes, the building represents, first of all, a cancellation of a building that was planned and approved under the Conservatives to go in suburban southwest Winnipeg. We're proud of the fact that not only did we cancel it in the suburbs of Winnipeg—I guess that's interference—in the suburbs of Winnipeg. We're proud of the fact it's in downtown Winnipeg. We're proud of the fact, Mr. Speaker, that it will have

2,000 workers at that site in downtown Winnipeg, and it will have a gold LEED standard of energy efficiency. There will be solar panels, there will be geothermal, there will be renewable hydro-electric power. That's our vision for the future. We didn't put it in the Speech from the Throne, and no, we're not cancelling the Hydro building. We're going to keep going forward.

**Manitoba Hydro Power Line
Location on West Side**

Mr. Hugh McFadyen (Leader of the Official Opposition): Mr. Speaker, he said nothing about Conawapa. He says he's not cancelling the Hydro building. He's not talking about Conawapa any longer. I want to say we have the three largest capital projects announced last year that will supposedly materialize at some point in the future. We've got no reference to them in the Throne Speech yesterday, and the Premier refuses to say today whether Conawapa's on or off.

We certainly hear the talk about the Hydro tower, and the Premier will be interested to know that we had representatives of private business meet with us this morning to say that nobody in the private sector wants to invest in downtown Winnipeg. We know there's lots of government investment going on downtown. The private sector doesn't want to do it, Mr. Speaker, because frankly they don't want to invest anywhere in Manitoba under this government. That's been the track record of this government. That's why, you know, he talks about the land of the bright sun, and I think he may be on to something as a potential replacement for Manitoba's slogan, because we are optimistic about what the Blue Bombers are going to do. We look forward to seeing those signs go up, and we would encourage the Premier to consider if not Friendly Manitoba, then maybe Land of the Bright Sun as an alternate to the spirited you-know-what referred to this morning in the *Free Press*.

Speaking of Spirited Energy, Mr. Speaker, we know that 40 megawatts of energy is going to be spirited from the power line down the west side of the province, a record waste of energy on a project. The rationale for this multi-hundred-million-dollar waste of money, the rationale for the 40 megawatts of spirited energy that the Premier is going to waste as a result of the power line is because of this great number of protesters that are going to go and block power sales from Manitoba.

Now, since we last sat, Mr. Speaker, other Manitobans have added their names, their voices, to the list, the growing list of people opposed to the west-side power line. There are now at least several busloads of protesters that we could send to the United States to protest the west-side power line.

I wonder if the Premier can indicate whether he's got anybody else who's prepared to join him in the Smart car that he and the Member for Assiniboia (Mr. Rondeau) are going to take south when a new government comes into place and builds the line where it should be, on the east side of Manitoba.

Hon. Gary Doer (Premier): Well, Mr. Speaker, we are the new government. We were elected in May 2007, so maybe he missed that election campaign. Maybe he was too busy land developing in Point Douglas, which he said in his alternative Speech from the Throne that he wasn't—

An Honourable Member: I don't remember that was mentioned in any alternative speech.

Mr. Doer: Yes, well, no, apparently we're supposed to be out of land development in his alternative Speech from the Throne.

Speaking of capital projects, Mr. Speaker, I was absolutely shocked on Monday to hear that not only has the member opposite got more unaffordable tax reductions, without subtracting other ones that he recklessly promised in the election campaign, but he also is cutting—reducing, by asking us to match the federal government—he's reducing water protection for Lake Winnipeg. Maybe that's what he wants to do. Lower a few taxes and cut the money to protect Lake Winnipeg.

Further, in speaking of capital projects, and, yes, we're committed to Conawapa, and, yes, you know our position on the transmission line. But, Mr. Speaker, why would the Conservative Party of Manitoba, why would the leader of the Conservatives say on Monday that we should sign an infrastructure agreement with 50 percent less money, because if you don't sign it early enough, there won't be any money left? Is that the position of the Conservative party, to stand with Ottawa to try to subtract the floodway? Or is the position to have all these projects come to the people of Manitoba?

He owes the people of Manitoba an apology.

Child Welfare System Policy Changes

Mr. Hugh McFadyen (Leader of the Official Opposition): Mr. Speaker, of all the ridiculous things the Premier has said—and there have been many—that one is right up there.

We stand with the taxpayers of Manitoba. We stand, Mr. Speaker, against the waste of \$50 million that he has thrown away because of his special deal with the union friends that he entered into on the floodway. While he runs around, you know, reference after reference in the Throne Speech to why we need the federal government to pay for things in Manitoba because we can't stand on our own two feet at the same time as we waste \$50 million on the floodway, at the same time as we're going to waste more than a billion dollars on the power line. Oh, the federal government should come and help us out.

Oh, boohoo. Well, you know what? Stand up on your own two feet. Start respecting Manitoba taxpayers. Have a vision. Mr. Speaker, it's time that somebody stood up for Manitoba taxpayers and we're not ashamed to do that.

Now, I want to ask the Premier, on a new question, Mr. Speaker. On a new question—

Mr. Speaker: On a new question?

Mr. McFadyen: Well—

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Is this your second supplementary, or are you on a new question?

Mr. McFadyen: New question.

Mr. Speaker: On a new question.

Mr. McFadyen: Mr. Speaker, the members opposite are trying to suggest that I can't ask a question on Child and Family Services and I beg to differ.

I want to ask the Premier, given the record of his government of failure in Child and Family Services, record numbers of deaths of children in care, a failed devolution in terms of the mismanagement of devolution. We've had tragedies involving young people in our province, including Gage Guimond, Phoenix Sinclair and others, Mr. Speaker, in the care of this government, in the care of Child and Family Services. We were disturbed to read a lack of attention to concrete action in the Throne Speech

yesterday, to deal with this issue, and particularly concerned that the government would state, in its own Throne Speech, that it is going to continue to shift its emphasis away from the apprehension of children that are in dangerous situations.

It is not an either/or situation. Where children are in danger, they should be apprehended and placed in a safe place. Why are they saying in their speech that they're moving away from apprehension in favour of prevention, when they should be working on prevention, and they should be doing apprehension in the short run in those cases? Why are they not only indicating that acknowledging the failures of the past seven-and-a-half years, but announcing yesterday the continuation of the very policy of not apprehending children in dangerous situations which has created so much heartache and so much tragedy to date?

* (13:50)

Hon. Gary Doer (Premier): Well, Mr. Speaker, there's two questions and I'm going to deal with both, but our money is on the table for the floodway and our money is on the table for water protection.

Mr. Speaker, it is very important that people in this House not allow any infrastructure agreement to be swiftly passed if it means that less money coming to Manitoba, that would come on a per capita basis to any other province, be subtracted. I'm shocked that the Leader of the Opposition party would take a view to sign the first piece of paper that comes along when it may represent a 50 percent reduction in infrastructure. I believe that you can build the floodway and can have water protection. I would ask the member opposite to apologize and don't undermine Manitobans in getting fair share of infrastructure money for Dauphin, for Russell, for Brandon, for Virden, for Winnipeg, for Thompson, for Flin Flon. Don't undermine the per capita infrastructure investments for Manitoba. You made a mistake, sir, and you should retract your comments.

