

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

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authority of
The Honourable George Hickes
Speaker*

MANITOBA LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
Thirty-Ninth Legislature

Member	Constituency	Political Affiliation
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.
BLADY, Sharon	Kirkfield Park	N.D.P.
BOROTSIK, Rick	Brandon West	P.C.
BRAUN, Erna	Rossmere	N.D.P.
BRICK, Marilyn	St. Norbert	N.D.P.
BRIESE, Stuart	Ste. Rose	P.C.
CALDWELL, Drew	Brandon East	N.D.P.
CHOMIAK, Dave, Hon.	Kildonan	N.D.P.
CULLEN, Cliff	Turtle Mountain	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.
GRAYDON, Cliff	Emerson	P.C.
HAWRANIK, Gerald	Lac du Bonnet	P.C.
HICKES, George, Hon.	Point Douglas	N.D.P.
HOWARD, Jennifer	Fort Rouge	N.D.P.
IRVIN-ROSS, Kerri, Hon.	Fort Garry	N.D.P.
JENNISSSEN, Gerard	Flin Flon	N.D.P.
JHA, Bidhu	Radisson	N.D.P.
KORZENIOWSKI, Bonnie	St. James	N.D.P.
LAMOUREUX, Kevin	Inkster	Lib.
LEMIEUX, Ron, Hon.	La Verendrye	N.D.P.
MACKINTOSH, Gord, Hon.	St. Johns	N.D.P.
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McFADYEN, Hugh	Fort Whyte	P.C.
McGIFFORD, Diane, Hon.	Lord Roberts	N.D.P.
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MITCHELSON, Bonnie	River East	P.C.
NEVAKSHONOFF, Tom	Interlake	N.D.P.
OSWALD, Theresa, Hon.	Seine River	N.D.P.
PEDERSEN, Blaine	Carman	P.C.
REID, Daryl	Transcona	N.D.P.
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RONDEAU, Jim, Hon.	Assiniboia	N.D.P.
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STRUTHERS, Stan, Hon.	Dauphin-Roblin	N.D.P.
SWAN, Andrew, Hon.	Minto	N.D.P.
TAILLIEU, Mavis	Morris	P.C.
WOWCHUK, Rosann, Hon.	Swan River	N.D.P.
<i>Vacant</i>	Elmwood	
<i>Vacant</i>	The Pas	

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Thursday, November 27, 2008

The House met at 1:30 p.m.

PRAYER

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

Bill 208—The Universal Newborn
Hearing Screening Act

Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights): Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the MLA for Inkster (Mr. Lamoureux), that Bill 208, The Universal Newborn Hearing Screening Act; Loi sur le dépistage systématique des déficiences auditives chez les nouveau-nés, be now read a first time.

Motion presented.

Mr. Gerrard: Mr. Speaker, this bill provides for the universal screening of newborns in Manitoba for hearing deficiencies. This screening exists already in 48 states and a number of other provinces. It's about time that we do this in Manitoba to make sure that we're picking up children early on, because children with hearing problems are likely to have problems in school if they're not picked up [*inaudible*]

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

Bill 5—The Highway Traffic Amendment Act
(Promoting Safer and Healthier Conditions
in Motor Vehicles)

Hon. Ron Lemieux (Minister of Infrastructure and Transportation): I move, seconded by the Minister of Healthy Living (Ms. Irvin-Ross), that Bill 5, The Highway Traffic Amendment Act (Promoting Safer and Healthier Conditions in Motor Vehicles), be now read for a first time.

Motion presented.

Mr. Lemieux: This bill introduces measures to enhance the safety on our roadways by banning the use of hand-held cellphones and text-messaging devices while driving. It also prohibits smoking in a vehicle when a child is under the age of 16 or present. Thank you.

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

Bill 219—The Personal Information Protection
and Identity Theft Prevention Act

Mrs. Mavis Taillieu (Morris): I move, seconded by the Member for Minnedosa (Mrs. Rowat), that Bill 219, The Personal Information Protection and Identity Theft Prevention Act; Loi sur la protection des renseignements personnels et la prévention du vol d'identité, be now read a first time.

Motion presented.

Mrs. Taillieu: I have introduced this bill a number of times. This bill governs the collection, use and disclosure of personal information by organizations in the private sector, and it also establishes a duty to notify for these organizations should this personal information be compromised or stolen. In today's society, identity theft is an escalating event. It's the new crime, and personal information is the new currency. So I think that we need to protect people's personal information and, in the event that it is compromised, there should be duty to notify the individuals.

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

Bill 220—The Freedom of Information
and Protection of Privacy Amendment Act
(Duty to Notify)

Mrs. Mavis Taillieu (Morris): I move, seconded by the Member for Minnedosa (Mrs. Rowat), that Bill 220, The Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Amendment Act (Duty to Notify); Loi modifiant la Loi sur l'accès à l'information et la protection de la vie privée (obligation d'avis), be now read a first time.

Motion presented.

Mrs. Taillieu: This bill amends The Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act to require a public body to notify an individual whose personal information is stolen, or lost, or disclosed, or accessed in an unauthorized manner. It is separate from the previous bill because it refers to public bodies while the previous bill referred to organizations in the private sector.

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

PETITIONS

Long-Term Care Facility—Morden

Mr. Peter Dyck (Pembina): Mr. Speaker, I wish to present the following petition to the Legislative Assembly.

The background for this petition is as follows:

Tabor Home Incorporated is a time-expired personal care home in Morden with safety, environmental and space deficiencies.

The seniors of Manitoba are valuable members of the community with increasing health-care needs requiring long-term care.

The community of Morden and the surrounding area are experiencing substantial population growth.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To request the Minister of Health (Ms. Oswald) to strongly consider giving priority for funding to develop and staff a new 100-bed long-term care facility so that clients are not exposed to unsafe conditions and so that Boundary Trails Health Centre beds remain available for acute-care patients instead of waiting placement clients.

This is signed by Rick Klippenstein, Judy Stambuski, Valerie Stambuski 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.

Education Funding

Mr. Cliff Graydon (Emerson): Mr. Speaker, I wish to present the following petition to the Legislative Assembly.

These are the reasons for the petition:

Historically, the Province of Manitoba has received funding for education by the assessment of property that generates taxes. This unfair tax is only applied to the selected property owners in certain areas and confines, including, but not limited to, commercial property owners.

Property-based school tax is becoming an ever-increasing burden without acknowledging the commercial property owner's income or ability to pay.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To request that the Minister of Education, Citizenship and Youth (Mr. Bjornson) considers removing education funding by school tax or education levies from all property in Manitoba, including commercial property.

To request that the Minister of Education, Citizenship and Youth consider finding a more equitable method of funding education, such as general revenue, following the constitutional funding of education by the Province of Manitoba.

This petition is signed by John Ropos, Dave Mach, Gustine Mancini and many, many more fine Manitobans.

* (13:40)

Community Police Offices

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

The background to this petition is as follows:

In the 2007 provincial election, the NDP clearly stated that making communities safer was a priority.

The NDP government did nothing to prevent the McPhillips Street Community Police Office and other offices from closing.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To request the Premier of Manitoba (Mr. Doer) to consider the important role that community police offices can play in making our communities safer.

Mr. Speaker, this is signed by D. Legaspi, B. Legaspi, L. Legaspi and many, many other fine Manitobans. Thank you.

TABLING OF REPORTS

Hon. Andrew Swan (Minister charged with the administration of The Manitoba Lotteries Corporation Act): I am pleased to rise today to table the Manitoba Lotteries Corporation Second Quarter Report for the six months ended September 30, 2008.

MINISTERIAL STATEMENTS

Mumbai Terrorist Attacks

Hon. Gary Doer (Premier): Mr. Speaker, I have a statement for the House.

Mr. Speaker, I rise today in sorrow to condemn the vicious terrorist attacks that have swept across the city of Mumbai. Our government stands firm in our solidarity with India, with all those taken hostage and with the many families affected, including those in Manitoba's Indian community.

The Province of Manitoba counts the people of India among its friends, and we are proud of the fact that our two-way trade with India has grown by 56 percent in this decade.

As members of this House will know, several high profile locations throughout Mumbai's financial district were assaulted yesterday by a highly co-ordinated act of terrorism leaving over a hundred people dead, over 300 people injured and many others held hostage. We are deeply saddened by this atrocious act and we pray for the safe return of all hostages, including the six Canadians that have reportedly been taken as hostage.

Acts such as these affect all of us regardless of our race, our religion or our nationality. When a bomb is exploded in a public place, when a gun is fired into a crowd, we must recognize that act of violence for what it is, a crime against humanity. Crimes such as these, though they are horrific, must never distract us from working to promote the values that seek to bring us together, values that recognize every life is important and worthy of respect, the very values that were under attack yesterday in Mumbai.

Though we mourn the losses this struggle has incurred, we will continue to stand with all those affected by terrorism, and today, Mr. Speaker, we stand with the people of India. Thank you.

Mr. Hugh McFadyen (Leader of the Official Opposition): Mr. Speaker, I thank the Premier for the statement and join the Premier, all honourable members and, indeed, all Manitobans in expressing our sympathy and concern for the victims of the atrocious attacks that took place in Mumbai yesterday. We think, in particular, of family members and others who have a connection to those who were in India and Mumbai during these horrific attacks.

As the Premier indicated, these attacks resulted in the deaths of over 100 individuals, and, to date, we know of nearly 300 who have been badly injured. It's a grim reminder of the turmoil and instability facing many regions of the world today. It's also a reminder of the need for civilized nations to confront the threat

of terrorism strongly and to try to create conditions that would reduce the incidence of such terrible events.

Manitoba is fortunate to have such a large and vibrant Indian community, and for those in Manitoba who are waiting to hear from loved ones in Mumbai, please know that our thoughts and prayers are with you. I know prominent members of the community here, including the Member for Radisson (Mr. Jha) and others, have had anxious hours awaiting word from loved ones.

So as we pray for the victims of yesterday's attacks and for all citizens of the world, we must also reflect on our fortune to live in Canada as well as our duty and our opportunity to protect those in countries and regions where terrorism is unfortunately a fact of life. Thank you.

Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights): Mr. Speaker, I ask leave to speak to the Premier's (Mr. Doer) statement.

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

Mr. Gerrard: Mr. Speaker, I stand in solidarity with other members of the Legislature in speaking out against this senseless act of violence that has occurred in Mumbai and the harm it has done to many individuals who have been killed or wounded, the damage this has done in terms of creating a state of fear and concern in Mumbai and indeed around the world.

We extend sympathy and concern to all those who were affected and reach out to those in the Indian community in Manitoba and in Canada. It is a time to remember that we are building the Canadian Museum for Human Rights and that India was a centre, a country, which led in using non-violent approaches. It is all the more tragic that this has happened in India and in Mumbai, which is a major hub for commerce in India and indeed a leader for environmental issues, as they demonstrated by being probably the first very large city in the world to ban plastic bags, something which we are trying to follow here.

But, for the moment, we're very concerned about this act of terror and hope that the world can come together to diminish such threats and to prevent such threats in the future.

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 Steinbach Christian High School 50 grade 9 students under the direction of Mr. Curt Plett. This school is located in the constituency of the honourable Member for Steinbach (Mr. Goertzen).

Also in the public gallery we have from Lord Selkirk Regional Comprehensive High School 20 grades 10, 11 and 12 students under the direction of Ms. Raina Pierce. This school is located in the constituency of the honourable Member for Selkirk (Mr. Dewar).

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

ORAL QUESTIONS

Vote Tax Legislation Withdrawal

Mr. Hugh McFadyen (Leader of the Official Opposition): Last month, on October 7, 2008, the Toronto Stock Exchange took its largest ever intraday loss. What this meant for tens of thousands of Manitoba seniors was that their retirement plans went off track and their financial security was put in doubt.

On that very same day, black Tuesday, October 7, 2008, rather than show compassion for our seniors and take action to protect them, this NDP government stood up and voted to take another million dollars from the pockets of Manitoba taxpayers and put it in their own party bank account.

I want to ask the Premier: Why, during this time of stress, is he siding with the NDP rather than the people of Manitoba?

Hon. Gary Doer (Premier): Mr. Speaker, I think it's really important, and we hope in the fiscal update made by the federal government today that there is some sensitivity to seniors. Manitoba was one of the leading provinces to argue that the rigidity of age 71 for people required to move registered retirement savings plans into RIFs should be eliminated and flexibility should be provided. That would represent a loss of income to provinces, to the treasuries of provincial governments. It would represent a loss of income, I recognize, to the federal government, but almost every premier did recommend that to the Prime Minister.

We await the fiscal update because every day that goes by, seniors are required to make that decision. So, in terms of sensitivity to seniors, given that no money has flowed as the member has alleged, we would recommend strongly that today—I know there will be lots of distractions in Ottawa, but I hope one of the areas that comes through for seniors in Canada is the provision of taking away the rigidity of age 71.

I hope the members opposite, if they're listening to seniors across Manitoba, will join with us in calling for that change because he's right, the market has gone down in an unprecedented way and seniors are most certainly affected. I hope that he will join with us in calling for the elimination of that rigidity at age 71 in the fiscal update today.

* (13:50)

Mr. McFadyen: I want to encourage the Premier to seek the nomination federally for Winnipeg Centre the next opportunity he gets. I think that he may have a great contribution on the federal stage. We do want to ask him, though, about his area of responsibility that he's directly responsible for rather than the usual buck-passing that we tend to hear from him in this Chamber.

The government is spinning some reporters that a million dollars over four years isn't really all that much money in the context of a budget. However, the PUFs report, which came out a few years ago, highlights the fact that the St. James-Assiniboia library can be fully restored for less than a million dollars, for \$600,000; that the Bourkevale Community club in St. James requires only \$415,000 to be fully refurbished; the Bronx Park Community Centre in Elmwood only needed \$341,000, one-third of the amount they're planning to take over four years; Charlie Krupp stadium, \$120,000—you could do that project eight times over with the million dollars they plan to pocket; St. Norbert Community Centre, \$200,000, Mr. Speaker, less than the one-year amount that his pocket—his party plans to take from taxpayers to spend on NDP polling firms.

I want to ask the Premier: If he's bound and determined to spend \$1 million, why not consider putting that money into the hands of volunteers in places like St. James, Elmwood, St. Norbert or downtown Winnipeg?

Mr. Doer: The Bronx Park Community Centre has a considerable amount of funding from this provincial government. Many of the other projects the member

opposite is talking about also have funding for those projects.

I would also point out, Mr. Speaker, that the only public money that's flowed since the member has been leader of their party and since the last election and during the last election is the member opposite has taken more money than we did in public financing for less seats. Those are the facts. We have not taken any money from this bill. I said we wouldn't take it retroactively.

The members opposite took more and got less seats in the last election. I know that's their definition of being cost-effective, but that's the only real issue of what money has been provided in partial public financing. There has been no other allocations. I would point out that we have not prepared our '09-10 budget. I'd also point out that everything is on the table.

Mr. McFadyen: The reference to the 1985 NDP rebate program that he's referring to, the program that was introduced 23 years ago, has seen his party take close to a million dollars more than our party over the last two elections from Manitoba taxpayers. That was the last NDP government that destroyed the finances of Manitoba, that brought in that rebate program that he's now referring to.

I can share with him that he has raised what I think is a good idea. We will look in the future in terms of our policy positions of perhaps dealing with that NDP rebate program, as well, when the time comes.

But I will say to the Premier that I hear that he's leaving the door open now to scrapping the vote tax. Will he just confirm today, because I believe Manitobans want to know what his priorities are, that it is, in fact, his intention to scrap the vote tax?

Mr. Doer: The member opposite had the choice of taking the money or he had the choice of not taking the money. He actually took more money for less seats in the last election campaign.

He is the Leader of the Opposition. He had a choice. He chose to say one thing in this House and do something else as leader of the party. That's, Mr. Speaker, the inconsistency of members opposite.

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Speaker: Order. Let's have some decorum here.

Mr. Doer: Now, Mr. Speaker, when I say everything is on the table, I happened to get three copies of this

partisan ad mailed by the taxpayers of Manitoba through the PC caucus. Talk about waste, I actually got three of them. I would like to thank the Member for River East (Mrs. Mitchelson) for her generous mailing to our campaign. It's called: "Back to the deficit." It has this very charming picture of myself, very charming picture. I would like to thank the photo editor for that digital work. I'll table three copies of this really, really considerate group for taxpayers' money on the mailings that I got in my own backyard. Oh, big crocodile tears about the taxpayers and the seniors, and they're mailing it out with taxpayers' money morning, noon and night, mailing it out, mailing it out.

So, Mr. Speaker, when I say everything's on the table, it's the partisan ads that are mailed out with taxpayers' money. It's the issue of the public financing. Maybe we should even go back to the wild, wild west on union and corporate donations, because obviously they're connected together.

We have no difficulty raising money under any system. We'll still do what we did in the last election campaign, but we won't be hypocrites doing it, Mr. Speaker.

Vote Tax Legislation Withdrawal

Mr. Rick Borotsik (Brandon West): Mr. Speaker, I take it from that stance that no longer will constituents of mine receive NDP propaganda paid for by the taxpayers of Manitoba. Thank you, Mr. Premier.

You want to talk about hypocrisy, Mr. Speaker, let me tell you about hypocrisy. You want to talk about a contradiction? On October 8, this Finance Minister said that the best investments are made in hospitals, in schools and in infrastructure.

Rather than waste \$1 million and put it into the NDP pockets, Mr. Speaker, why will this minister not spend that million dollars on the infrastructure needed at the Brandon airport for an ILS system? Ironically, it's \$1 million. Will he put that \$1 million into my airport in the city of Brandon?

Hon. Greg Selinger (Minister of Finance): Mr. Speaker, this is the member that continuously gets up and says he doesn't want to spend money in this province, that he thinks that there's too much expenditure in this province, except when he goes back to Brandon and then he has a continuous list of things he wants to spend money on. He wants to build new casinos, but the citizens of Brandon don't

want to do that. He wants money immediately for new bridges, but he doesn't want to pay for it. He now wants money for an airport, but he doesn't want to pay for it.

He has consistently voted against every major investment we have made in Brandon. He's voted against it on the one hand, and he's demanded it on the other hand. That's the textbook definition of hypocrisy.

Mr. Borotsik: I think, Mr. Speaker, the textbook interpretation of hypocrisy would be the Minister of Finance looking in the mirror because, quite frankly, we vote for infrastructure projects. We didn't vote for taking money out of taxpayers' pockets and putting it into the party's coffers.

The Premier (Mr. Doer) just stood up and said everything's on the table. Is the Finance Minister prepared to go to his Premier and say no to the vote tax and put the money where it belongs, in infrastructure and into other projects in Manitoba?

Mr. Selinger: Mr. Speaker, the Member for Brandon West can run but he can't hide. He's on the record when he was a Member of Parliament of supporting public financing for elections. He's on the record here. I've got four quotes here. There are two provinces that have these kinds of restrictions on corporate and union donations. One is in Manitoba; the other is in Québec. In Québec they have public financing for elections.

What does the member say about Québec? Québec works better, I think, than in Manitoba. That's what the member said.

*(14:00)

Mr. Borotsik: Mr. Speaker, as per usual the Finance Minister likes to cherry-pick. What he doesn't say is that during that period of time I and my party voted against the vote tax in the Parliament of Canada. We voted against it in the Parliament of Canada. We would vote against it again in the Parliament of Canada.

We voted against it in this Legislature, Mr. Speaker. He voted in favour of it. He's taken money out of the taxpayers' pockets. Why won't he admit to doing that and why won't he put the money where it belongs, back in either the taxpayers' pockets or in infrastructure?

Mr. Selinger: Mr. Speaker, all the huffing and puffing in the Legislature won't let him cover up what he said in the past, and I quote, on May 8,

2003, in the Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs: The problem I understand our counterparts in Manitoba are encountering is that there is no public contribution component to their legislation. Where you have 50 cents vote per annum, in Manitoba there's nothing.

He lamented the lack of public financing in Manitoba when he was in Ottawa. He represented his citizens by demanding public financing in Manitoba, and today he has completely and totally and without any shame at all flip-flopped once again.

Vote Tax Legislation Withdrawal

Mrs. Heather Stefanson (Tuxedo): Mr. Speaker, at a time when we're facing a worldwide economic crisis, this NDP government seems to think that it's more appropriate to line their own political pockets than to do what's right for Manitobans. I think that's unfortunate.

In the last nine years, Manitoba has seen a 67 percent increase in the provincial operating budget, Mr. Speaker, a 67 percent increase in the operating budget yet a decrease in the percentage of the funds from the overall budget transferred to the municipalities to face their crumbling infrastructure deficits.

Mr. Speaker, why are they more concerned about lining their own political pockets than doing what's right for Manitobans? Why is it that they can't get their priorities straight?

Hon. Gary Doer (Premier): Well, let the record show that the claim in Tuxedo and the public financing in Tuxedo was greater than that at Concordia. Let the record also show that the claim made—not what may or may not happen but the claim actually made in the last election—was greater by the Conservatives for less seats.

So, Mr. Speaker, those are the facts. On the issue of funding for municipalities, and we had a good discussion today in the—I think we had 15 Cabinet ministers at the—I know they don't call it the bear pit anymore but the session that we had with municipalities, there was recognition that everybody's in challenging times for infrastructure. We acknowledge that for municipalities.

We were credited for going up in our municipal funding, and I would point out that items such as the floodway which are 50-50 carried by the federal and

provincial government aren't factored into the member's question, Mr. Speaker.

Mrs. Stefanson: I think we should let the record show that the Premier can't get his priorities straight when it comes to what's in the best interests of Manitobans in this province, Mr. Speaker. I think that's unfortunate.

Now, Mr. Speaker, the federal NDP MP Pat Martin said in his reaction to doing away with the federal vote tax, and I quote: This means war. This is so audacious and outrageous. So much for reaching across the aisle.

Well, Mr. Speaker, I ask the Premier: Who does he stand with? Does he stand with Pat Martin or does he stand with what's in the best interests of Manitobans? Who is it, Pat Martin or Manitobans?

Hon. Steve Ashton (Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs): Mr. Speaker, I have a great deal of respect for our federal members of Parliament. I have a newfound knowledge of how much work and responsibility that takes.

One thing I would suggest to the member opposite, if she's interested in federal politics, she might want to seek federal nomination. It's an honourable profession.

But, you know, here in the province of Manitoba, our NDP government, we respect Pat Martin and our counterparts federally. We actually try and work with all parties. We're not a farm team of the federal Conservative government like members opposite. Quite frankly, I think we just had a debate earlier on, just a few months ago, about public financing. We've moved in areas such as eliminating corporate contributions and union contributions. That's called electoral reform. That is something all Manitobans can support.

Pharmacare Deductibles Impact on Seniors

Mrs. Mavis Taillieu (Morris): Mr. Speaker, more now than ever with the economic crisis that we're facing seniors are concerned about their savings and their pensions. The NDP have raised the Pharmacare deductible by 34 percent since 2002 costing seniors \$384 a year more for lifesaving medication. We've heard from seniors who are scared they're going to be faced with horrible decisions: food or medicine.

Will the Minister responsible for Seniors (Ms. Irvin-Ross) make seniors a priority in this province? Will she relinquish the million-dollar vote tax she's

grabbing from taxpayers and instead use the money to bring Pharmacare deductibles for seniors down?

Hon. Theresa Oswald (Minister of Health): Mr. Speaker, I thank the member for raising the important issue of our Pharmacare program here in Manitoba. We know that on average since 1999, that for every dollar increase in Pharmacare deductibles paid by families, there's been an increase of over \$3.50 paid by the Province. That's enabled us to add over 2,000 drugs to the Pharmacare formulary. That's enabled us to add 24,000 families to the coverage of Pharmacare.

I think we need to be clear and remind the member that people who are on income assistance don't pay Pharmacare deductibles. It's one of the many reasons that the Canadian Institute for Health Information says we have the best program in the country.

Mrs. Taillieu: Mr. Speaker, I don't understand why the Minister responsible for Seniors will never stand in this House. She won't stand up for seniors. You know, there's a saying: If you don't stand up for anything, you'll fall for everything.

We're in an economic crisis, some say as bad as the Great Depression. While Manitobans are feeling the crunch, the NDP government wants to steal a million dollars from us and line their own political pockets.

What does the Minister responsible for Seniors say? Does she say that she supports the needs of seniors and wants the money to be used to lower Pharmacare deductibles? No, she won't stand up and say that. She says she supports stealing a million dollars from Manitobans to give to the NDP. What's her—

Mr. Speaker: Order. There's a word used that some Speakers have a rule, parliamentary, and other Speakers have a rule, unparliamentary. It was directed in a general term. I let it slide. But this time it was directed at an individual, and I don't think there's one individual in here that would steal from anybody. I ask the honourable member to withdraw that comment.

Mrs. Taillieu: I'll withdraw that word, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: I thank the honourable member for that. The honourable Minister of Health.

Ms. Oswald: Mr. Speaker, I can inform the member once again that in addition to being called by CIHI the best program in the nation, we are such for

Pharmacare because we don't discriminate on age, nor do we discriminate on disease once the deductible has been increased.

On the issue of caring about our people and our seniors, Mr. Speaker, every time we train a nurse, every time we train a doctor, every time we open a new hospital or send diagnostics across the province, we're caring about the people of Manitoba. I wish the member opposite would understand that.

*(14:10)

Emergency Health-Care Services Rural Communities

Mr. Cliff Cullen (Turtle Mountain): Well, Mr. Speaker, it's very unfortunate we as opposition members have to rise in the House every day to explain to this government the crisis that exists in health care. It's not just our opinion; it's the message from our constituents.

Over the last few days, members on this side of the House have been listening to community leaders from across the province. These leaders are very frustrated with a lack of leadership and vision shown by this government. Mr. Speaker, hospitals are closed and thousands of Manitobans do not have timely access to emergency rooms, and after nine years in government the situation is getting worse.

Why does the government choose to ignore the thousands of Manitobans that don't have emergency room services and choose to line their own pockets?

Hon. Theresa Oswald (Minister of Health): I can inform the member opposite that, of course, the commitment to rural health care, including educating more nurses and doctors, a commitment to rural health care by renovating or newly constructing over 65 facilities and by bringing diagnostics and other programs like community cancer care so that those people can get that care closer to home is a commitment indeed.

I acknowledge that we have, like every jurisdiction in the nation, a shortage of doctors, which is why we're making decisions, decisions in a time of economic challenge, not to cut the spaces in medical school, Mr. Speaker, but to increase them, not to stop training nurses, but to train more. That's what the people of our province need and that's what we're committed to do.

Mr. Cullen: Well, Mr. Speaker, it's all about priorities. Obviously, this government's priority is to

line its own pockets for a million dollars of taxpayers' money.

Mr. Speaker, we know that the minister has met with community leaders representing over 50 municipalities in western Manitoba over the last few days. The community leaders are asking the government to show some leadership and some vision in this time of crisis. We know that the RHAs are just managing from crisis to crisis. Community leaders are prepared to work with this government to find solutions. Instead, this government chooses to ignore the real crisis facing thousands of Manitobans and to line their own pockets.

Why is this government choosing to ignore the pleas from communities like Carberry, Killarney, Wawanesa and others across this province, Mr. Speaker, and choosing to line their own pockets?

Ms. Oswald: We, too, have conversations with the members of Manitoba, rural, northern, urban. It's for that reason, of course, that we have expansions at the Ste. Anne's hospital; a new emergency room in Portage la Prairie; dialysis units announced for Gimli, Peguis and Berens River; a pharmacist dedicated to emergency rooms in Brandon, Thompson, Selkirk; new echocardiography, Swan River and Brandon; equipment in Minnedosa; a million-dollar dedicated rural doctor support fund; CT scanners, Brandon, Steinbach, Thompson, The Pas, Selkirk, Morden-Winkler, Portage la Prairie; the first MRIs outside of Winnipeg in Brandon and Boundary Trails; mobile ultrasound at Eriksdale.

The people want us to diversify programs, to bring health human resources to rural Manitoba, so we have to train the doctors, we have to train the nurses and bring them here. The people are speaking to us and we're committed to listen.

Rivers Recreation Facility Government Support

Mrs. Leanne Rowat (Minnedosa): That was quite a speech by the minister. Actually, I have a community—

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Speaker: Order. The honourable Member for Minnedosa has the floor.

Mrs. Rowat: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have a community that has raised over \$500,000 and has been played Ping-Pong by this minister and the RHA within the local area, \$500,000 waiting for a medical health clinic that this government can't fulfil. So I

think this minister should withdraw her comments about all the things she is doing because most of the money that has been raised in those communities has been done by the private sector, not by the public sector.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to raise a question with regard to this government's priorities with taxpayers' dollars. We have a community called Rivers which is waiting for a recreation facility, and this government is playing Ping-Pong with them again, as they have done on other issues and other projects within my constituency.

I'd like to ask the minister why he would say at the event today at the bear pit that he's looking at the Rivers complex, and I'd like to know what his statement would be to the House to put on the record so I can let the community know.