Mr. Speaker, we consider any death of children in care and out of care a serious issue for all of us, and everyone in this House cares about a tragedy of a child death. Everybody cares equally. There's no one that has kind of moral ownership of people in care that are facing very tragic situations. And, you know, if it's one child, if it's 19 children, if it's 11 children, it's too many. Members know the statistics and so do we, but it's not a matter of statistics. It's a matter of doing everything we can humanly do to create the conditions to allow children to have a safe family,

because the best place still to be is a safe and secure family. It is also important that when children can't safely remain in this family that any kind of care is as safe as possible.

We have increased child care protection considerably since we were elected. We have committed ourselves a year ago to the three independent reports that were produced to us. We are not producing a U-turn in our Speech from the Throne. We're committed to implementing those recommendations. We've done over half of the staffing in terms of those recommendations. We're still committed to another numbers of staff which we said before the Speech from the Throne, during the Speech from the Throne, and today after the Speech from the Throne. We are going to continue to try to ensure that kids have the safest possible conditions.

I would point out, Mr. Speaker, that we believe strongly that the foster parents that have been established, 500 more families, is an important step forward since the report was produced a year ago. But when children die in tragic circumstances where accountability is necessary, whether it's criminal or whether it's to the system itself or to the agencies itself, we take that accountability very seriously as I know every Manitoban does. Every Manitoban cares about kids, and certainly we know that people on all sides of the Legislature care about children.

Mr. McFadyen: I will agree with the Premier. This is not an issue of who cares more. Everybody cares. It is an issue, though, of competence, and there is a duty and a responsibility on the government in difficult circumstances which we acknowledge. Every child that is in contact with this system is in contact with it because of a difficult circumstance and because of a dangerous circumstance. We acknowledge that by its nature there are things which happen in the system which are heartbreaking and tragic.

However, Mr. Speaker, there is a responsibility on the part of governments that have legislative and moral responsibility for the management of these systems to do so in as competent a manner as possible, setting aside fuzzy, well-meaning notions, naïve notions, of what's happening and replacing those with a clear and direct and safety-based approach to Child and Family Services. What we had been looking for and have been asking for are measures to develop caseload standards, to bring caseloads down, development of mentoring programs for new workers, completion of the CFS

standards manual, development of risk-assessment tools, and, most importantly, a clear direction to all workers within the system that safety comes first, that they should not be directed or in any way influenced to leave children in dangerous situations for cultural reasons, for family reunification reasons or for any other reason when there is a better alternative that is better from a safety standpoint.

And we were very concerned to see the language in this Throne Speech yesterday where they say on page 6 that we will shift focus from apprehension to prevention, Mr. Speaker. You cannot shift away from apprehension in a situation where children are at risk. You need to both work at prevention for the longer term, and focus on apprehension in the short term where children are at risk.

Why are they carrying on with the failed policies of the past eight years that have resulted in record numbers of deaths? Why are they continuing to turn a blind eye and allow the system to be mismanaged by their government by sending conflicting signals, fuzzy directives and establishing a lack of accountability and responsibility for the well-being of these children who, by the very nature of the circumstances they're in, are in a situation of vulnerability?

Mr. Doer: Mr. Speaker, I would urge the member to read the annual reports on the statistics. Statistics do not describe. They provide the facts, but they don't provide the story because any child that dies in care is unacceptable to anyone in this House and anyone in Manitoba. But I would ask members not to misrepresent the numbers.

Mr. Speaker, in terms of fuzzy, the recommendation dealing with 150 staff which was made a year ago, we, I believe, have hired 78 and we have 70 more on the way in terms of front-line staff. That's on top of the extra staff we have hired since '99.

I do regret that we did not backfill the total cuts which was identified in terms of foster care parents. We didn't totally backfill those from our first few years in office, from the cuts that were made in the 1990s. I'm pleased that we've got now results of 500 extra foster placements for children. I'm pleased that, in terms of child protection, the cyber tip line was instituted by the former Minister of Justice, now the Minister of Family Services (Mr. Mackintosh). I'm pleased that we are hiring a separate Crown prosecutor for children that are at risk from predators here in Manitoba: a separate, dedicated, Crown prosecutor.

The issue here is implementing recommendations that were made a year ago to not have all our eggs in only the apprehension basket, but to also put some resources into the prevention area. This is a recommendation made by the Child Advocate, made by the Ombudsman, made by the chief child psychologist at the Manitoba Adolescent Treatment Centre, made by other people on the front lines that if we had a little more resources in the area of trying to back up families pre-apprehension, we could make, perhaps, a safer difference to kids. It's not to subtract from one, Mr. Speaker. It's not to subtract from one. It's to add to the safety of children, and we think that that hopefully will make a difference for children and their safety.

Throne Speech Rural Health Care

Mr. Kelvin Goertzen (Steinbach): Certainly we're disappointed that the Premier says that he's pleased with the system that continues to put children at risk.

Mr. Speaker, the Throne Speech is supposed to outline how a government is going to deal with the most critical issues that our province faces, and residents in 14 communities across rural Manitoba will have been very disappointed yesterday. Fourteen communities representing thousands of Manitobans have had their emergency rooms closed for months; in some cases, years, because of this NDP government's inability to ensure the proper medical staff available to keep those ERs open.

Can the Minister of Health indicate to those 14 communities, to those thousands of Manitobans who are affected, whether or not she failed to advocate on their behalf with this Throne Speech, or whether or not the Premier didn't believe it was important enough to put a solution in the Throne Speech?

Hon. Theresa Oswald (Minister of Health): Mr. Speaker, I find it interesting that the member opposite would make mention of a failure to advocate; this same member who served as the co-chair of the Tory election campaign, who was arguably the chief engineer or a partner thereof of a party that only made it out of Winnipeg once for a health-care announcement, only managed to make reference to perhaps adding a handful of nurse practitioners, didn't offer to bring us one doctor and didn't offer to train us one nurse.

Failure to advocate, indeed.

* (14:00)

Mr. Goertzen: That'll be slim comfort to those residents in Reston, in Erickson, in Rossburn, in Wawanesa, in Birtle, in Rivers, in Baldur, and the list goes on and on, Mr. Speaker, of emergency rooms that have been closed and remain closed under this NDP government. Thousands of Manitobans left without access to critical care when they most need it. And this Minister of Health gives them platitudes instead of a plan. She gives them arrogance instead of an answer.

Can this Minister of Health tell these residents, tell these communities, whether or not she specifically ignored the concerns in the Throne Speech because she doesn't have a plan, or is it because they didn't vote the right way in the last election, Mr. Speaker?

Ms. Oswald: Well, Mr. Speaker, using the member opposite's logic, I'm pretty sure that we wouldn't have been planning the redevelopment of the Bethesda ER in Steinbach, if that's his logic, but I'm sure that members of rural Manitoba took absolutely zero comfort from the Tory non-platform on rural health care.

Let's talk about a little bit of progress that's been happening in rural health care. We've shown our commitment. We've shown our commitment to capital projects: new, renovated hospitals in Brandon, Swan River, Thompson, The Pas, Beausejour, Pinawa, Gimli, Morden-Winkler, Ste. Anne, Steinbach and Shoal Lake. CT scanners, Mr. Speaker, not in the city of Winnipeg, but in Brandon, Steinbach, Thompson. There's not enough time.

Anti-Gang Legislation Government Initiatives

Mr. Gerald Hawranik (Lac du Bonnet): After months of front-page news on gang shootings during which 11 Manitobans were shot in gang-related shootings since July 14, on Monday, the Premier stated that he was planning to overhaul Manitoba's anti-gang legislation. Yesterday, during the Throne Speech, all Manitobans were disappointed when they found out that there was to be no overhaul as promised. All that we would get is simply tinkering with failed NDP legislation.

So I ask the Minister of Justice: Why does he refuse to overhaul the anti-gang laws in Manitoba?

Hon. Dave Chomiak (Minister of Justice and Attorney General): I'm very pleased the member has provided me with the opportunity to announce a decision that was made last week at the

FPT conference by all 14, regardless of political stripe, Justice ministers to support phase 1 of Manitoba's recommendations for changing laws in the federal government dealing with gangs. First phase approved unanimously by every province dealing with—and the Minister Nicholson, I think the member might be familiar with him, he's the Conservative Cabinet minister, thanking Manitoba for bringing the recommendations forward and promising to bring legislation forward. We'll be in Ottawa to support the minister and to bring that legislation forward because it's good for all of Canada to fight gangs. We're with that, Mr. Speaker, as is every province, and I wish the member opposite would come on board, help fight gangs.

Mr. Hawranik: This minister continues to point to Ottawa for a solution when he should really be looking in the mirror for a solution. There's a massive gang problem in Manitoba. One that has flourished under this NDP's soft-on-crime policies and the anemic response of this minister is to tinker with failed NDP gang legislation.

So I ask the minister: Why has he failed to overhaul the anti-gang laws in Manitoba? What is he afraid of?

Mr. Chomiak: The member will know that criminal law is a federal responsibility, and we've supported changes to the Criminal Code. I know it's a problem for members to grasp that. Any place that we have had jurisdiction, such as safer communities law that Alberta has adopted because they followed our example of closed over 200, any place where we have jurisdiction we've taken action, and we're taking further action, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, some of the legislation has not been effective. Some of it's been changed, as is the Criminal Code legislation dealing with gang organizations that hasn't been used for a decade. We've asked them to change that so that we can identify gangs, list gangs and schedule gangs, and I hope Ottawa does that in phase 2 of the recommendations they are now reviewing to change the Criminal Code as a result of Manitoba's recommendations.

Kyoto Targets Government's Commitment

Mrs. Heather Stefanson (Tuxedo): Well, Mr. Speaker, the NDP government's track record on reducing greenhouse gas emissions in this province is nothing more but a bunch of empty rhetoric. In the

last election campaign, they promised to meet Kyoto targets for the greenhouse gas emissions by 2012. Yet, in the Throne Speech yesterday, this government committed to complete only 5 percent of the work needed to meet those Kyoto targets over three years. That leaves 95 percent of the rest of the work to be done within a two-year period. So, five percent in three years, 95 percent in two years; is this government really committed towards meeting those Kyoto targets?

Hon. Jim Rondeau (Minister of Science, Technology, Energy and Mines): I'd like to thank the member for the question. She is talking about where we're going as far as the green initiative. We have a number of programs, such as the hybrid car rebate program, which I'm happy to tell the people have met wonderful, wonderful initiatives and is moving forward.

I'd like to say that we're moving forward in wind. We've got the first wind farm. We're looking forward to moving that forward. As far as demand-side management, when the members opposite were in government, we were almost dead last in government. There was one further behind you. In our government, we're No. 1 in demand-side energy efficiency. We're moving forward. We have good plans. We've started and we've reduced the increase in greenhouse gases, and we're going to make that target.

Mrs. Stefanson: Was that a yes or a no, or maybe a bunch of more empty rhetoric?

Mr. Speaker, the analogy to this is promises made in an election campaign to give someone a dollar if you vote for me, and then after the election they promise, oh, we'll give you five cents over the next three years, and then, oh, if you vote for us again we'll give you the other 95 that we promised before the last election.

Mr. Speaker, it's unbelievable. It's dishonest to Manitobans. I'll say that if this government is so confident that they can meet the Kyoto target with respect to greenhouse gases, if they're so confident that they can achieve that goal in two years, the 95 percent towards meeting the Kyoto reductions, why wait three years to do the 95 percent? Why not do it now?

Mr. Rondeau: Right now we're No. 1 in the country as far as demand side or energy efficiency. Right now we have built a 99 meg wind farm and we're moving forward in wind. Right now we're taking and

we have prototype hydrogen buses around. Right now we're looking at energy efficiency in new buildings. Right now we're No. 1 as far as geothermal installations. Right now we're getting more hybrids on the road and, Mr. Speaker, we look at the five million trees that we're going to plant. That makes a difference.

As far as pollution, we've decreased the amount of pollution in major emitters. We've closed down the Selkirk coal plant. We're doing things right now, and I'm proud of our record. It stands as gold compared to the members opposite.

Agriculture Industry Assistance for Producers

Mr. Ralph Eichler (Lakeside): Mr. Speaker, agriculture was a scarce commodity in the Throne Speech. This was given disturbing new challenges facing our hog and cattle producers. Manitoba Cattle Producers Association Martin Unrau stated, and more recently I quote, the worst year since BSE is way too much for us to handle. Cash injection is something through the CAIS program. We need something that's positive.

Mr. Speaker, will the Minister of Agriculture step up to the plate, tell producers in this province when the money is going to flow as they are sorely needed within this province?

Hon. Rosann Wowchuk (Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Initiatives): Mr. Speaker, I don't know where the member opposite comes from, but where I come from \$95 million is a lot of money.

Mr. Speaker, there are many groups that are hurting because of the high Canadian dollar and the livestock industry is one of those. That's why when I was in Toronto at the Ag ministers' meeting we talked about how we might make changes, how we might be able to—money to flow better through the various advances, how we might be able to have money flow, but the member opposite is not recognizing that there is an advance program. There's a problem with that advance program, and I've asked to visit with the federal government.

* (14:10)

Mr. Eichler: Mr. Speaker, obviously Perimeteritis has got the Minister of Agriculture as well. Somebody from Swan River who doesn't even know where Lakeside is at, she ought to get out of the Perimeter once in a while.

Mr. Speaker, the need to protect a multimillion dollar livestock sector is urgent. Keystone Ag Producers Vice-President Robert McLean, stated, and I quote, government farm organizations and industry, I hope they bring all of us together at the table to find a long-term solution. If they don't do something very quickly, I'm not sure what kind of industry will be left. End of quote.

Mr. Speaker, I ask the minister again: What steps is she taking to get assistance into the hands of producers sooner than later? This is no time to dither. Our farm families need assistance now.