Hon. Ron Lemieux (Minister of Infrastructure and Transportation): I was really pleased, Mr. Speaker, to meet with the community of Rivers before. We're proud of our record of consulting with communities. They understand that there's a new Building Canada Fund, and they understand that there still has to be some agreements signed. Obviously, the Member for Minnedosa doesn't understand that.

Mrs. Rowat: Well, what I don't understand is the minister making a comment at the bear pit today saying that the Building Canada Fund dollars haven't flowed yet.

Well, Mr. Speaker, in a letter that he has sent to me, he indicated, and I quote: In effect, and contrary to initial indications, community recreation facilities such as the Riverdale Community complex may not qualify for funding under the Building Canada Fund.

So I'd like the minister to clarify: Is he saying one thing at a bear pit in front of hundreds of community leaders and saying other things in a letter that he quotes to me that is actually contrary to what he has been saying?

Mr. Lemieux: You know, Mr. Speaker, we provided many, many dollars into recreation in communities already, recreation facilities, but it was a concern and it still is a concern whether or not recreation facilities will fit within that envelope.

We understand that roads and bridges, yes, they're important, also sewer and water projects. But we're saying there are many, many communities, Mr. Speaker, that have recreation facilities that go long

before 1967 when Canada's centennial was there, when a lot of buildings were built, and 1970 as well.

Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to say today, here, as I said in the bear-pit session this morning, it is a concern for us and it's one thing that we would like to push. We'd like to see dollars allocated to recreation communities.

Dr. Larry Reynolds
Government Response to Termination

Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights): Mr. Speaker, Dr. Larry Reynolds is an outstanding physician and teacher who has been targeted and dismissed by the WRHA and this government.

The Premier has said that no one who works for the RHA should fear speaking up, and yet Dr. Reynolds, who has spoken up, has now been targeted and dismissed.

Many people who provide health-care services in Manitoba are now fearful of speaking up in case they, too, are targeted in a similar fashion that Dr. Reynolds has been and that they may lose their jobs.

The Premier's words suggesting that people should not fear losing their jobs are empty and meaningless unless he provides some better guarantee than he has to date. What kind of assurance will the Premier provide now?

Hon. Gary Doer (Premier): Well, Mr. Speaker, last time Madam Ruth Krindle certainly took all the allegations, and they fell like a house of cards when the evidence was presented and cross-testimony was provided, and the allegations made by the member opposite proved to be wrong. But lots of press, lots of noise, lots of issues.

We do not—and I didn't even know who this individual was until it was raised in the House. We do not tell the dean of the medical school who to hire, who to promote, whose contract to extend, whose contract not to re-sign. We do not tell Dr. Postl or Dean Sandham who to hire, who to extend, and we won't. We don't believe it should happen. We believe in independence of particularly all the academic institutions.

We have people, by the way, that have run for the Liberal Party that have been political science profs that have been critical of us before they ran, during the time they ran, after the time they ran. You know, people criticize us all the time, morning, noon and night, columnists, reporters. That just makes us

stronger; that just makes us stronger. We can handle it.

But, Mr. Speaker, so let not anybody suggest for a moment that this government or—in terms of our belief, we believe in the independence of the academic areas, and I trust Dean Sandham and I trust Dr. Postl to make these decisions. To bring this on the House of the Legislature will prove to be as wrong as the member opposite in the previous case. The bottom line is you can ask Dean Sandham why or why not it may be a private matter. I'm not sure. As I say, I didn't even know who this person was. That's how concerned I was about him.

Mr. Gerrard: Mr. Speaker, today, Dr. Reynolds is in Toronto at a national conference of family physicians where he's been invited to speak because he's recognized as a leader in family medicine in Canada. He's speaking on leadership in family medicine.

Not only is the Premier not recognizing Dr. Reynolds' leadership, he's covering up the targetting of an internationally recognized physician. It's happening here. Unless the Premier provides a much better guarantee than he's done to date, those who work in the RHAs will continue to fear for their jobs.

Will the Premier do better than he has so far in standing up for free speech in our province?

*(14:20)

Mr. Doer: Well, I don't know what the privacy provisions would allow the dean and the head of the Winnipeg Regional Health Authority, two doctors, to say about the individual case, but if they were able to say to the member opposite that the government obviously had nothing to do with the decision that the member opposite is talking about, would he take responsibility for the mistake he's putting on the record today?

Mr. Gerrard: The Premier denies involvement, denies people are being targeted, but the claim he makes is meaningless in the present environment where people in our health-care system are fearful of speaking up for losing their jobs.

I simply ask the Premier: If people write or call the Premier in his office, will the Premier guarantee that none of the names will ever be mentioned or released to anyone in the WRHA, or anyone else, without having that person's permission first? What procedures does the Premier take in his own office to

safeguard the primus privacy of individuals who come forward with critical information for him?

Mr. Doer: The whistle-blower legislation applies, No. 1.

Point No. 2, has the member opposite talked to Dean Sandham? I guess there's a privacy issue here, but the bottom line is we don't tell Dean Sandham who to hire, who to put in a leadership position, whose contract to extend, whose contract not to extend. We don't interfere with that.

That is academic independence that we respect, and I suggest to the member opposite he should be accountable. If he's proven to be wrong, will he be accountable? I suggest he never has in the past, but we have never, ever interfered with academic independence, and we won't.

Highway Upgrades Government Initiatives

Mr. Tom Nevakshonoff (Interlake): Mr. Speaker, it's unfortunate that members opposite didn't focus on any agriculture issues today.

I have a question, Mr. Speaker. Adequate highways: Adequate highways are absolutely critical to the smooth functioning of the rural economy. Manitobans have seen many construction projects over the past summer as part of this government's historic 10-year, \$4-billion commitment to our highway system, something that was in stark contrast in the Filmon years when the Interlake region that I represent saw virtually no construction whatsoever.

Can the Minister of Infrastructure please inform the House of steps he has taken to affirm his historic commitment?

Hon. Ron Lemieux (Minister of Infrastructure and Transportation): Mr. Speaker, we made a significant mark on adding to our already historic 10-year announcement, and we announced an additional \$45 million to Manitoba's Highway Renewal Plan.

I know, Mr. Speaker, the industry is very, very pleased with this and we work with the industry closely. We also put out a tender schedule for the construction season '09, and I know members opposite that are always asking about projects in their backyard, we've already put hundreds of millions of dollars in many of their constituencies, in their backyard.

I just want to add also that there are many more to come, Mr. Speaker. We're very proud of our

record and we continue to build on our historic amounts of money. Now, I'd like to just see, when it comes time to vote in support of it, which members opposite are going to vote for it or against it. Thank you.

La Broquerie Education Facility Government Support

Mr. Cliff Graydon (Emerson): Mr. Speaker, when we start talking about infrastructure, I'd like to have you keep in mind the Letellier Bridge, Mr. Minister.

Mr. Speaker, in April of 2007 and again in April of 2008, the Minister of Education issued press releases promising a new combined school and high school for the students of La Broquerie. In fact, when I asked him about the project last spring, he said it was in a design phase and was going forward.

Mr. Speaker, can the Minister of Education explain to the students and the parents in La Broquerie why he has broken his promise and why he's not going to build a combined school?

Hon. Peter Bjornson (Minister of Education, Citizenship and Youth): Certainly our school capital projects have been very ambitious since we've been in office and we'll continue to address the needs as they arise.

The school divisions talk to us about their priorities. We address the priorities as presented by the school divisions and we'll continue to do so.

Mr. Graydon: Mr. Speaker, we see before us legislation recently passed in this House, Bill 37, for self-interest groups with millions of dollars that would go very far towards building that school in La Broquerie. In the minister's own press releases, he said the new school is needed because of population growth in the area. Population continues to grow and so it hasn't changed.

Can the minister tell my constituents why he's changed his mind and why he's broken his promise to this new high school in La Broquerie?

I fear overall government economic mismanagement is coming home to roost, and the students in La Broquerie are paying the price.

Mr. Bjornson: Mr. Speaker, I heard the Member for Brandon East (Mr. Caldwell) talking about the million dollars. It's refreshing to hear—pardon me, Brandon West. It's refreshing to hear them actually advocate for increased funding for education because during the election members opposite said that they

didn't think they'd have to increase the education budget at all because of declining enrolments.

As it comes down to the issue of population growth, we have built schools in growing communities. We will build schools in growing communities, and we will meet the needs as they arise. We're committed to do so, Mr. Speaker. We pledged to build the school in Arbogate; we're going to build a school.

Emergency Health-Care Services Ebb and Flow Community

Mr. Stuart Briese (Ste. Rose): Mr. Speaker, I repeatedly raised the issue of emergency services for the Ebb and Flow First Nation, Bacon Ridge and Eddystone area. There are over 200 calls per year in this area and most emergency transportation must take place in private vehicles.

I ask the Minister of Health: Instead of taking \$250,000 per year to line NDP coffers, why not supply critically needed ambulance services to the Ebb and Flow First Nation and Bacon Ridge?

Hon. Theresa Oswald (Minister of Health): I can let the member know, of course, that we are working to continue to enhance emergency medical services across the province. We know that we've done this by investing in 164 new ambulances. We know that we've done this by investing in the medical transport communications centre in Brandon, so that we can look very closely at response times and ensure that we have emergency medical services throughout the province in an appropriate way.

Of course, this is being done in regions. It's being done in partnership with First Nations communities to ensure that we're giving the best service that we can, and we're going to continue to work on that, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Briese: Mr. Speaker, 2,500 people, over 200 calls per year, trained EMT people in the area. What's missing? An ambulance.

I ask again: Why are you taking public money to line NDP coffers when you could be providing critical ambulance services? Whose side are you on anyhow?

Ms. Oswald: Mr. Speaker, we know that in addition to funding additional ambulances, 164 of them as I said, we're also working on increasing education for emergency personnel. We're ensuring not only that we train more paramedics but for the first time in Manitoba, we are running a primary care paramedic

program, starting at Red River with 16 seats there. In addition to those 16 seats, we're ensuring that we bring those satellite programs out to other areas as well.

We know we have to continue to work with communities, with First Nations, to augment our emergency medical system and our pre-hospital care, and we'll continue to work with each community as the member raises.

Mr. Speaker: The time for oral questions has expired.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

Mumbai Terrorist Attacks

Mr. Bidhu Jha (Radisson): I rise today to echo the comments made by the honourable Premier (Mr. Doer) about terrorist attacks that have occurred in Mumbai. I thank the Leader of the Opposition (Mr. McFadyen) and the Liberal Party Leader also for supporting comments that they have made.

As we know, 119 people have died in the attacks and over 300 are injured. If anyone has been following the news, we know there are children, men, women, police and military officers that have lost their lives. We know that many people are being held hostage in the hotels, including there are six Canadians. Prime Minister of India, Dr. Manmohan Singh, has condemned the acts, and our Prime Minister, Stephen Harper, has called them despicable and cowardly.

To hear such acts of hatred committed in my own home country of India, both saddens and repels me, Mr. Speaker. India is a country of over one billion people and hundreds of people with different cultures, including people of Jewish faith, Christians, *[inaudible]* Muslims, Buddhists, Sikhs and Hindus, live together as a large family in that great country. That country which was the home of Mahatma Gandhi, a man who has taught the world that civil disobedience and change need not come by violence, and yet wars can be won by love, peace and tolerance. Yet, here we stand today watching acts of violence being committed in that country.

When the Manitoba Premier led the trade mission in 2006, I was proud to accompany him and be the representative from both sides. That particular event saddens me. The same hotel that we stayed in is being destroyed by the terrorists who are cowards and have no courage to come and face people whom

they kill. That hotel was 105 years old, an architectural monument that has been destroyed.

I pray for the safe return for the hostages. I know that the government of India is doing everything it can to resolve this terror as quickly as possible and, as Manitobans, we stand by them and provide support to them.

When the gunmen randomly fire at people and run away, we call them cowards, not heroes, and this is how the world sees them, Mr. Speaker.

My thoughts and wishes go out to any Manitobans that have family in Mumbai and are affected personally by this horrifying act. Our government will stand with the people of India and Mumbai, and mourn the losses from this tragedy and pray for the peaceful resolution.

I know, Mr. Speaker, with courage, unity, Canadians will bring peace on this earth. I am very proud to be part of the government of people of Canada that believe in non-violence, that believe in peace, and they believe in harmony. I think terrorists, one day, would perhaps understand that their act is not acceptable by the new world that is emerging.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

* (14:30)

Christopher Harding

Mrs. Leanne Rowat (Minnedosa): I would like to pay tribute to a group of brave and selfless soldiers based in my constituency, who have risked their lives to help others. These soldiers have been recognized for their courage by the Governor General of Canada.

In particular, I would like to congratulate Master Corporal Christopher Harding, who is a resident of my home community, the town of Souris. He will be receiving Canada's third-highest military honour, the Medal of Military Valour, in a special ceremony in Ottawa on December 2.

Master Corporal Harding, who has completed two tours in Afghanistan, was caught in a firefight with Taliban insurgents on July 8, 2006. He, and two other soldiers, showed extraordinary courage in saving the life of a wounded Canadian soldier by getting him to safety.

Master Corporal Harding is in good company. Other Manitoba-based recipients of this high honour include Chad Chevrefils, Michael Reekie and Michael Wright. These soldiers have served in the

2nd Battalion Princess Patricia's Canadian Light Infantry based at CFB Shilo.

I would also like to congratulate three other Shilo soldiers, Corporal Alex Shulaev, Master Corporal Tim Fletcher and Captain Trevor Pellerine.

Canada's Governor General recognized these men on October 21, when she awarded Mentions in Dispatches on the recommendation of the Chief of Defence staff. These brave soldiers have been awarded this honour for their bravery and courage under fire.

Corporal Shulaev and Master Corporal Fletcher were caught in the same firefight as Master Corporal Harding. Their harrowing ordeal was recently retold in the *Brandon Sun*.

I'm extremely proud to call these men and their families my constituents, and I am honoured to represent the brave soldiers of Shilo and their families in this House.

I would like to ask all members to join me today in paying tribute to these men and congratulating them on the high honours with which they have been recognized. Thank you.

Domestic Violence Prevention Awareness Month

Mr. Doug Martindale (Burrows): Mr. Speaker, November is Domestic Violence Prevention Awareness Month in Manitoba.

As we all know, domestic violence occurs in all cultures, with people of all races, ethnicities, religions, sexes and classes. It is perpetuated mostly by men against women and can occur in a number of different forms such as physical violence, emotional abuse, intimidation or economic deprivation, among other things.

In Manitoba, domestic violence is against the law. However, because it occurs in the home, many cases go unreported. As a result, the government has launched a new interdepartmental domestic violence awareness workplace initiative. This initiative is supported by \$100,000 and will focus on educating employers to recognize the signs of domestic violence among their staff and to become familiar with relevant support services available. The ministries of Family Services and Housing, Labour and Immigration and Justice will play leading roles in the implementation of this initiative. It begins in the spring of 2009.

During the Domestic Violence Prevention Awareness Month, communities across the province join in a province-wide effort to increase awareness of domestic violence and available resources. Manitoba is also proud to join with over 30 governments in making a public commitment to end violence against women by signing the United Nations Development Fund for Women, Say NO to Violence against Women campaign.

Mr. Speaker, we must remember that it takes enormous courage for those affected by domestic violence to reach out for help and to access the support and services offered by various agencies. As the Minister of Family Services and Housing (Mr. Mackintosh) has said, we all have a role to play in countering domestic violence and supporting victims. Our government has taken steps to help those caught in the vicious cycle of violence. Our goal is to help them break this cycle and help them as they begin taking steps towards independence, empowerment and a life free of violence.

Sunbelt Prairie Products

Mr. Cliff Graydon (Emerson): Mr. Speaker, I'm pleased to rise today to put a few words on the record about a sod turning for the Sunbelt Prairie Products Ltd. in Altona. The new \$12-million plant has an ability to produce, process and package peas, beans and lentils. In keeping the processing and packaging as close to the growing area as possible, higher economic returns for agricultural commodities will remain locally.

In the past, we have shipped unprocessed agricultural goods to be processed elsewhere. With Sunbelt Prairie Products' processing factory in Manitoba, these jobs will be given to Manitobans and the exports will be sold at a higher price. ANR Foods and ZEB Rice, a Pakistan-based company, which also has a presence in Sweden, owns Sunbelt Prairie Products Ltd. Four municipalities worked together to attract the business. Members from Gretna, Altona, Plum Coulee and the R.M. of Rhineland made up the Sunbelt Development Group, the group responsible for the proposal to put the plant in the area. CEO of the Sunbelt Development Group, Jim Spencer, believes that the project will have a significant impact on southern Manitoba. Sunbelt Prairie Products CEO and president Makhdoom Abbas chose the Altona area because of the work ethic of the people in the area.

Future expansion is planned for the corporation, which gives agricultural producers an excellent

opportunity. It bodes well for the area when processing is done right here at home. In adding value to crops, value is added to our exports and our community.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to congratulate the Altona area for the economic growth they have achieved. I would also like to congratulate Sunbelt Prairie Products for bringing business to Manitoba. Thank you.

Provincial Nominee Program

Ms. Flor Marcelino (Wellington): We have heard many predictions that say Manitoba's economy will grow faster than Canada's in the near future. Even with the economic downturn, the projected growth rate of our province for 2009 is 1.6 percent, double the 0.7 percent rate projection for Canada as a whole. Behind every strong economy is a strong work force, and the government is committed to maintaining a strong work force to keep our economy on the go.

The successful Manitoba Provincial Nominee Program is attracting more immigrants to the province. Last year we saw over 10,000 immigrants find a home in Manitoba, but that is not where we stop. This year we are making the nominee program even easier for people to apply to so that the process is quicker and easier for those looking to work here. The program has recently changed and become more open. There's no longer an occupation requirements list. Now people can come to Manitoba and practise their profession. The new Fairness Commissioner, Ximena Munoz, will be responsible for improving qualifications recognition for skilled immigrants to Manitoba.

* (14:40)

To provide new Manitobans with more information about the Provincial Nominee Program, the constituency offices of Wellington and The Maples will be conducting an information session on November 29, 2008, for professionally trained immigrants to learn more about how they can gain the credentials required to practise in their professions here in our province. This session will be held in the multipurpose room of Cecil Rhodes School from 10 a.m. to 1 p.m. Everyone is welcome.

Our government has worked with accounting, engineering, nursing and medical associations, among many others, to make the transition for new immigrants into their respective work fields easier. Thanks to the proactive policies and legislation of this government, much headway has been done to

access the professional bodies and work toward needed education and training for accreditation.

Mr. Speaker, it is important that we recognize the talent and skills that come with new immigrants moving into our province. They have experience, knowledge needed to help carry our province forward through the tough economic times ahead and beyond. I invite everyone in my constituency and around the province to join me at the information session this Saturday. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

House Business

Mr. Speaker: Okay, before we start orders of the day, I'm just going to recognize the honourable Government House Leader for House business.

Hon. Dave Chomiak (Government House Leader): Mr. Speaker, on House business, there is the agreement of the House to waive the time frame. I'm canvassing the House to see if there's agreement of the House to waive the time frame for the filing consideration of private members' resolutions by the House leaders, as outlined in rules 31(2) and 31(3) to a time of the House leaders' choosing, with the understanding that there will be a private members' resolution considered next Thursday morning.

Mr. Speaker: Is there agreement of the House to waive the time frame for the filing consideration of private members' resolutions by the House leaders, as outlined in rules 31(2) and 31(3) to a time of the House leaders' choosing, with the understanding that there will be a private members' resolution considered next Thursday morning? Is there agreement? *[Agreed]*

ORDERS OF THE DAY GOVERNMENT BUSINESS

THRONE SPEECH (Fifth Day of Debate)

Mr. Speaker: We'll now move on to orders of the day. Adjourned debate on the proposed motion of the honourable Member for Southdale (Ms. Selby),

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 Third Session of the Thirty-Ninth Legislature of Manitoba.

And the proposed motion of the honourable Leader of the Official Opposition (Mr. McFadyen) in amendment thereto.

And the proposed motion of the honourable Member for River Heights (Mr. Gerrard) in subamendment thereto.

Standing in the name of the honourable Member for Portage la Prairie (Mr. Faurshou), who has 18 minutes remaining.

Mr. David Faurshou (Portage la Prairie): Mr. Speaker, it is once again a pleasure to rise and participate in debate pertaining to the Throne Speech just delivered last week by this government.

I spoke on agriculture and the deficiencies that I see in this government's leadership. I believe agriculture is indeed the backbone of this province's economy and should have the attention of this government in helping look to the future with added processing here in the province of Manitoba. It should be abundantly clear at the present time, with the changes that we've seen with our major trading partner, the United States, and the introduction of their country-of-origin labelling and the significant impact that it has had on our livestock industry.

I also mentioned yesterday about the potential to transport the finished product to the countries which we are doing more and more import business with, that there is a significant number of empty containers leaving Winnipeg, bound for China and Japan, India and other Pacific nations.

So, Mr. Speaker, agriculture will and can lead this province in prosperity, if we do assist and show leadership, which, this government, I trust, is listening, will do just that. I'm looking at the number of deficiencies within the Throne Speech and a lot of areas that are a real true concern with myself and constituents in Portage la Prairie.

I know that this government announced more than five years ago that they were going to be constructing a new women's correctional facility and went through the process of identifying Headingley as the ideal location for the new women's correctional facility. But, even though this amount of time has passed, no construction has taken place.

The 110-year-old women's correctional facility in Portage la Prairie is overcrowded and has been taking the overflow for the Remand Centre here in Winnipeg for female prisoners. The facility is indeed dated and to be pressed into service on a remand

basis is causing a great deal of concern with personnel employed at the facility. I'm dismayed that this government is not making more progress towards addressing this concern.

I perhaps can say that this is the type of operational activity that this government continues year after year after year. It's study, employ committees, engage the public, make announcements and then nothing happens.

Along with the proposed construction of the women's correctional facility in Headingley was construction of a transitional healing centre for Portage la Prairie, and some location in the north, for persons returning from being incarcerated, before complete release into the public, so that the individuals are allowed to re-adjust and perhaps learn new skills, as well as rehabilitate in the fashion to which will make individuals stronger and able to stand up for themselves and fort off the criminal element that persuaded them to break the law in the first place. So those are two points that I'd like to raise with government as it pertains to Justice.

Another is the issue of delayed court appearances by persons that have been held in custody, persons that have been released on bail. Our court docket in Portage la Prairie for serious crimes is out over a year from now for an initial trial. As you can appreciate, a lot of times things are remanded and put off even farther. We read in the newspaper day after day about court cases dealing with incidents that were two or more years ago. That's not the way to deal with someone who has broken the law.

We should be dealing with individuals that have come in conflict with the laws of Manitoba in three months or less. That is the recognized time where persons will consider a guilty plea because they know that their charges will be dealt with in a timely fashion.

When court cases are a year or two years away, chances are the memories of the witnesses will fade, the police officers may be transferred or retired. Then there's a greater possibility of plea bargaining and a lesser sentence.

This is what happens. Besides, the double or triple time recognition of those persons in remand, in custody awaiting trial, comes into play, and so we see, time and time again, inexcusably short sentences for individuals convicted of serious crimes. So there is a lot of concern regarding justice.

* (14:50)

I don't know, Mr. Speaker, if you have—this Throne Speech was glaringly absent of recognizing the challenges out there in the street, and the amount of yellow police tape in and around the area of the Legislature. One only has to look to Broadway and Osborne and see yellow tape. Go two blocks over and see yellow tape around York Avenue where half or a good portion of the Workers Compensation parking lot had to be vacated because of the yellow police tape.

There are incidents after incidents occurring in and around the Legislative Assembly. In fact, incidents of graffiti are even on the grounds of the Legislative Assembly. Graffiti on a parking sign out front of the Legislative Assembly. If one walks in any direction from the Legislature, they will see new graffiti. That is terribly alarming to me as a member of the Legislative Assembly and as a citizen of Manitoba.

Yet there is very little mention of this as a concern in the Throne Speech and, obviously, is not a concern of this government because this government is playing, indeed, to the term that has been given this government that it is a catch-and-release. The police catch, and this government releases, the individuals with little or no consequence for their crime. So there is a significant lack of morale in our justice system because they feel that this government is not providing the resources necessary to make our justice system functional and one that we can be proud of and ultimately feel safe in our own homes.

I again point to this government heralding a program that they are extraordinarily proud of and that provides for bars and deadbolts for our seniors to stay in their own homes. Why would they not go hard on the criminals so all of us do not require deadbolts and bars on our windows in order to feel safe and sleep at night? This government is, indeed, going the wrong way and I hope Manitobans recognize what this government is all about when it comes to the avenue of Justice.

Now, looking to education, which is another keen area of my interest, the reason for my coming to the Legislative Assembly, is the post-secondary educational performance of this government. Much has been said and, again, in the Throne Speech, about the number of students in our post-secondary institutions and the additional spaces made available; however, nothing is said about the retention of our

students. Nothing was said from the Minister of Health (Ms. Oswald), when it was announced that almost, almost, one-half of the graduating class of medical physicians left the province after receiving their diplomas. That is shameful. The current classes that are graduating, I would like to hear from the members opposite as to the number of graduates staying here in the province of Manitoba.

Our daughter just graduated from the Faculty of Medicine's med rehab with a Master's in Occupational Therapy. Mr. Speaker, 31 of 48 in her class left the province. Yet this government made no efforts whatsoever to encourage those individuals to stay here in the province of Manitoba. All they had to do, if they want to get the real true picture, would be to go down to the job fairs. Go down and see what the recruiters from other provinces are offering.

This government gives out millions upon millions of dollars in scholarships and bursaries. I would ask this government: Do you ever ask of the student whether they intend to stay here in the province of Manitoba as, perhaps, a prerequisite of qualifying for the bursaries or scholarships, because these dollars that students are receiving are hard-earned taxpayers' dollars?

People working in Manitoba, doing without, so they can pay taxes to this Province of Manitoba government which in turn doles out the monies to students but then, ultimately, many of those students leave the province with their education and significant investment by Manitoba taxpayers.

Now I want to just make mention, as my time is growing short, of a significant concern in rural Manitoba, as I believe it is here in the city of Winnipeg as well. That is available child-care spaces. This government heralded once again in the Throne Speech their initiative to bring on more child-care spaces. However, this government and members opposite might be interested in the actual state of affairs of child care here in the province of Manitoba.

In northern Manitoba, 68 percent of the child-care spaces are not actually operating within the government's parameter, because they do not have qualified staff. Sixty-nine percent in Eastman area, 42 percent in Central, 43 percent in Interlake and 26 percent—more than a quarter of the child-care facilities here in the city of Winnipeg—are operating outside the law that this New Democratic Party has passed. We want to try and address the issue of the shortages of qualified individuals.

So I ask the minister to reflect upon how we train individuals for early childhood educators and providing for the positions that are now vacant in our child-care facilities.

I did not realize, but I certainly do now that there is a law in this province that college and university courses, basically in prescribed programs, have an age restriction. Child care is one. I look to government over there and I hope they're listening, but the child-care instruction cannot be provided to individuals that are not 18 years of age; yet, here in the province, we recognize that individuals can baby-sit their younger siblings or for other persons at the age of 12.

You can legally be as sexually active as one can—it was at 14, now raised to 16. Yet, here in the province of Manitoba, you can't learn how to take care of a child until you're 18 years of age. That does not make any sense to me whatsoever.

The early childhood educators' program is not available to anyone under the age of 18. What we were looking to do was potentially offer the program in our high schools, so that persons taking their Senior 3 and 4 would take options that would be in line with prescribed curriculum offered by our colleges, so that they upon graduation would be able to receive accreditation not only for their high school programming, but also for their college curriculum training as well. Then that would afford the individuals the opportunity to go right into the work force, if not right from graduation, very shortly thereafter.

* (15:00)

I look to government to bring a little common sense to governance. Perhaps it's asking too much, but I've given a specific example to government here this afternoon that I hope they can recognize that there is significant deficiency—significant deficiency. It doesn't matter how many day-care spots you are going to fund and how many press releases that you go ahead and issue, unless you have the trained personnel to fill those positions and to provide for those day-care spots, they're not going to be filled. So every announcement that you make is essentially bogus. You are giving false hope to those young families looking for day-care facilities in the province of Manitoba.

So I thank you, Mr. Speaker, and I know I could go on for much longer because I haven't even

chipped away at the corner of the iceberg in this one. There are a lot of deficiencies in the Throne Speech.

House Business

Mr. Gerald Hawranik (Official Opposition House Leader): Yes, on House business, Mr. Speaker. In accordance with rule 31(9), I would like to announce that the private member's resolution that will be considered next Thursday is a resolution on Making Manitoba a Have Province, sponsored by the honourable Member for Brandon West (Mr. Borotsik).

Mr. Speaker: In accordance with rule 31(9), it's been announced that the private member's resolution that will be considered next Thursday, is the resolution on Making Manitoba a Have Province, sponsored by the honourable Member for Brandon West.

* * *

Mr. Speaker: The honourable Member for the Interlake, to continue on with the debate.