Ms. Wowchuk: Again, I—

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Ms. Wowchuk: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I will say again that ministers across the country, both federally and provincially, recognize the serious challenge that is facing the industry and that is why we met last weekend to try to make changes to the programs so the money can flow more quickly.

Again, I would say to the member opposite, he says there is no money there. Ninety-five million this year; provincial money, Mr. Speaker. That's 40 percent of the money. The federal money is on top of that. We are looking to make changes. There is the cash advance program that is administered by the Manitoba Cattle Producers Association that we're trying to change. There is a targeted cash advance that some groups have applied for and there are other changes that are being made.

Reporting Medical Errors Regional Health Authorities

Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights): Mr. Speaker, today we have an important conference in Winnipeg on one of the most important issues of today, patient safety. The provincial Patient Safety Conference features the stories of people like Claire Elisabeth Lewis who died tragically after a medical error.

It is more than two years now after the passage of Bill 17, which made reporting of medical errors mandatory in Manitoba, and yet we're faced with a situation today where only one of eleven regional health authorities has an easy Web-accessible way of reporting medical errors.

I ask the Premier (Mr. Doer) to explain why there is a 91 percent failure rate for regional health

authorities to deliver a clear way to report medical errors.

Hon. Theresa Oswald (Minister of Health): Certainly, hosting a conference here in Winnipeg concerning patient safety is a very important part in the development of patient safety initiatives. The member opposite and I have had a number of conversations, of course, about improving patient safety and that's why we stood together in passing The Apology Act just some weeks ago.

We also know that we have discussed the fact that that Apology Act is one small part of a broader picture, including the amendment of the RHA act which served to enshrine in law the practice of reporting and investigating. Regional health authorities across the province have protocols for this, whether they're of a technological nature or otherwise, and that reporting is being done because it's enshrined in the law, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Gerrard: Mr. Speaker, The Apology Act is important, but without other ingredients it's not going to work to the extent that it should.

The one regional health authority, the Winnipeg Regional Health Authority, which has a mechanism for reporting, on its Web site, of medical errors has a very bad definition of what is a critical incident. It says a critical incident is not a critical incident if it's the result of a risk inherent in medical services provision. Mr. Speaker, a plane crash is an inherent risk of travelling in an airplane, but no one would argue that a plane crash is not a critical incident. Clearly, we need a much better definition of what is a critical incident so it's clear to everybody.

I ask the Minister of Health: When is she going to start by having a much better definition of critical incident so we can proceed to proper reporting of medical errors?

Ms. Oswald: Again, we know that efforts that have been made in this province to improve patient safety are very clear. We know that, prior to the Sinclair report into the pediatric-cardiac program in the '90s, the culture was for medical errors to be swept under the carpet. We know that that no longer exists today as a result of a number of initiatives that have taken place: the Manitoba patient safety institute; we know that the amendments to The Regional Health Authority Act; we know that The Apology Act, new here in Manitoba, is going to be very helpful.

What I'd like to inquire about the member opposite, as he was railing against the health-care

administrative spending just last week, is he insisting now that we increase spending to administration and not front-line care? I'm just wondering.

Mr. Gerrard: Reduction of spending on patient safety should be the last thing that's reduced, and anybody who suggests otherwise should be sacked.

The Winnipeg Regional Health Authority definition is designed to cover up and refuse consideration of many medical errors just as critical incidents like Claire Elisabeth Lewis's death was initially called a risk of surgery.

Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Health has left the chair of the board of the Manitoba Institute for Patient Safety vacant for more than 10 months. There was not even a mention of patient safety in the Throne Speech yesterday. Patient safety is clearly at the bottom of the priority of this government.

I ask the Premier: When he will put patient safety at the top of his agenda rather than at the bottom?

Ms. Oswald: I seem to have hit a nerve with the member opposite concerning his flip-flopping attitudes about spend today, don't spend yesterday, spend a little more tomorrow.

What I can say very clearly, Mr. Speaker, is of course we take patient safety very seriously which is why we have the Institute for Patient Safety, which is why we've made amendments to The RHA Act and to The Medical Act, which is why we are continuing to work with our health-care professionals and we're continuing to build capital infrastructure.

I can assure the member opposite that when we complete our commitment, our \$40-million commitment, to the redevelopment of the Women's Hospital, that we're going to ensure that all the recommendations from these bodies comes forward to ensure that incidents are reported, that there's open and honest communication and that patients in Manitoba continue to be as healthy as they possibly can be, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: Time for Oral Questions has expired.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

Football Victories

Mr. Cliff Cullen (Turtle Mountain): Mr. Speaker, it is with a strong sense of Manitoba pride that I extend my congratulations to both the Winnipeg Blue Bombers and the Manitoba Bisons.

These teams will both be advancing to their respective championship finals this weekend.

The Blue Bombers defeated the favoured Toronto Argonauts in their home stadium on Sunday and earned the right to compete against the Saskatchewan Roughriders this weekend for the Grey Cup. In stealing the win from Toronto, the Blue and Gold have a chance to win their first championship since 1990 and will make their first appearance in the final since 2001.

Unfortunately, the Bombers lost quarterback and Most Outstanding Player candidate Kevin Glenn. Replacing him for the big match will be Ryan Dinwiddie coming off a promising college football career with Boise State.

Despite this challenge, we here in Manitoba are confident that our team's forward momentum, led by the play of Charles Roberts and Milt Stegall, will prevail this weekend as our rivalry with neighbouring Saskatchewan culminates this Sunday.

Not to be overshadowed, the University of Manitoba Bisons football team has turned in another dominating season and will be competing for the Vanier Cup. Having posted an undefeated 10 and 0 record this season, the Bisons will get an opportunity to avenge their 2001 Vanier Cup loss against St. Mary's. Led by quarterback and team captain John Mackie, the Bisons will be looking to earn their third Canadian Interuniversity Sport championship and their first since 1970.

In closing, I would like to reiterate my congratulations to both the Bombers and the Bisons. What they have achieved this year is truly outstanding. As fans, we are lucky to enjoy such competitive professional and university football clubs in Manitoba.

Mr. Speaker, on behalf of the Progressive Conservative caucus and all Manitobans, I wish both teams the best of luck in their championship games. Go Bombers! Go Bisons!

National Addictions Awareness Week

Ms. Bonnie Korzeniowski (St. James): Mr. Speaker, since 1981 communities in every corner of this province have been co-ordinating events to raise awareness about addictions. In 1987, the federal government proclaimed the third week of November each year as National Addictions Awareness Week.

This year's National Addictions Awareness Week is themed: It Takes a Healthy Community to

Raise a Child. The organizers seek to provide information to Canadians through a wide array of activities that raise awareness about addictions issues. The events take a decidedly positive tone and celebrate the advances in addictions awareness and create a culture of support for those dealing with addictions.

It is truly a pleasure to see the fantastic collaboration that is happening as a result of this event. This week is building partnerships with First Nations, Inuit, Métis and non-Aboriginal professionals working toward providing the highest quality care, service and support to people dealing with addictions. The organizers have shown that when people work together toward a common goal, any obstacle can be overcome. The unified front that this diverse cross section of Canadian society provides forms the base that many in our community need to overcome an addiction.