Mr. Tom Nevakshonoff (Interlake): Mr. Speaker, it is, indeed, my honour to rise today to respond to the Throne Speech.

It's been a couple of Throne Speeches, I think, since I've risen to speak, but so much has happened in the last little while, the agricultural crisis in the Interlake region, the passing of the Honourable Oscar Lathlin and so forth, that I decided to take that opportunity today.

Ms. Marilyn Brick, Acting Speaker, in the Chair

I would like to speak about the Honourable Oscar Lathlin, whom I had the honour to work with for close to a decade. I was elected in 1999, and I would just preface my remarks by saying that the thing that I have appreciated most about becoming an MLA is the opportunity for personal growth. You learn so much in this job. You meet so many interesting and diverse peoples and, for somebody such as myself who came from the bush country, I guess you would say—up in the north I spent many years working in the oil fields of Alberta, and it was a pretty rough and somewhat less enlightened crowd, to say the least. So a lot of my opinions as a younger man were formed on that basis, and as I have enjoyed this job, I have learned so much and that's been very important to me.

Working with Oscar and also with the Member for Rupertsland (Mr. Robinson), and with yourself,

Mr. Speaker, the Member for Point Douglas (Mr. Hickey), has been very enlightening for me to have learned so much about First Nations issues over the years and, Oscar, of course, was pivotal of the three in terms of my personal education. I look to some things that were very near and dear to him that I have taken to heart myself since I was elected to represent the Interlake. Of course, there are eight First Nations communities and a number of Northern Affairs communities in my constituency, so having him as our minister for so many years was very helpful with the experience that he had in this regard.

One of the things that was very important to him, and has been mentioned by others before me, was his focus on education. It's something that I have spoken myself about on numerous occasions and something that this government has taken to heart, to say the least, and I would say that that process has even accelerated in recent years to the benefit of all of us. To have the vast majority of our Aboriginal people unemployed is of no help to them and it's of no help to our economy and our society. Focus on education, which was one of Oscar's driving ambitions, is really going to be pivotal for the development of this province in the near future and into the distant future as well.

I look to recent initiatives that the Throne Speech made some reference to, in particular, things that have occurred up in the north Interlake which is that hinterland that I referred to earlier, quite often overlooked. When we look to the north, for example, we seem to, on occasion, forget that we have the near-north, but I am very pleased to say that this government has really stepped up to the plate and I look to a number of things. The Minister of Advanced Education and Literacy (Ms. McGifford), for example, just recently made an announcement about providing Aboriginal people with access to adult education and literacy programs. We are looking at technical vocational skills and training programs as well as options to advance post-secondary education. So these are things that are going to be of great benefit to us.

Red River College regional campus, for example, just recently announced that they will be opening up 12 seats in Aboriginal Self-Governance, 15 seats in the Business Administration program and 18 seats in Health-Care Aides for this immediate region which, as I said, will be of great benefit in terms of skills shortages. The college has also implemented a rotating Introduction to Trades program which will also expand to introduce

students to eight trades through pre-employment programs which will allow graduates to enter the apprenticeship system and work toward their interprovincial Red Seal and journeyman status.

These are critical programs, Madam Acting Speaker, because we are greatly challenged in this province in terms of the trades, in particular. I know, as a rural member and as a budding farmer with a lot of infrastructure challenges, whether it's putting a power line in or getting a well drilled or a building built or plumbed or whatever, it's, at times, virtually impossible. Sometimes you'll wait an entire season and even into the following spring to get these things done and it's an impediment to the development of the rural economy. So for this government to work as we have with Red River College and Assiniboine College and all these others on these programs to bring training, to bring education to the rural areas and in particular to our Aboriginal communities, is a giant leap forward, I have to say.

I look to the Fisher River First Nation as another example. One of the challenges that young students face when they leave home going to a strange environment, to university, to a new city surrounded by strangers, that's a challenging thing for them and quite often they fail because of that. That's been recognized and I take my hat off to the people of Fisher River who have recognized this, who have come to us and we have structured a program to try and help them through that transitional process.

So all of these types of things were initiatives that this government has brought forward, and Minister Lathlin was fundamental in this whole process. I recall when he was the Minister of Conservation back in the early years of our term in office here. Shortly after we were elected—he was the Minister of Conservation at the time, as I said—and it was under his jurisdiction that Manitoba introduced the water strategy. Of course, since then, we have made giant leaps forward, whether it's to do with conservation districts or improvements to drainage, et cetera.

*(15:10)

Also, I look again specifically to my constituency, the initiatives that we have undertaken on the Fisher River. Shortly after I was elected, of course, we experienced extensive flooding, as we so often do up on the Peguis and Fisher River First Nations because of intensive drainage and so forth downstream. I raised this with Minister Lathlin and

wasn't I surprised when he flew up there with a helicopter to have a look at the scene. It was a memorable day to see him landing at Peguis. One of the first things that he did was go among the people. Rather than talking to the politicians so much and the staff that ultimately we did talk to, the first thing he did was go to the elders there, in fact gathered some of them up and loaded them back up onto the helicopter and took them up because he wanted the experience of the elders to see what the lay of the land was, how things had developed over the years. That was very important to him. Respect for elders has always been one of the strongest traditions among our First Nations people, and Oscar certainly gave me a living example of that early on in my career.

Another thing that was, of course, very important to Oscar was the eradication of racism. He took great offence to this particular scourge on our society. It's something that he focussed on all of his life.

One of his last major acts in this Chamber had to deal specifically with that topic. It was an unfortunate remark made by a member here that was, to her credit, quickly retracted and apologized for, but given the press and all that, of course, it resonated a little bit in days to come, and Oscar made a point of this. He was prepared to take a stand on this to heighten the awareness of this particular problem. There was a lot of debate back and forth what to do.

It went to the Speaker's ruling. I want to really take my hat off to the Speaker, the honourable Member for Point Douglas (Mr. Hickes), in his ruling that he ultimately made in this regard because previous Speakers had ruled that even the use of the word "racism" was unparliamentary in this Chamber. The word was considered *persona non grata* I guess he would say. This last major initiative of Oscar's brought this to the fore and I give the current Speaker credit. He went against precedent. He went against rulings of previous Speakers. In his ruling—I recall I listened very closely that day he spoke—he spoke very definitively. He said that the use of the word "racism," the topic of discussion, as far as he was concerned, was back on the table, so I think that Oscar made a major accomplishment in that sense in bringing this topic to light and in putting it to the Speaker who ultimately made that ruling, which I think was incredibly important and historic for this Chamber. So I really take my hat off to the Speaker

and also to the former member for The Pas for undertaking this.

I've spoken about some of our education initiatives up in the north Interlake. I've spoken about water initiatives, of course, which were very important. I started to talk about the Fisher River, and I would just like to maybe dwell on that a little bit further.

Previous governments have always said these are First Nations communities; they're under the federal domain and they're off limits to us. That's been the attitude of previous provincial governments.

I'm proud to be a New Democrat because, when I was elected to this House, one of the first major initiatives that I became aware of was, in the words of our Premier (Mr. Doer), that our Aboriginal people are Manitobans not just Canadian citizens, that they are as much a part of this province and as much our responsibility as they are the federal government's.

Some of the actions that I've referred to on the education front and on the Fisher River where, even though it's a navigable waterway, considered federal domain, even though it's on a First Nations community, this government with the encouragement of people like Oscar, has undertaken major initiatives on this river with LiDAR aerial survey that cost close to a million dollars, if not more—only the second of its kind in the province of Manitoba, the first being, of course, the study of the Red River prior to the floodway project.

That showed the seriousness that this government took in regard to this particular watershed where so many people for so many years have suffered because of poor decisions made in the past. This LiDAR survey has identified the problems.

We have made commitments on several fronts. After years and years of negotiating, Madam Acting Speaker, we were finally able to convince Ottawa, actually, to come onside and cost share on some of these initiatives which technically were one hundred percent their fiduciary responsibility.

So this is a major theme-change in this province. We entered into the new millennium and we did so with a new mind set from this government's perspective in relation to Aboriginal people, and I really thank Oscar and I thank our Premier for doing this. It's made my job as the MLA for the Interlake, where I represent eight First Nations communities, a lot easier, I assure you.

Infrastructure has been a major theme of this Throne Speech and also of this government in our time in office. We are a building government. We have been from the very beginning, whether it's new schools—I look to my constituency and practically every school has been dealt with. We have new schools. We rewrapped them with Tyndall-stone fronts and fixed boilers and so forth and so, certainly, stepped up to the plate there.

Just the other day here—just yesterday as a matter of fact—on another front, the Minister of Infrastructure and Transportation (Mr. Lemieux) announced there would be an increase, almost a \$45-million increase to the infrastructure capital budget, which pushes us up to \$460 million in the coming year.

These are fundamental commitments and something that's resonating in Ottawa as well, as we enter into this period of recession globally. Even the Conservative Prime Minister in Ottawa has acknowledged that, in these times, governments have to step up to the plate and what better way to keep people employed than to spend money on highways, on water infrastructure, on waste-water and sewage facilities, on schools, on hospitals.

It keeps people busy. It keeps people employed. It keeps money circulating and, in the end, it's good for our economy. So that's always been our strength.

I look to the Conservative record just on highways in my constituency, in the 1990s when the Filmon government was in office and they did virtually nothing. In fact, the only road they did build went past the Conservative candidate's house. That was the only one that made the list when Filmon was in office.

On the water front, they should be ashamed of themselves. They cut staff to the water-resources branch by almost 70 percent and reduced the budget accordingly. Talk about backward thinking, Madam Acting Speaker. Then, supposedly, the party—or so they say—that represents the rural areas—it's laughable when you see how poorly they managed not only the highways issue, but the water-management issue.

In fact—and I've said this before in this House—when they came to office, things had gone to pot so badly that a judge in this land had ruled in the Hildebrand case that the provincial government had no business being in the business of water management, because they were so derelict in their duties that The Water Rights Act was basically

thrown out the window by a judge of this province because of the dereliction of duty across the way here.

* (15:20)

So they can chirp all they want, but the record speaks for itself. The people were fed up with them as of 1999. They're where they so justly deserve to be, on the opposition benches. It's been close to a decade and it's probably going to be close to another decade at the very least before that situation is reversed as well.

I look to the health front, again an area supposedly where the feds are supposed to look after the Aboriginal people. I look to some of our initiatives, particularly, in regard to dialysis, something that is so important to Aboriginal people. The announcement that a dialysis unit will be coming to the Percy E. Moore Hospital in Hodgson, which is on the Peguis First Nation, truly stepping outside the box once again proving this government's commitment to our First Nations in this province.

I look to the farm sector. I have to make some mention of this because the Interlake, of course, has experienced great hardship this past summer with the excessive rainfall, and there's been a lot of confusion sown by members opposite and the federal election campaign certainly didn't help. The misinformation that was perpetrated by members opposite during this time of crisis was an absolute disgrace I have to say—

An Honourable Member: What's the program called that you put in? Disaster.

Mr. Nevakshonoff: And I see I have them chirping once again. The truth hurts, and it's often been the case when I rise to speak in this House, members opposite try and drown me out and that's something that I'm used to. Thankfully, I have an oil rigger's voice. I'm used to shouting across floors with screaming engines so I can drown them out if I have to. But, you know, I was very disappointed because I like to work with all members of this House and I really think that in times of crisis we should put our political differences aside. We should forget about the next election and try and work for the betterment of our people and that was not the case.

This whole federal election that we experienced in the midst of this crisis was a massive disinformation campaign by members opposite deliberately trying to confuse the farmers of the area spreading, well, I won't say lies because I don't want to be unparliamentary, but some of the stuff that

came out was pretty bad. All the discussions about disaster declarations for instance, they banged this gong the entire summer and it's only now that the people themselves are starting to realize that with the new growing forward sweep of programs and the AgriRecovery, which is an agricultural disaster assistance program put in place under the Growing Forward program. *[interjection]* I know, did you hear that? The Member for Lakeside (Mr. Eichler). I take my hat off to the federal government. The federal Conservative government for including a disaster component to the growing forward sweep. That's a good thing. We engaged this. August 22, our Deputy Minister of Agriculture phoned over to the federal minister and said we have a disaster on our hands. The federal minister said, yes, you do, and that was all it took. The disaster was declared.

It wasn't like things that are done in the United States. We weren't standing on the deck of an aircraft carrier with mission accomplished in hundred-foot-high letters like George Bush made his announcement about the Iraqi war. Manitoba, Canada is a little more low key and all it takes is a phone call and the disaster was declared, but members opposite all summer were confusing the people and deliberately spreading this mistruth, shall we call it, that the Province had not declared a disaster. Utter nonsense, absolute bunk is what it was and as we can see, they put politics first when it comes to farming as they always have. Rather than try and help the producers that were in difficulty, no, they chose instead to try and capitalize on it politically. Very regrettable.

Madam Acting Speaker, I know others want to speak. I've had my opportunity. So I thank you once again for the opportunity to respond to the Throne Speech.

Mr. Gerald Hawranik (Lac du Bonnet): I'm going to try to stay within my time limit. We've got an agreement within this House of 20 minutes. I noticed that the Member for Interlake (Mr. Nevakshonoff) spoke for at least five minutes over that. So I just wanted to let him know that we'll probably be deducting that five minutes off the Premier's (Mr. Doer) time at the end. Just so that the Premier knows that.

I'd like to thank the people of Lac du Bonnet for their support for the past year, in fact, their support of my nomination and the support of three different elections for the last six and a half years. I thank them for that.

I also acknowledge the new members of Parliament that were just elected in the previous federal election: Shelly Glover, Candice Hoepfner and Niki Ashton. I wish them well. Public life is not always easy. We're always in the public's view, and we have to be careful what we say and what we do, and so on. It's important that they are aware of that. I wish them well, though, both on a personal level, and, of course, on a professional level as new members of Parliament in Ottawa. I also wish Jim Maloway well. He's provided a long and distinguished service in this Legislature on behalf of his constituents, and also he was a colleague of ours, of course, and mine. I congratulate him on his successful election and wish him well in Ottawa.

Oscar Lathlin, of course, a colleague of ours in the Legislature, and I acknowledge everything that he had done in the Legislature. I only knew him for six and a half years, but I knew him as a man of integrity, someone who meant what he said and said what he meant. I know there's going to be a condolence motion at some time in the future, and we'll all then have an opportunity then to pay our respects to Oscar as well.

I also would like to acknowledge the work of the table officers and the Speaker. I know that I've been Opposition House Leader for about a year and a half now at this point, and the help that I get from the table officers and the Speaker I'm very grateful for. It makes a difference in terms of, particularly, starting to learn the rules after watching them for about five years or so in this Legislature. You don't really take notice of them until you actually be put in that position. I know that they went out of their way to assist me, both in interpretation of the rules and to conduct proper proceedings in this House.

I also thank, as well, the Attorney General, the Government House Leader (Mr. Chomiak), for his assistance. It seems that we have been able to, so far, get along in any event, deal with issues in the House and deal with proper procedures in the House. I get along with him very well, and he does with me too. So I thank him for that as well for the effort that he has made.

Getting to the Throne Speech itself and the Leader of the Official Opposition's (Mr. McFadyen) amendment, Madam Acting Speaker, I am really appalled at what's happened, over the last couple of years in particular, in the province and the waste and the mismanagement that we see on a year-by-year basis and continuing to escalate as we go along.

I think the most obvious example of waste and mismanagement that I've seen in this Legislature, and perhaps the worst example of waste and mismanagement I've ever seen in this Legislature is the justification for running a hydro line down the west side of Lake Winnipeg. There's absolutely no justification for doing that.

* (15:30)

I know there had been various arguments advanced by the Premier (Mr. Doer) and members opposite about why they would take a hydro line down the west side of the province, and then bring it back directly east to Winnipeg, increase the length of the hydro line, the electricity loss on that particular line. They've used all kinds of arguments, but every one of those arguments has not been, in my view, valid argument. There are holes in every one of those arguments to the point where I think Manitobans should sit up and take notice.

The argument about putting the hydro line on the west side of Lake Winnipeg because it would ruin pristine forest on the east side is nonsense, and I point simply to the Throne Speech of last week where, in the Throne Speech itself, it was announced that the all-weather road is still under construction on the east side of Lake Winnipeg.

I have no problem with constructing a road on the east side of Lake Winnipeg because those communities need direct access to southern points. They need road access to their communities to reduce food prices. They need access in order to access health-care facilities and so on. They deserve that access as any other community does, but when, on the one hand, you say that we're not putting a hydro line on the east side of Lake Winnipeg because it will ruin pristine forest, and on the other hand, you make an announcement that you're building an all-weather road on the east side, to me—and I think to many people—the road has the potential of ruining more pristine forest than any hydro line would. So that particular argument that the government has been making over the last couple of years, in my view, is nonsensical.

We've seen lots of waste and mismanagement in other areas, of course, and sometimes it's easy to pick those things out after they've happened, but this one in particular with the road going on the east side, which I have no problem with, and stopping a hydro line going on the east side, is something that actually can be reversed at this point. It's something that I think the government should take notice of what

they're doing on the east side and start looking at things from an economic perspective as well.

We're in a very tenuous economy. We have a very fragile economy, and there is absolutely no doubt in my view that Canada is not going to escape a recession and neither is Manitoba. We are diversified in terms of the natural resources we have, in terms of the manufacturing, the business sector and so on. We are as equally diversified in this province as it is across the entire country, and if the country goes into recession, so does Manitoba.

We have to look at every expenditure in government I think and determine—and it's not just government, but it's also because we now have a budget that's going to be not just an operating budget, but it's going to be a consolidated budget including Manitoba Hydro. Manitoba Hydro has to be thrown into this mix and that \$640-million unjustified expenditure, I think, must be stopped.

The rainy day fund, I note from the Throne Speech and so on, I look at the size of the rainy day fund. It's only one-thirtieth of Manitoba's debt. To point to the rainy day fund and say that's how we're going to weather the storm, I don't think it's enough, anywhere near enough, considering the kind of recession, and possibly even a depression that could occur here in this province and in this country. There's \$600 million roughly in the rainy day fund when you exclude the federal transfers that have been put into that fund, and that's less than 7 percent of the revenue of this province.

I've been here six years and I've seen the province increase expenditures by 5 percent, 6 percent, 7 percent, 8 percent per year during that period of time, the six and a half years that I have been here, and the \$600-million rainy day fund would evaporate if revenues would not increase in one particular year and yet expenditures increase at that normal rate as what has been happening over the last six years. So it's not a lot of money. It's not a lot of money to rely on unless the Minister of Finance (Mr. Selinger) or this government is counting on a recession lasting a year or less, but if it lasts more than a year, I think we're going to have a real economic and fiscal problem in this province.

We have a government that has relied more and more on federal transfers, and I think we'll hear today that the Government of Canada, Conservative government in Ottawa, will likely announce that we will be heading into a recession. How deep it is, it's anyone's guess, but in my view, I think there's going

to be a long time before we get out of this recession. It may not be deep, but it may be very prolonged. Because of that, I expect that the federal government will likely—I don't think they're going to reduce federal transfers, but they may not increase federal transfers at the rate that this government may want it to. When you do that, Madam Acting Speaker, it really puts us into a situation, an economic situation in this province where we're going to find that we're going to be running deficits at least on an operating basis in terms of the consolidated numbers, in terms of adding in Hydro numbers as well. We may be able to run a surplus using all of the Hydro profits to declare a surplus over a short period of time. But, over the long term, I don't think that's going to work.

So those are my words with respect to the Throne Speech itself in terms of the big picture, in terms of what's happening in the province itself and how we relate to what's happening across this country. I think it would be remiss of me if I didn't mention a number of constituency issues which I am concerned about. Of course, I represent the constituency of Lac du Bonnet and I take that very seriously and I advocate quite fiercely in terms of the issues that are facing our constituency and concerns that my constituents may have.

Roads comes up as a No. 1 issue in our constituency. I've stood up in this Legislature year after year talking about Provincial Road 304 from roughly around the No. 59 highway all the way to Powerview-Pine Falls, a very well-travelled highway which winds in and among boulders and rock outcroppings, has no shoulders—this road has no shoulders—quite a number of accidents each year on this road. An unsafe road to travel and yet not a lot is being done. There are only about 12 kilometres of road that really have to be rebuilt.

I know the provincial transportation department did make a public presentation to the community a couple of years ago asking for input as to the direction and the configuration of a new highway replacing Provincial Road 304. They did give their opinions, but they haven't heard back since. I don't think it's responsible for government not to get back to them. I know it's a question of priorities. And, if we're dealing with priorities, what we should do is ensure that our roads are safe first. Safety, in my view, trumps anything when it comes to roads. Provincial Road 304 is not safe. I would encourage the Minister of Transportation, I would encourage this government to take a second look at that road and come up with a solution to replace that road and

to make it safe for the travelling public. It's not only just the people in Powerview-Pine Falls, but it's also people in Manigotagan, Little Black River, Hollow Water, Bissett, all of those people travel that road.

Another road that's a priority in the constituency would be Provincial Road 520 which travels—it's about 10 or 12 kilometres going in a north-south direction from Provincial Road 313 all the way to Pinawa, just to the west of Pinawa. That road in particular is a nice wide gravel road, but in the spring it breaks up and it needs pavement. It needs a hard surface on it. If for no other reason than that it is the secondary access to the Pinawa Hospital and it's the primary access for people that are located to the east of the Winnipeg River in the Lac du Bonnet rural municipality and also the Rural Municipality of Alexander. When an ambulance has to travel a different route to get to the hospital in an emergency, a longer route, I think that the Minister of Transportation (Mr. Lemieux) ought to take notice and deal with that situation in the R.M. of Lac du Bonnet and the L.G.D. of Pinawa.

Highway 11 through Powerview and Pine Falls as well, I understand it's slated in 2009 to be resurfaced with sidewalks and so on right through the communities. It's only a couple of kilometres long, and I'm hopeful that that project won't be stalled and that project will continue. Powerview and Pine Falls is one of the more beautiful communities in our constituency and the road itself is a detraction from the community. I would encourage the Minister of Transportation to ensure that that particular stretch of highway is, in fact, rebuilt and beautified and made more safe for residents in that constituency.

* (15:40)

You can almost pick any number out of the hat in terms of the roads that need to be redone in the constituency. It's almost every road that we have, it's been neglected for so long. Provincial Trunk Highway 12 north; 317, 302; Highway 44 east of Whitemouth, going east of Whitemouth to Rennie, and then all the way to West Hawk Lake needs a lot of attention; No. 15 east of Anola.

Provincial Road 307 and 309 through the Whiteshell. We have Whiteshell Provincial Park within the constituency. It's the busiest provincial park within the province by far. There's over a million visitors into that park every year and the conditions on Provincial Roads 307 and 309 are abysmal. They're terrible and they're really a hazard to the travelling public and to tourists alike. It doesn't

encourage people to come off the Trans-Canada Highway, for example, in order to travel through the constituency and travel to our provincial parks. They really are two roads that really need attention as well.

And 304 north to Bissett, from Manigotagan to Bissett, is gravel. I can tell you that the gold mine in Bissett is a going concern. Hugh Wynne, he's an entrepreneur from Bissett, he turned that mine around and has done a tremendous job to turn the community around. He's taken local people from Manigotagan, Hollow Water, Little Black, Seymourville, and so on, and from Bissett as well, those local people, trained them in mining production and has boosted employment in that area and also increased the standard of living of many people in that area. So I commend Hugh Wynne for what he's done for Bissett and the surrounding communities in the north.

Provincial Road 315 to Pointe du Bois, another concern of mine, all the way from 313 as it goes east to Pointe du Bois. I think that road needs to be rebuilt and I think it probably will because of the fact that the Pointe du Bois hydro-electric dam needs to be reconstructed and there's a commitment to reconstruct that by Manitoba Hydro.

So that's the roads issues within the constituency. There's a lot of other issues, including the hospital and health issues within the constituency. I note from the Throne Speech that the Minister of Health (Ms. Oswald) is talking about redeveloping the Powerview-Pine Falls hospital. It's a much needed redevelopment. The hospital is—Beausejour and Powerview-Pine Falls hospitals are both the busiest hospitals within the constituency and Pinawa is not far behind. But the Powerview-Pine Falls hospital, in particular, needs reconstruction because of the fact that the primary health-care centre itself is in the basement and cannot be accessed with any ease by people who are disabled. So I think, I believe, that that's probably one of the things that's going to happen with the Powerview-Pine Falls Hospital, that there's going to be a primary health-care centre located on the main floor instead of in the basement and, of course, an upgrading throughout the entire hospital.

More personal care home space is important in the constituency and I know different constituencies look at this differently because other constituencies may in fact have too many personal care home spaces. In the constituency that I represent, we don't have enough. There's not enough space within the

Lac du Bonnet personal care home in particular, and also in the Powerview-Pine Falls personal care home as well. Many of those people in those communities are admitted to East-Gate Lodge in Beausejour and are away from their communities, away from their friends, away from their family and that's not fair to them. I think those two particular personal care homes need expansion.

As well, Pinawa is of course a brand-new community in many ways because the AECL no longer controls the community itself. The community controls its own community and what's happened is that, as a result of that, they look at what is really needed within the community. I can tell you, Madam Acting Speaker, that there is no seniors home within the community and there are 1,500 people living within Pinawa, and not a seniors home to be had. So Manitoba Housing, I would hope, would construct seniors accommodations within Pinawa so people can stay within their community. I know the community is looking for an assisted living unit within the community and we're hopeful that that will happen in the very near future.

I've spoken to the Minister of Justice (Mr. Chomiak) about expansion at Milner Ridge, and I was grateful that there was some expansion already. I know that there is a shortage of provincial jail space at this point and the Milner Ridge Correctional Institute does have room and it also has the ability to be expanded. I've talked to the Minister of Justice about that and I'm hopeful, and he is too, that there will be some expansion going on at Milner Ridge as well, because I think that is one facility that could be expanded and could, as well, deal with the overcrowding in other provincial jails across the province.

I would be remiss too if I didn't indicate that there is a concern in Manigotagan. It's a small community in the north of my constituency, a small community, but very community driven, very community orientated. It's a community that needs Manitoba Housing units badly and it also needs seniors public housing as well. Many of those people in Manigotagan who are seniors and cannot live on their own within their own homes are taken to Powerview, Pine Falls, which is about a 45-minute drive to the south of Manigotagan away from their family and friends.

So those are the kinds of issues that are on top of mind, I think of people in the constituency itself and I just named a few of them. I mean roads, health

issues and, of course, housing and jobs. I would hope that the ministers to whom these matters they are responsible for, I hope that they take note and, certainly, deal with those kinds of issues that are important to residents in our constituency.

So, with those few words, Madam Acting Speaker, I know I've taken my time. We've talked about 20 minutes debate each, and I look forward to hearing comments from members opposite.

Mr. Bidhu Jha (Radisson): I rise today to put a few comments in support of the Throne Speech delivered by the L-G on 20th of November in this House.

Madam Acting Speaker, some of the points that I may say may be repetitions of previous statements and things I have said, but it's important for me to put some of my own thoughts on record on this particular Throne Speech, which I think is absolutely reasonable for all of us to expect to pass without any opposition.

Why I say this is for several reasons. I mean, the last few weeks have been a little bit tough for me and for all of us here. We have witnessed a few very sad events, untimely death of our dear colleague, Honourable Oscar Lathlin, who was really a very quiet gentleman, but had a huge intellect in his heart and mind, who shared with me several times his own life stories and his own inner emotions to say how and what he thinks should be done for future, not for now, but for future. It's the building process that he talked about, discrimination he talked about, the Aboriginal community issues he talked about, and I admired a lot of things that he had to think and say. I am really very sorry, as we all have shared the sad event of his untimely death, and I think that that did bring some kind of stress.

On top of that, the economic time that is now seen, as declared by all world leaders to be a real recession for months and, perhaps, a year to recover. It's also very unfortunate when we see families, unemployment, suffering and closure for factories, laying off of labourers. We also see, you know, some of the pension monies evaporating. These are very unfortunate events at a time that we feel bad.

Ms. Jennifer Howard, Acting Speaker, in the Chair

* (15:50)

Today, as we all witnessed, the members—and I thank all the members of the House who came and did sympathize with my statement of the terrible bombing and violence in Mumbai, which, also, I

would like to reflect, that Mumbai, the financial capital of India, not only India, I would say, the Indian sub-continent. Making those two hotels, which are very critical for business travellers to go travel and work, being destroyed is going to create a further dent on the financial recovery that people would be expecting, because those two hotels were where people were staying, and I think we have some people from Manitoba who visited India and are returning because of the terror.

I think it's also going to add to the economic burden that we all feel challenged and we will be faced to do that.

I'm particularly very sympathetic to both hotel owners. Taj Mahal Hotel is owned by Tata, which is a very large industrial house and very compatible to bringing industries in the world. We are working with them to bring some projects into Manitoba. It's going to be a challenge.