Mr. Speaker, the National Addictions Awareness Week involves more than 600,000 participants from right across Canada in events like sober dances, walkathons, informational sessions and much more.

I would like to extend my congratulations to all the organizers and volunteers of this year's National Addictions Awareness Week. Their ongoing efforts are making a very real difference in the lives of not only those with addictions, but those supporting family and friends and loved ones fighting an addiction.

Addictions have consequences for the entire community. I know I speak for all honourable members when I say that we have a responsibility to educate Manitobans about addictions. Let us use this week to do just that, as well as celebrate the advances and raise awareness about addictions. Thank you.

* (14:20)

Oak Park Raiders

Mrs. Myrna Driedger (Charleswood): Mr. Speaker, I would like to extend congratulations to the Oak Park Raiders football club for capturing the Anavet Cup as the Winnipeg High School Football League AAA Champions.

The road to the championship was a difficult one for the Raiders who entered the post-season in fourth place with a 4 to 3 record. Their opponent in the semifinals was the undefeated two-time former champions St. Paul's Crusaders. The Raiders'

close-fought victory over the Crusaders gave the team a boost of confidence by beating a team that had not lost in three years of play.

Having accomplished this major upset, the Raiders turned their focus to the final game played at Canad Inns Stadium. On November 9, under the bright lights of the big league field, the Raiders were able to fight off their pre-game nerves and come out with a strong effort against their opponent, the Sisler Spartans. Trailing 19 to 15 in the late stages of the game with the Spartans in possession of the football, the Raiders made a key interception and were able to capitalize on the opportunity.

In the end, the Raiders came away with a 29 to 19 victory over the Spartans led by quarterback Tye Noble, Jeremy Lomonaco, who had three interceptions, and Anthony Matt with two touchdowns.

For Oak Park, it is their first championship victory since 2002. For Coach Stu Nixon, it is his first league championship and not one that he or any of his players are soon to forget. Oak Park Raider fans should be grateful to their team for providing another highly entertaining season.

Again, I wish to congratulate the Oak Park Raiders on their league championship win and thank everyone involved with the Raiders over the course of the season because, Mr. Speaker, it is the parents, teachers and volunteers whose behind-the-scenes work makes memorable events such as these possible. Enjoy your victory, Raiders; you earned it.

National Child Day

Ms. Erin Selby (Southdale): Mr. Speaker, I rise today to acknowledge National Child Day, which is recognized in Canada and across the world on November 20. This day marks the adoption by the United Nations of the Convention of the Rights of the Child. The convention spells out basic human rights to which children under the age of 18 throughout the world are entitled.

In this province, we're working hard to ensure that children are given the opportunities they deserve and have their basic needs met, to be treated with dignity and respect, to be protected from harm, and to learn and grow to reach their full potential.

Early childhood education is one dimension of this commitment to Manitoba's children. We recognize that investment in early childhood education benefits children throughout their

schooling and leads to greater opportunities later in life. For that reason, the Province of Manitoba has increased the provincial investment in child care by more than \$14 million to make up for withdrawn federal funds.

We've added over 6,000 funded child-care spaces since 1999 with 2,500 additional spaces still to come. We also recognize the importance of well-trained child-care workers to our children's future. I'm proud to say that our new investments have also improved training and salaries for existing staff and have helped train 700 new child-care workers, including 250 who will graduate this year.

Mr. Speaker, our children are our future and deserve the best start we can give them in life, and that's why National Child Day is so important. It recognizes the rights of our smallest citizens and reminds us of our responsibility as a society to protect them and provide them with the best possible care and support we can. Thank you.

Reporting Medical Errors

Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights): Mr. Speaker, first, my colleague the MLA for Inkster (Mr. Lamoureux) and I want to wish the very best of success to the Winnipeg Blue Bombers and the University of Manitoba Bisons in their championship games.

Second, I want to speak to the appalling situation in which we find ourselves with respect to medical errors in Manitoba. Only one of 11 RHAs have a process for reporting medical errors on their Web site, and the position of the chair of the board of the Manitoba Institute for Patient Safety has been vacant for some 10 months.

There was no mention of patient safety in the Throne Speech. Even the definition of medical error or a critical incident is so flawed that it's more a cover-up than an open invitation to report medical errors properly. It is sad when we have a government which is more concerned with spin and covering up of medical errors than with properly reporting them.

The NDP approach is totally unacceptable. The Manitoba Liberal Party in government would act very quickly to make the kind of fundamental changes that are needed to improve the reporting and addressing of medical errors properly and making sure that they didn't happen again.

**ORDERS OF THE DAY
GOVERNMENT BUSINESS**

House Business

Hon. Dave Chomiak (Government House Leader): I'd like to announce that the meeting time for the Standing Committee on Crown Corporations scheduled for 6 p.m. this evening to consider reports from the Manitoba Lotteries Corporation is changed and that the committee will now meet at 3:30 this afternoon.

Mr. Speaker: It's been announced that the meeting time for the Standing Committee on Crown Corporations scheduled for 6 p.m. this evening to consider reports from the Manitoba Lotteries Corporation is changed and that the committee will now meet at 3:30 p.m. this afternoon.

**Throne Speech
(First Day of Debate)**

Ms. Erna Braun (Rossmere): Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the Member for The Maples (Mr. Saran), 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 the Second Session of the Thirty-Ninth Legislature of Manitoba.

Motion presented.

Ms. Braun: Mr. Speaker, it is an honour to rise today to speak in support of the Throne Speech. It is a Throne Speech which addresses the well-being of all Manitobans.

I would like to pay particular note to the economic, health care and healthy living initiatives highlighted in His Honour's speech.

Innovation and Competitiveness: These are key words and critical concepts when we look at the economic future for Manitoba. The strength of our economy and our continued competitiveness in the global market will be a major priority for our government. We have much to be proud of here in Manitoba. In the past year, Manitoba has achieved the third-highest economic growth rate among provinces, with a projection for the second-highest growth rate in 2008. We have the third best employment growth, combined with an unemployment rate of just 4.4 percent. We've

experienced the second-largest increase in investment and the largest growth in exports.

Ms. Bonnie Korzeniowski, Deputy Speaker, in the Chair

Our economic progress is evident throughout the province and is certainly visible in my constituency of Rossmere. As I drive along Gateway Road and see the many small and large enterprises that dot the landscape, I am reassured that business is welcome in Manitoba and is growing. The signs of expansion and billboards displaying Help Wanted along the road confirm for me what these statistics are telling us.

So how do we maintain this economic development? In order to successfully promote sustainable economic growth into the future, our government has adopted a Seven-Point Growth Strategy, which focusses on innovation, skills training and the strategic plans for key sectors of the economy. It is this planning with a vision that has allowed Manitoba to maintain consistent growth over the past eight years. Manitoba has been the most stable economy in Canada over that period. But we recognize this is a work in progress: Ongoing consultation with the Premier's Economic Advisory Council and with stakeholders from across Manitoba, our government continues to evaluate and update our growth strategy.