Mr. Oberoi, whom I know personally, was the builder of that hotel which also was destroyed. Now it will take a tremendous amount of courage for them to rebuild. I, on behalf of this House and my people, we offer them the courage to rebuild and work to make sure that the future does not get doomed because of these terrorists that have damaged the institutions, the hotels and industry that will be set back. But, as I mentioned earlier, it will be the courage that we'll put together to make sure that we rebuild.

Having said all that, Madam Acting Speaker, I would say that the Throne Speech has offered things that I feel very encouraged about. That Manitobans will realize that when you invest in the future, it takes courage. It takes courage and management skills both. I'm proud to say that.

I've said it before in this House, that the perspective image that friends opposite try to sell to the public, that they're the good managers and we are not. But the reverse is true. We have seen how this side of people, with a social justice agenda, with some of the things that were perceived to be impossible have been done. As the Minister of Finance (Mr. Selinger) has said several times, the rating has gone up and we have balanced budgets, we are spending more money and we are reducing taxes for small businesses. These are some of the very interesting things to see how a perception of NDP bad managers are not true. I think that reflects the ideologies.

I have mentioned this several times, that what makes us separate from the friends opposite is basic thinking of what should be done. What should be the priority? I think that, as I said, we believe in certain values which they don't. We believe in universal values; they don't. We believe in people first; they don't. We believe in a public health-care system; they don't. We believe in education for all; they don't.

We believe in public institutions like MTS not to be privatized; they don't. We would never let Hydro be sold because we are trying to really make sure that that is the asset that belongs to all Manitobans. But had this been seen as a private model, of course, sell it, take some cash, put it in the Treasury and show it as a surplus or show a balanced budget. Very false, very, very false way of thinking long term.

We don't have to be a hard-wired economist to understand the simple theory of when you have an asset that is going to feed you for the future, don't sell it. Don't get rid of it because you have temporary cash coming in. So it's just like owning a house versus renting a house. If you can afford to own a house, own it. But the question is, that this is the philosophy, which is more important? It is the cash in the bank or the quality of life or a healthy child or a well-educated family. So this is what we're trying to do.

This Premier (Mr. Doer), this government, and our wonderful Cabinet, they have delivered a huge amount of confidence in the minds of Manitobans, which we have witnessed over the last nine years. Things are progressing. I have repeatedly said this. In the health-care system, we have seen, including my family, children leaving here because they could not find jobs.

Now we are recruiting them back. We are bringing them back, and I think that more nurses are being hired. It's not very easy for us to think that solutions are found like that, but it takes time. I'm pretty sure that we are on the right track and we will do that.

I think, perception-wise, I again look back at my previous statement and said the Republicans in America give the impression that once they come, boy, they will fix the economy and they'll just make things so, so fantastic for Americans. They have the largest deficit in the history of the U.S.A. by the Republicans, because their priorities are spend money on trillions of dollars in creating wars, trillions of dollars in trying to think that is not important for Americans.

Madam Acting Speaker, 40 to 50 million Americans don't have health care. That is what I think is the challenge of that country, for the new thinking is emerging in the world that you don't have to really look beyond your own backyard and see what has happened.

Manitoba has demonstrated that we have done remarkably well on all fronts, that are responsible and also required to serve people, because it's people that sent us here to look after them. It is not small corporations or big corporations that have an interest in all people. I'm sorry to say that, that times when you talk about this, you bring some of the events and emotions.

I'd like to share with the House—I recently had an occasion to share with the great Honourable Ed Schreyer on a forum where, at the university when he was speaking, he brought a very wonderful term, called the greed. He said that the CEOs' salaries in the corporations that are sinking, that are literally going bankrupt, the severance packages go in millions—\$24-million severance package to a CEO. That company was sinking, and I think it's absolutely immoral for those CEOs to take that much money from the corporations where people are not even getting a good, decent, minimum wage.

But this is called freedom and, of course, this is freedom, but I think it is very irresponsible for anyone to exploit the freedom and the given rights to people to say, you choose your own salary.

Corporations do that, which, I think, is irresponsible. So Mr. Schreyer's comments that we need to regulate, we need to really go back is something that can be debated, but I am suggesting that the courts, to let everything be free and not care for people is bad.

The Premier has done a remarkable job bringing the balance. Our businesses are prospering here in this province. The entire business community is very friendly to us. We have the Economic Advisory Council; we have people from business who admire what we do. We have labour that is on our side; we have minimum wages that are going up. So we see a lot of great things happening which are not creating a hole in the Treasury until we balance budgets.

I think that I am very proud, very happy to be a part of this government that has demonstrated this. As I say, that when the '99 election—I don't want to repeat that story, but I do recall that in my campaign—I think some of the new members will

perhaps will like to hear that, in Fort Whyte when I was knocking on doors, I was thrown away from one house when he heard that I was NDP.

I was in a suit. He thought maybe I was perhaps worse—Liberal or maybe Tory—but when I said NDP, he said: Get out. Now the same gentleman sees me and he respectfully smiles and says: You guys have done very, very well. So again, perception versus reality, and I think that, what do we offer?

* (16:00)

My experience is thrilling when I see the gentleman several times. I've seen him at some seminars and other places. What do we offer? We offer universal values, services to all. We offer a government system with fairness and equality. We offer vision for the future and long-term solutions to social needs. We offer fiscally sound management without greed. We offer justice for all. We offer hope to those who don't have it. We offer opportunities and equal opportunities to those who don't have it. We offer futuristic and in that to build our country, and we offer our youth a solid and secure platform for their future with a safe environment.

Climate change is an issue that has been discussed. We are proud that we have taken that approach. We have taken the leadership to bring those kinds of issues which are socially responsible and very futuristic. We have just looked at the logging regulations that have been passed by the Minister of Conservation (Mr. Struthers). We have seen the Minister of Water Stewardship (Ms. Melnick) bring in the legislation to protect the water. We have seen a lot of very positive and creative things done from this side of the government, including keeping our books balanced. In the most financial intelligent terms, we do balance our books. I think that is one reason that our ratings are going up.

So I think that I am very fortunate to have opportunities to work on this side that has vision, that has a platform and that has a plan to work. I thank my constituents, people of Radisson, who come from different backgrounds, from different ethnic backgrounds, to this community of communities, that I live in Radisson and I really enjoy representing them. I have talked to several seniors, I have talked to children going to schools and I see hopes in their eyes. I see satisfaction on their faces, and I see some kind of a joyful relationship that they are building with the government and the representatives that they elect.

So I think my conclusion, I have a few other things to make, but I did not want to repeat, Madam Acting Speaker, things which are already written in the Throne Speech. I would rather give time. They want some time. I would give them the time rather than read it. So I would say that I have my own way of making a statement that some part of our own self we look inside and say, is it right or it's not right. That is called consciousness. I think we all should go back in our own hearts and see our inner conscious, and see what does it say to what kind of government we want, what kind of society we want. How do we want to bring change?

I think that we have seen this act of terrorism which just happened. We need to go back and say why this happens. What is the basic reason for that happening? Is it because of poverty? Is it because of oppression? Is it because of threats? Fundamentally, we go and look into those values to change. I am positive. I am very positive that, as we see the world emerging as a new world, I think the history has just been established, which makes me very, very hopeful, Madam Acting Speaker, that the United States, first time electing a person of African origin as second generation, born in the U.S.A., but father born in Africa, to be the elect-President of the U.S.A., is something that was impossible at one time. But now it has happened. So it's sending a new wave. It's sending a new message to the world that, after all, we are all people with wisdom and consciousness and we will build the world one day with that kind of thinking, what has been witnessed by the U.S.A., that Barack Obama will be the President which will make the history. It will send signals to the world that, yes, there are no two classes. There's no upper and lower class. There is no top caste and lower caste.

I was born in a Brahmin caste, and my late brother knew that caste system by changing the titles. So I come from that background that has condemned things that were not really good for society because it was done at one time, old time. Things are changing. Things are emerging. I am very pleased to see that that kind of thing is happening, and I see, Madam Acting Speaker, I see a sun rising in the horizon which hopes to make our world much safer, much better, much universal. But this is up to us, people like my friends and colleagues in this Chamber. We all work together. We build our own consciousness to govern and to bring laws and make things doable for the society that builds a better world. So I would say that eventually I will see a world that will be far secure, far better and much, much more enjoyable.

It's not a dream. It's reality. When you see Barack Obama's election, it's a reality. But I think in my lifetime I hope to see that.

In concluding, Madam Acting Speaker, I would like to say I am guided by three great personalities who are—two of them are not, but one is and that's my mother. Sharda Devi is my mother's name. That means the Goddess of Knowledge. She is 97 years old and she, a few days back, told me: Son, have courage, have courage, keep working, keep your health, keep your mind set and the world will be better. I think that her words made me so encouraged. I remembered this speech or dialogue from my, you know, door that the photo is hung—Tommy Douglas, courage my friends, it's never too late to build a better world. So I think that Tommy Douglas is No. 2 and No. 3 hero, which I have worshipped literally throughout my life, is Mahatma Gandhi, who has brought the universality of all human beings together by saying, don't kill, don't hurt, but tolerate, accept, love.

So I think that my dreams, my vision, is reflected in the way this government has worked and our leader has demonstrated that by working together, we can bring a far, far secure and better society. So I think that a new world is emerging that will be safe, secure and will be absolutely great for children and grandchildren. I have five of them and I hope and wish their children will live in that world.

Thank you very much.

Mr. Cliff Graydon (Emerson): Thank you very much for the opportunity to rise today to address and to speak to the Throne Speech. After listening to the colleague across the way today, or just now expounding on class distinctions. I, too, feel that what he said has a lot of merit, that there should not be such things as class distinctions and that shouldn't be at all in our society, in our free society in Canada today and especially in Manitoba. However, at the same time saying that, I don't believe that at any time that anyone in Manitoba should be taxed beyond what is necessary to supply the necessary requirements that we have to carry on our everyday business. I don't think that people should be unfairly penalized. When I say that, I could point out and I will point out speaking to the Speech from the Throne, exactly where some segments of our society have been penalized for the work that they have done.

I believe that the purpose of a Throne Speech should be to instil confidence in the people of the

province, confidence in the economy and it should also indicate to the people while it's instilling this confidence, it should also point out to the people how—a road map so to speak of how the present government will deal with the largest downturn in the economy of Canada since the Great Depression of 1929-1932.

* (16:10)

There was talk of a balanced budget at the beginning of the Throne Speech. It was mentioned, but it wasn't really pointed out how that would take place. There had been talk that there would be an economic statement and obviously that was not there. It was glaringly not there. We were certainly prepared to view that economic statement which would have probably set a roadmap as well for going forward.

However, there were a number of announcements of tax cuts, and those are always welcomed by many people in society on both sides of this House. We realize that people need to have some incentives, and those incentives will include tax cuts in many areas. However, there was no indication of how one would replace these tax cuts, so I have a feeling that perhaps they may have been replaced prior to this Throne Speech. I'm almost wondering if they haven't been replaced with some instrument such as an MLCC, for example, when they raised the rates. They doubled the rates for any of the people that—businesses. They doubled the rates for the small business. They doubled the rates for the larger businesses, and unfortunately, that's going to probably offset some of the tax cuts today, but it's not really a true picture of what we really needed to see.

Also, the application fees, which don't really show up here and people don't pay a lot of attention to in this House, but the application fees for many things now have doubled and tripled. Those are also going into the general coffers so those are the things that have paid for the tax cuts, the good-news story, the sugar-coated story that we heard in the Throne Speech that everything is wonderful and we're just going to coast along. I want to say to you, Madam Acting Speaker, that whenever you're coasting, I would point out that there's a good chance you're heading downhill because there's not very many people that are able to coast uphill. In saying that, I think the sugar-coated message that came through the Throne Speech has really been a disservice to the people of Manitoba. To the business people of

Manitoba and to the working class of Manitoba, it has been a disservice.

We have a number of issues in different areas that will come forward, and with the downturn in the marketplace, I would say that we're going to see some more increases in things like our Autopac that has been offset by some fairly, I should say, welcomed investments we've had in the past that paid fairly well. We see the stock market has crashed so the investment revenue generated from that investment that we had is going to be less. It'll have to be made up from some place.

In the Throne Speech, there's been some talk about the realization. Perhaps before I go into what was said in there, the realization by this government that the equalization and transfer payments are not going to be as robust as they have been in the past, and the realization that Manitoba is not a have province, but is a have-not province, and the have provinces, some of them, and some of them are large provinces to our east, are now falling into the same situation because of the crash in the stock market and the massive layoffs in the automobile industry, the layoffs in the manufacturing industry.

Mr. Speaker in the Chair

Right now, we're still rolling along fairly well because there's a certain amount of pension plans. There's a certain amount of UI. When this starts to run out and there are no jobs, these large provinces to our east will become have-not provinces, and the federal government, whoever they happen to be, will be paying attention to the multitude of people that are unemployed. I would suggest, Mr. Speaker, that the transfer payments and the equalization payments will not rise in the near future with a good possibility of them declining.

Mr. Speaker, I'd like to point out just a little bit on the financial end of what happens in western Canada, and we are not an island; we're not an island unto ourselves. We're not going to be protected just because we have a border around Manitoba. That isn't going to protect us. We're not going to be protected from the recession in the United States, and we weren't prepared for this. We've made no preparation.

When we see the provinces, our sister provinces to the west, that have made great, great preparations going into and looking forward. When they started off in 1999, and our colleagues across the floor took over, they had a debt of around \$7 billion, give or

take some change, and change is what they call that, anything in between the seven and the eight, because that's what they're willing to waste on the west side. When we looked at Saskatchewan, with 11 point something, 11 and change, and we take a look at British Columbia in '99 with \$43 billion in debt, and today, Mr. Speaker, we are at a crisis in Manitoba with a \$10-billion debt, relying on one-third of our budget on equalization and transfer payments. We see Saskatchewan with \$3-billion debt and a have province with no equalization and no transfer payments. We see British Columbia with a \$7-billion debt, no equalization and no transfer payments.

So, Mr. Speaker, I have to suggest that there has been no forward planning. We heard a lot of rhetoric over the last nine years, but there has been no forward planning on what we were facing and what we could face. They have taken the idea that Manitoba is invincible. We are invincible. We are an island that will not go down.

They have relied on agriculture to carry the province in Manitoba, and it has done a wonderful job. It has done a wonderful job until this past year—actually, the past two years—and in spite of a situation in the cattle industry with BSE in 2003, the ranchers of this province have worked diligently, and I like that term. I've heard it often in this House by someone across the way that has worked diligently.

We, Mr. Speaker, the cattle producers in this province have worked diligently. They have worked through many, many situations of either drought and/or—the opposite of drought. They've worked through a lot of hardships, and they've continued to contribute to the economy in a full and productive manner.