* (14:30)

There is another element that is essential to the economic viability of our province. As a teacher, I know that quality education and training are crucial for our citizens to gain the skills and knowledge base that are necessary to sustain and continue the healthy economic growth that we are enjoying. These are the keys for Manitobans to succeed in the marketplace. Therefore, education and training continue to be a major focus, and we are committing to undertake the largest increase in apprenticeship training in our history.

Over the next four years, 4,000 new apprenticeship spaces will be created through a partnership initiative that will be guided by the new Apprenticeship Futures Council. I look around my constituency and I see the variety of operations and businesses, from automotive and cabinet making to stonework and masonry. I know this program will be a boon to these industries by providing the skilled workforce that they require to be successful in Manitoba and the world.

Over the years during my teaching career, I have seen many students who left their small northern communities behind in order to pursue their educational dreams and those of their families here in Winnipeg. Many were successful, but others were not. Coming to the city was not the answer.

Access to educational opportunities is a must, and every region of the province is important to the economic success of Manitoba. I am pleased to see that the Throne Speech highlights the expansion of the University College of the North and a second phase of capital investments for post-secondary campuses in Winnipeg and Brandon and an enhanced Manitoba Bursary Fund providing direct support for students who otherwise could not afford a post-secondary education.

Added labour-market services for immigrants, including a new Qualifications Recognition Strategy, will assist our newest Manitobans in becoming part of our province's economic fabric more quickly, an issue I hear frequently among the many recent immigrants who have chosen Rossmere as their home.

As a classroom teacher for many years, one could say that I lived through the evolution of technology as it applied to teaching, from the slide rule to the calculator, you might say. It is amazing the wonders that transformed both the classroom and teaching. The same could be said for the use of technology in the world of business and industry and the innovations that have resulted in new measures which we know will facilitate the reduction of red tape, such as the streamlining of business permits and licences through the new BizPaL service, on-line filing of PST and other provincial taxes, on-line incorporation and registration of trade names and the creation of a Manitoba Business Portal to allow one-stop access for business transaction over the Internet.

Being innovative and competitive is also about the effective delivery of services to Manitobans. The use of technology will allow for on-line highway traffic condition reports, one-stop replacement for lost or stolen birth certificates, issuing social insurance cards to Manitoba children at birth and a one-stop Career Development Navigator for students and new entrants to the workforce.

The theme of competitiveness must also extend to tax incentives. I am pleased that our government will proceed with the tax reductions announced in this year's budget. These include, effective January 1, 2008, a further reduction in the middle-income tax

rate from 13 percent to 12.75 percent, combined with a \$200 increase in the basic personal exemption and a 60 percent income tax rebate on tuition fees for all post-secondary graduates who live and work in Manitoba.

The most recent changes add to a record that has seen Manitoba income taxes reduced in every budget introduced by our government since 1999. Also effective January 1, 2008, further reductions will be made to the corporate capital tax, which will go from 0.5 percent to 0.4 percent, and, on July 1, 2008, the corporate income tax rate will be reduced from 14 percent to 13 percent. On January 1, 2008, the small business tax rate will be cut again from 3 percent to 2 percent. With this further reduction, Manitoba will go from having the second-highest small business tax rate in Canada in 1999 to the lowest rate in 2008.

Innovation and ideas have become the most powerful drivers of economic growth. The spectacular growth of Manitoba's biotech sector in the past eight years, leading to an increase of over 200 percent in pharmaceutical production and the success of home-grown companies, demonstrate the value of investments in research and training as part of a co-ordinated sector strategy. I am pleased that our government is committed to continue fostering effective linkages between universities, colleges, the government and the private sector. Steps taken by Manitoba leaders to learn from best practices will help guide our future direction.

The community of Rossmere is made up largely of seniors and young families. The theme that emerged strongly from both groups during the election period was that of health services. I would say more so for the seniors, but health care was also important for families with young children, for seniors who are seeing their health decline, their wishes to have timely and compassionate care. For parents there can be nothing more overwhelming and frightening than seeing your child ill or hurt. To know that help is there for you or your family is absolutely critical. As someone who has seen both parents through major health issues, I, too, know how important a well-functioning health-care system is. That is why I am proud to be part of a government for whom improving health care for Manitobans remains a top priority.

Since 1999, we have taken steps to address the impact of the prior decade's cutbacks. We've expanded the education and hiring of health professionals. We have invested in health capital and

introduced new innovations in health delivery. We all note with pride that these changes have had a positive impact. Today, there are 235 more doctors, 1,589 more nurses and over 200 more technologists working in Manitoba than there were eight years ago.

I remember the 1990s, with a massive departure of nurses from Manitoba and yearly reductions in the number of practising physicians. I recall friends whose sons and daughters went off to Texas or Florida in order to practise their chosen profession.

Our change in hiring policies has been accompanied by a concerted effort to expand the education of health professionals. The expansion will continue this year with nursing education spaces added at Manitoba's universities and colleges, the spaces added to the University of Manitoba School of Medicine.

Ensuring that rural emergency care is vital to our health system and building on commitments to emergency medical services, a new primary care paramedic program introduced at Red River College will support improvements in rural emergency services.

As an MLA from a constituency with a growing seniors population, I am heartened by our government's commitment to seniors, with increased staffing levels in personal care homes, building to a target of 400 additional staff, including additional nurses and nurses aides, more dieticians, respiratory therapists and occupational therapists. These additions are part of a long-term strategy to improve the quality of care for seniors.

Health care is important across the province, and our government continues to take action in that regard. Thanks to the investments in the redevelopment of the Health Sciences Centre, the rebuilding of the Brandon Regional Health Centre and the replacement of the Swan Valley Hospital, surgeons and nurses now practise in state-of-the-art operating rooms. New hospitals have been built in Gimli and Morden-Winkler, and a new emergency room was recently opened in The Pas.

Investments in rural Manitoba remain a priority for our government. The capital program will continue this year with the planning and construction of a new hospital in Selkirk, new operating facilities at Ste. Anne Hospital and a redeveloped emergency ward at Steinbach's hospital. Dialysis treatment spaces will be added in Winnipeg, Russell and Gimli

and in the First Nations communities of Berens River, Norway House and Peguis.

In addition, our government has committed to a major investment in the delivery of health services for women and their babies. Consultations on a plan to replace the Women's Hospital at Health Sciences Centre with a state-of-the-art facility will be under way shortly. The investment will also include a south-end birthing centre and a redeveloped maternity ward at the St. Boniface General Hospital.

*(14:40)

I am pleased to see the theme of innovation continues into this government's vision for health care. Investment in the Gamma Knife at Health Sciences Centre has helped make Manitoba a national centre for neurosurgery. These new investments in non-invasive surgery will reduce recovery time for patients and improve outcomes.

From my earliest days as an educator, I have known that a healthy society means having healthy children. That is why I was pleased to hear in the speech that the children's health care will be improved with the installation of a new MRI and a cardiac catheterization lab at Children's Hospital and the development of a new asthma and allergy clinic for children.

Without excellent health-care professionals, we are unable to have quality in our health-care system. Our investments and innovation play a key role in the recruitment of health specials. Two new pediatric cardiologists have been recruited to Manitoba. The launch of a new pediatric ophthalmology program this year has led to the recruitment of a specialist in pediatric ophthalmology.

Madam Deputy Speaker, we have been able to recruit 103 additional specialists to the wonderful province of Manitoba since 1999. When our government invests in people, all Manitobans benefit. Our investments in health professional, health capital and innovation is a measurable improvement in the delivery of service. Key wait times have been reduced for Manitoba citizens. For example, the wait time for radiation therapy is now one week. In the '90s it was as high as six weeks. The wait for an MRI is now six weeks compared to 32 in the 1990s, and for a CT scan it is now eight weeks compared to 16 weeks.

The wait time for cataract surgery is down to 11 weeks from a high of 22 in the 1990s, and the median wait time for all orthopedic surgery is

25 weeks, down from 37. The median wait time for non-surgery cardiac surgeries in Manitoba is now at 13 days, the lowest in the country.

Our government believes that quality health care should be accessible to Manitobans regardless of where they live. Investments in diagnostic programs outside of Winnipeg have not only helped bring wait times down, it has also added convenience for rural patients.

The newly opened MRI at the Boundary Trails Health Centre is the second MRI installed outside of Winnipeg. A decade ago most patients had to travel to Winnipeg to get a CT scan. This important diagnostic test is now available in Brandon, Steinbach, Morden, Winkler, Thompson, The Pas, Selkirk and Portage la Prairie. We are creating better care closer to home for all Manitobans.

Healthy living is a concept that I am very familiar with. After all, I was a home economics teacher for many years, and healthy food and lifestyle choices are the foundations of the home economics curriculum. Helping students learn that healthy foods can be delicious and fun to eat was always very gratifying. Having students discover the benefits of making healthy choices was definitely rewarding.

It continues to be gratifying for me to know that we, as a government, also recognize and support the importance of healthy living in its many forms. Healthy living improves our quality of life, allows us to live longer and healthier lives and with the additional benefit that it reduces the demands on our health-care system.

Recently I was pleased to open the Northeast Pioneers Greenway, which is connecting our neighbourhoods in Rossmere with a fantastic bike and walking path. This is part of a 40-kilometre pathway that will link Birds Hill Park with communities all over Winnipeg. It is a pleasure to see young families out walking or pushing strollers, joggers, Rollerbladers and even seniors power walking. What a terrific venue for physical activity.

Many schools in Manitoba and communities are playing a lead role in developing healthy living plans. Since 2005 when the programs were introduced, almost half of our schools have registered as Schools in Motion and 76 communities have registered as Communities in Motion. This year Workplaces in Motion will be introduced to

encourage Manitobans to incorporate physical activity into their workday.

Being healthy is about making healthy food choices, but also having healthy choices available. The home economics teacher in me is thrilled that our government will be leading with legislation to ban the sale of foods containing trans fats in school vending machines and cafeterias.

We will also be helping to build lifelong, healthy habits in our schools by ensuring that students entering Manitoba high schools will have the opportunity of additional physical activity as part of their school year.

Madam Deputy Speaker, as one of the newer members of this House, I am pleased to move the Speech from the Throne to recognize the success that we have had over the past eight years and which continues to move this province forward, and success that was also recognized by the constituency of Rossmere that elected me to represent them in this Chamber. Therefore, I move that this speech be supported and accepted by all members of this House. Thank you.

Mr. Mohinder Saran (The Maples): Madam Deputy Speaker, it is an honour to second the motion made by my colleague the Member for Rossmere on the November 2007 Throne Speech.

I'm delighted to speak in support of a Throne Speech that reflects so well the priorities of Manitobans.

My colleague has very ably touched on the government's vision for health care, including measures to help Manitobans make healthier choices in the way they live and work. The NDP government, unlike members opposite, knows how much importance Manitobans place on getting better care sooner for themselves and their families. Our government continues to make health care a priority.

The Member for Rossmere also highlighted the progress being made by the government on its Seven-Point Growth Strategy. Our progress vindicates the NDP's belief in making our education policy the foundation of our economic policy. Education spurs the innovation and ideas that make for prosperous societies in the 21st century.

When my constituents elected me to represent The Maples, they were telling the NDP to continue to move forward with health care and education. They could see the NDP's commitment in the

redevelopment of the emergency facilities at Seven Oaks General Hospital. They were appreciative of the NDP's new income tax rebate on tuition fees for recent graduates who are making their home in Manitoba.

My constituents were also voting for our government's continuing leadership in environment matters. The Canadian Energy Alliance, the international Climate Control Group and the Suzuki Foundation have all lauded our government's action on climate change. The governor of Arizona, Janet Napolitano, said recently the province of Manitoba is recognized internationally as a leader in fighting the effects of climate change. *BusinessWeek* magazine has noted that, under the Doer government, sustainable development has become an economic linchpin in the Canadian province of Manitoba.

We take great satisfaction in the fact that Manitoba, as announced during the election campaign and reaffirmed in the Throne Speech, will be the first province in Canada to enshrine Kyoto targets in legislation. This comes at a most critical time. Just last weekend, the United Nations' panel on climate change released its report detailing the quickening pace of global warming. As the chairman of the panel, Rajendra Pachauri, said: What we do in the next two to three years will determine our future. This is a defining moment.

* (14:50)

Our government has been rising to this tremendous challenge by further developing its hydro-electric resources, spurring the development of a huge network of wind farms over the next 10 years, promoting the use of geothermal energy to heat and cool our buildings and encouraging alternative energy sources for vehicles such as biodiesel and hydrogen fuel cells.

Under the previous government, greenhouse gas emission grew by 2.2 megatonnes as opposed to just 0.1 megatonnes under the NDP. Our new legislation will see emission reduced to the 2000 level over the next three years and we know how to accomplish this. We will, for instance, be phasing out the coal-burning generating station in Brandon, helping low-income households across the province afford energy-saving home improvements, and requiring that methane emission from the province's large landfills be reduced.

Mr. Speaker in the Chair

In my own constituency, we have an inspiring example of what Manitobans can accomplish under a government that is focussed on combating climate change. Seven Oaks General Hospital conducted environmental audits and launched a program of energy and water conservation, solid waste reduction, and pollution prevention that earned it certification under the Building Owners and Managers Association of Canada Go Green campaign. Seven Oaks is the first hospital in western Canada and one of only two nationwide to receive this certification.

Our province can also boast that the new Manitoba Hydro office, currently under construction, is going to be the most energy-efficient building in North America.

The Maples constituency is renowned for having one of the highest proportions of new Canadians in Manitoba. It is accordingly very welcome news in the Throne Speech that legislation is on the way that will expand skills training and ease the transition of immigrants into the work force. It's not only good news for new Canadians, but for all Manitobans who stand to benefit directly or indirectly by the contributions that newcomers make to our economy and society.

Let me just allude to some of the headlines that have appeared in the Manitoba press over the last year as a result of our province gaining 10,000 immigrants in 2006, the largest number in half a century. One *Winnipeg Free Press* headline proclaimed: "Immigration saves the day—Chief cause of population growth—Province's nominee program lauded." Another headline read: "Nominee program a lifesaver for businesses."

Such was our government's success in obtaining immigrants to fill occupational shortages that the Alberta employment minister visited Manitoba this year to see what Alberta could learn from our experience.

Our government had already done much to help immigrants settle into their new home. This year's budget alone provides almost \$49.5 million in new funding for settlement services, language training, labour market integration, ethnocultural programs, and anti-racism initiatives.

It is my hope that the anti-racism and ethnocultural initiatives will help create a better understanding of the various cultures represented in Manitoba society and that we will never see the likes

of the Komagata Maru incident again that occurred in Vancouver previously.

There are over 40 community-based programs to help newcomers adjust. We have helped fund the construction of centres for Philippine, Hindu, Islamic and Hellenic ethnocultural organizations. The NDP had increased support for ethnocultural organizations to just over half a million dollars. We value their role in attracting and keeping new immigrants in our province by helping smooth new immigrants' transition to their new home.

In June, our Minister of Labour and Immigration (Ms. Allan) introduced a new settlement strategy that will include better orientation for immigrants before and immediately after their arrival, a new language assessment centre and several hundred additional seats for English language training across the province.

The Throne Speech also announced a new qualifications recognition strategy for making better use of the skills and talents of new Manitobans who have earned their credentials abroad. This would build on the legislation that was passed this fall, The Fair Registration Practices Act. This act calls for transparent, objective, impartial and fair registration practices for professionals and provides for the appointment of a fair registration practices commissioner.

It also requires the minister to help people educated in other countries with the registration process. This act is a step in the right direction. It will help lay the groundwork for the recognition of the skills of foreign-trained professionals, and perhaps some day, we may see a similar process for trades people. When foreign credentials are not recognized, two countries lose out: the country where the immigrant was trained and the country that failed to take advantage of the person's skills.

The NDP has come a long way in speeding the recognition of credentials for international graduates. Manitoba was the first province in Canada to establish a permanent program to assist international doctors in obtaining licences to practise. Our government has partnered with the Certified General Accountants Association of Manitoba to help internationally trained accountants gain their credentials. Our Internationally Educated Engineering Qualifications Program has been in operation since 2003, and we recently launched a pilot program at the University of Manitoba for internationally trained agrologists. All of these

programs provide paid work experience to the participants, something which I long advocated at my previous workplace before becoming an MLA.

When newcomers are given the opportunity to become familiar with the workplace environment in Canada, they will be able to establish themselves in their chosen careers here much more quickly. I hope that such arrangements will become more entrenched in our workplaces.

The Throne Speech highlighted a number of ways our government is taking action on crime, such as hiring more police officers, pressing Ottawa for changes to the federal Criminal Code and Youth Criminal Justice Act. The speech also noted that our Lighthouses program will be expanded. I applaud the move. You could say that my constituency was a Lighthouse pioneer since our Maples Youth Activity Centre has been hosting Lighthouse activities since the program's inauguration in 2001.

*(15:00)

Mr. Speaker, protecting children and youth and providing them with social, recreational, and learning opportunities in the community as culturally diverse as The Maples is an important step in engaging our young people. Community-based crime prevention programs like Lighthouses, a program for youth launched by Manitoba Justice, play a significant role in imparting a sense of social responsibility to youth. These programs develop partnerships among youth, police, Justice personnel and the community in order to promote opportunities to get involved in positive, recreational and crime prevention activities. Lighthouses also allow young people to have a voice regarding their needs and give them the chance to be involved in finding solutions for the challenges facing our communities.

Programs like Lighthouses have been highly successful in offering positive alternatives for young people, and I am proud of the work that the Maples Youth Activity Centre, partnering with the Lighthouses program, does in this regard in my constituency. The Maples Youth Activity Centre is a local community outreach organization that co-ordinates community resources in The Maples to offer safe activities for youth during the evening hours, in-service days and school holidays. Youth can drop in for sports or games in the gym, to make crafts, access equipment like computers and services like the Internet or to just hang out with friends. This program has built an important partnership with the Seven Oaks School Division, especially with

Arthur E. Wright, James Nesbitt, Elwick and Leila North schools, which provide the facilities through which these programs are run. The City of Winnipeg and other community groups and social programs also contribute significantly to the success of this program.

Lighthouses play a fundamental role in providing young people with positive community-based social and recreational activities that are run after hours through local schools and other existing community facilities. These partnerships have strengthened our neighbourhood and provided our youth with the opportunity to develop an enhanced awareness of their personal responsibility for their community. An independent evaluation has found that Lighthouses make a very real and important difference in the lives of the youth and families involved. Because of their success, we are continuing to expand the Lighthouses program this year. Through the hard work of the individuals involved in running Lighthouses and programs like it, young people are given the opportunities they deserve to gather and have fun in a safe and supervised environment.

Mr. Speaker, our Speech from the Throne emphasizes the necessity for inclusion and citizenship. Everyone in our society counts, and no one should be left behind. That is why our government is working so hard to reduce poverty and encourage social mobility. Now, while it is true that the child poverty rate in Manitoba has dropped by 25 percent since 1999 and that there has been a 47 percent reduction in the child poverty rate of families headed by a single woman since we came to office, there is still much more we can do.

Just recently, our government announced the Rewarding Work program, a program designed to support low-income working families and help move people from welfare to work. In the coming months, a further increase in the minimum wage will be announced, and we intend to introduce a new child benefit that will provide further support to working families. Mr. Speaker, hard work should be rewarded and not discouraged by putting up barriers to meaningful participation in our society.

Mr. Speaker, our commitment to inclusion can be recognized by our efforts to make our schools and post-secondary institutions more accessible by our

determination to increase child care spaces and by our efforts to once again include northern and rural Manitoba in our vision for the future. Our government should also be recognized by our determination to include the needs and values of new Canadians in our approach to governing, as outlined in this Speech from the Throne.

On a personal note, Mr. Speaker, I believe that our government is the best positioned to represent the diversity of all Manitobans. As our Speech from the Throne has noted, ". . . we have an Assembly that more closely reflects the face of Manitoba. It includes the largest number of women elected in our province's history and the largest proportion of women of any Legislature in Canada." In our caucus alone, we have former engineers, lawyers, professors, teachers, social workers, business people, journalists, farmers, miners, ministers and many others. We have members with many different ethnic backgrounds, including at least six that I know of who were born outside of Canada. We have two Indo-Canadians serving together for the first time. We now have a woman of colour serving as an MLA for the first time. Together, we are truly representative of Manitoba and, therefore, are best positioned to move Manitoba forward. To quote the Sikh holy book, *The Guru Granth Sahib*: We should have such a society that all the people feel included. No one should be left out. As the Tenth Sikh Guru, Guru Gobind Singhji, said, there is only one race and that is the human race.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Hugh McFadyen (Leader of the Official Opposition): I move, seconded by the Member for Charleswood (Mrs. Driedger), that debate be now adjourned.

Motion presented.

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

Hon. Dave Chomiak (Government House Leader): Five o'clock, Mr. Speaker?

Mr. Speaker: Is it the will of the House to call it 5 o'clock? [*Agreed*]

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

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Wednesday, November 21, 2007

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