However, there have been circumstances well beyond their control, which I pointed out was BSE, but the other circumstance, Mr. Speaker, is the country-of-origin labelling in the United States. I would suggest that we have heard some glowing remarks about what has taken place in the United States in the recent election. But I would also caution this government today that there will probably be a stronger protectionist attitude than we have seen in the past. There has been a protectionist attitude in the past. That's what the country-of-origin labelling is all about.

I can see that this will continue. We in Manitoba, who are an export province of livestock of all kinds and of the feather industry, for that matter, we're going to pay a huge price, Mr. Speaker, if we cannot

resolve this country-of-origin labelling, which is right now the first defence by the protectionists in the United States. If we can't resolve this issue where we're allowed to market our product, then I would suggest that the businesses in this country and in this province, this great province of Manitoba, will shrink and that the income from those businesses, the taxes paid by those businesses, will also not be there for this particular government or any government for that matter to carry out the needed infrastructure requirements that are necessary for the rest of Manitoba to perform.

So, in saying that, Mr. Speaker, it's not just the cattle industry. The cattle industry has been affected first by a disease, which is called BSE, and it's been affected by the country-of-origin labelling.

* (16:20)

However, the hog industry, Mr. Speaker, is a different situation. The hog industry, it was the booming industry in this province. It's had many, many, tough times with a cyclical type of situation that they operate in. It's just part of the cycle of the industry, but the producers were able to work through all of those and prepare for them. They put money away for rainy days and the down cycle in the business that they would be able to carry forward. The banking institutions were there with them. They understood the economics of the industry.

All of a sudden, out of the clear blue, the Minister of Conservation (Mr. Struthers) took it upon himself to ban, ban hogs, ban hog expansions in a big portion of the province. Single-handedly, single-handedly, Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Conservation killed an industry in the province. He killed an industry, an industry that was contributing more money to the Province's coffers than Manitoba Hydro.

I know that the minister could not have done that single-handedly; he must have been forced into it. I felt that he was a fairly strong minister, but I believe he caved. He caved to some other power above him. I believe that; I might be wrong and, if I'm wrong, I'd like him to prove that to me.

At any rate, Mr. Speaker, I would suggest the damage that this minister has done to the development in this province in agriculture and, more particularly, in the hog industry in this province and to the feeding industry, because we are an exporting province—we export a lot of what we produce in this province.

I might point out that we export hydro and they have now let some of the wind farms slip through their fingers, probably will let some more slip through. We export our lumber industry. Now we've put a ban on that; we're not going to log in certain areas of the province. We've banned the expansion of the hog industry in this province. I would suggest that what they'll do is, probably now, they will let the cattle industry in this province die.

Agriculture as a whole has had nothing, nothing mentioned in this Throne Speech. I find that woefully disrespectful to say the least, that agriculture should only be mentioned twice in the Throne Speech with two words, with nothing in the Speech that would indicate that there was any preparation to help some of these industries through the downturn, the cyclical downturn in these industries.

Mr. Speaker, we'll just maybe move on a little bit to this logging in the provincial parks that has been banned. We have a minister from this side of the floor now that we refer to as the banner. He is a banner minister. It seems that any of the dirty work that needs to be done on that side of the House, the banner is the man to do that. He bans logging in parks; he bans hogs. But I wonder how they will deal with the amount of fuel that will build up in these parks because trees, like people, have an extended period of life and, after that, those trees become diseased; they die; they go down.

It's been pointed out to me that, possibly, the way to control all of the deadfall—the fuel—is forest fires. I agree that that's a natural way of evolution; that's how we have ended up with the forests that we have today. It's from lightning strikes that have set off some huge, huge, forest fires. After these forest fires, we do get a regrowth, but it takes many, many years.

I would suggest to you that, by leaving these parks and doing no logging in the park whatsoever, we're actually wasting a natural resource that could be harvested. It could be harvested in a selective way that you would do no damage to the forest. You can harvest it in blocks and reseed in blocks. You would be able to control forest fires if they do happen to happen. And they will; of course, they will. But you will have no opportunity to control the forest fire if you have no fire breaks, no geographic cuts in there, geological cuts. You have no opportunity. So I would suggest that the minister of banner—or banning minister, that we would refer to him as—has made a

terrible, terrible mistake, and I hope that he understands and will take some advice from this side of the House and change his mind.

Another thing that the Throne Speech said, that they would introduce a wetlands protection and restoration initiative, which I think is fine. We have a lot of respect for our environment. We have a lot of respect for our natural resources in this province. I would suggest, maybe, to the minister of environment and to the Minister of Water Stewardship (Ms. Melnick) that the reason that we have so much wetlands is because they have been negligent in the last nine years, Mr. Speaker, and they haven't done the drainage that they were required to do.

They made no effort to spend any money on the infrastructure and our roads and our bridges in this province. We can't ignore the fact that the bridges—and I might point out there's a bridge called Letellier Bridge that has been neglected over years and years. There's many others, however, the Letellier Bridge I'm sure that you'd want to hear about that. But the infrastructure, the highways, our roadways, more especially throughout the business part of our province, have been neglected. They have been sadly neglected and, today, with the downturn in the economy I don't think that this particular government has the money, but they do keep re-announcing the fact that they have \$4 billion. I've been in this House now for almost two years and I've heard \$4 billion, \$4 billion. They haven't spent it. Surely to goodness there should be more money and there should be interest on that money because they haven't spent it anywhere that we can see. So, I would suggest that it would be time to use some of that money to put the infrastructure out there to support the businesses in our fine province.

I will give the government some kudos on stepping up the recycling in this province. I think it's high time that we did some recycling. I don't think that they want to stop with just plastic bags, but I think they should be cautioned. In some places they have found that the cost of recycling the bags are worth more than what you're going to help the economy, but I'm not an expert at that. Perhaps I can check that out. But there is one other thing that they should consider recycling. We have these tin cans that they have pop in, like root beer, Black Label and pale ale, and those cans, Mr. Speaker, should be recycled, as they are in other jurisdictions around us, and I would expect that some of my colleagues right close by that put a lot of bills on the Order Paper will

be more than happy to include that in one of their upcoming bills.

Another thing that our Throne Speech brought forward that I think is of a lot of value, Mr. Speaker, is, of course, the CentrePort, the main inland port. I think that's important to our economy in Manitoba. I think it'll be a destination point and, because we are in the centre of the business world, so to speak, I believe that it's important that we all support that CentrePort. However, some of the ways of reaching that support I'm beginning to wonder if those are achievable. There are certain things that have to be done and, again, I'll go back to the infrastructure. The infrastructure coming through the busiest port west of Ontario—Port of Emerson—there needs to be a lot of upgrade for the Asia-Pacific corridor to be upgraded, 75 highway needs to be upgraded. We need to get after this, and we've seen the federal government put their share of the money on the table and I would encourage the Minister of Infrastructure (Mr. Lemieux) to move forward more rapidly than he has in the past. I would say if he had signed the growing Canada Fund much earlier in the season he wouldn't have missed a good portion of the construction season this year on that particular highway, or in the town of Morris, for that matter. In the end, what we have seen is that they were holding off and holding off because they were going to make a better deal. Well, I have to say that there is no better deal. They got what they were offered to begin with. Nothing has changed. All we did is we lost one full construction season—

* (16:30)

Mr. Speaker: Order. The hour being 4:30 p.m., pursuant to rule 45(3), I'm interrupting proceedings in order to put the question on the motion of the honourable Member for River Heights (Mr. Gerrard), that is, the subamendment to the motion for an address in reply to the Speech from the Throne.

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

Some Honourable Members: Agreed.

Some Honourable Members: No.

Voice Vote

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

Some Honourable Members: Yea.

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

Some Honourable Members: Nay.

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

Formal Vote

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Inkster): Mr. Speaker, I would ask that you canvass the House to see if there is support to have a recorded vote.

Mr. Speaker: Does the honourable member have support?

Some Honourable Members: No.

Some Honourable Members: Yes.

Mr. Speaker: Okay, the honourable member has support.

A recorded vote having been requested, call in the members.

Order. The question before the House is the motion of the honourable Member for River Heights (Mr. Gerrard), that is, the subamendment to the motion for address in reply to the Speech from the Throne.

Division

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

Yeas

Borotsik, Briese, Cullen, Driedger, Dyck, Eichler, Faurschou, Gerrard, Graydon, Hawranik, Lamoureux, Maguire, McFadyen, Mitchelson, Pedersen, Rowat, Stefanson, Taillieu.

Nays

Allan, Altemeyer, Ashton, Bjornson, Blady, Braun, Brick, Caldwell, Chomiak, Dewar, Doer, Howard, Irvin-Ross, Jennissen, Jha, Korzeniowski, Lemieux, Mackintosh, Marcelino, Martindale, McGifford, Melnick, Nevakshonoff, Oswald, Reid, Robinson, Rondeau, Saran, Selby, Selinger, Struthers, Swan.

Madam Clerk (Patricia Chaychuk): Yeas 18, Nays 32.

Mr. Speaker: I declare the subamendment lost.

* * *

Mr. Speaker: We will now continue on with the speech to the amendment that was brought forward

by the honourable Leader of the Official Opposition (Mr. McFadyen).

* (16:40)

Mr. Gerard Jennissen (Flin Flon): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to be able to put some words on the record regarding the Speech from the Throne. I am equally pleased to give my full support to the Throne Speech and will, of course, not be supporting the amendment put forth by the Leader of the Opposition.

I have listened carefully, though, to a number of speakers and am impressed by some of the analyses and the observations. Certainly, the Leader of the Opposition, in his comments, at least in his opening comments, struck, I thought, a tone and direction that was positive and assertive, co-operative and downright sensible. I mean, he admitted that there are many good things in the Throne Speech, and he also admitted something that we've always known on this side and that, of course, all Manitobans, I believe, know. He said about our leader, the Premier (Mr. Doer), and I quote him: he "represents our province with great dignity and in a very articulate way." So I couldn't have said it better myself.

I also agree with the Leader of the Opposition that we should thank all those who participated in the democratic process in the last federal election, both the winners and the losers. That includes a host of party workers and volunteers on all sides of the spectrum. Some of these new voices are Candice Hoepfner and Shelly Glover—I haven't had the pleasure of meeting either of those yet—and, of course, Jim Maloway and Niki Ashton, both of whom I know quite well.

I will certainly miss Jim Maloway on this side of the House and, in fact, I'm sure that even those on the other side of the House will miss his wit and his straightforward, folksy speeches. I don't know of anyone who could stick a pin into a balloon of hot air and pomposity better than Jim Maloway. Now, on the outside, Jimmy Maloway may have been an informal and jocular, regular kind of guy, but, inside, he was one of the sharpest, most focussed and informed politicians I've ever had the honour to meet. I will certainly miss him in this House. However, I wish him well in his new role.

A few other things about Jimmy Maloway—he listened to everything that was said in this House. If an important issue arose, he would actually check it out. He never took anything for granted, and I

remember very well when Highway 391 was an issue. It was a very bumpy road. It's the road between Thompson and Lynn Lake, and this was quite a number of years ago. He actually drove up to Cranberry Portage, asked me to get into his vehicle, and we drove that road. He wanted to experience it first-hand. Now that's some 2,300 kilometres he had to put on to find out first-hand what that road was like. Similarly, not too long ago, when the Leader of the Liberal Party raised some problems with regard to the Sherridon-Cold Lake mine that is now closed, and the material that came out of the mine, the slag, he wanted to see it first-hand because those tailings had a negative impact on Kississing Lake and he wanted to find out what that was all about. So, again, he drove all the way to Cranberry, asked me to jump into his SUV, drove the hundred-and-some kilometres to Sherridon-Cold Lake on some of the world's curviest roads, I guess I could say. I think there are 200 curves in that road in 80 kilometres. Then we drove up the where the pollution actually occurred, and we put on our waders, our rubber boots, and waded across this little stream which was polluted. You could see the red pollutants in the water, and he checked this thing out first-hand. That's the way Jimmy Maloway operated, and, like I said, we're going to miss him.

Then, of course, there is the other person that I know quite well, and that is Niki Ashton. That's the youngest woman ever elected, at least in this election, the youngest woman elected federally. What a bundle of energy and intellect she is. Like my wife says, well, you know, the apple didn't fall far from the tree. If you know her parents, you know where the intellect and the wit and the sparkling humour, and all that goes with it, come from—

An Honourable Member: Her mom.

Mr. Jennissen: Her mother, someone said. I'm sure that's not quite true. Her speaking ability seems to reflect her father quite well too. Anyway, I look forward with great joy to working with Niki. I've worked with her in the past, and I know I'll continue to work with her in the future. It's just delightful to have such a dynamic young lady representing our party in northern Manitoba. I'm just thrilled with that. Then I have to go on to a more sombre topic, and that is the untimely passing of our friend and colleague, Oscar Lathlin.

A day before Oscar died, I was with him the entire day. I got on a small plane very early in the morning in Flin Flon and flew with a pilot to

Grace Lake airport in The Pas. We picked up Oscar and we flew to Winnipeg where we met with some senior people, senior staff and deputy ministers and so on, because Oscar was very determined to refocus the Northern Development Strategy. He chaired those meetings and I thought he did an extremely good job.

His performance that day will not be soon forgotten, but, maybe, a side of Oscar that a lot of people do not know, however. Later that day, we, of course, flew back in the same little plane, another one and a half hour ride to get back to Grace Lake, and we joked a lot. Oscar talked about his family and his wife and his kids and his father, his early hunting experiences, very personal stuff, which was uncharacteristic, in a sense, of Oscar because he wasn't that talkative.

We also joked a lot. I still think my jokes were funnier than his, but he did tell some pretty good jokes. Little did I realize, when I dropped him off at Grace Lake, and you know he walked away in a fairly good humour because some of the jokes were, well they were good jokes, and that will be the last time I'll ever see him, Mr. Speaker. That left a bad feeling in my throat. It leaves a bad feeling in my throat right now. It's a great loss to all of us.

I also remember the time, I want to just repeat one more little story about Oscar. When he came to Frontier Collegiate Institute, and you have to realize that he graduated from Frontier, from FCI in Cranberry Portage in 1972. He graduated in June of that year. I started teaching there in September of that year and I stayed there 22 years.

Oscar spoke to the graduating class, because we had a habit, or tradition, I guess is a better word, in that school that every year we would ask a distinguished alumnus, a graduate from FCI to come and speak to the graduates before the graduation, long before the graduation. It was Oscar's turn to speak because he was a distinguished graduate from our institution, from our school. I remember some children, Aboriginal students talking to him, asking questions about, well, why do we have to take math and science. We want to take more culturally relevant stuff. What Oscar said, I think, was very profound.

He said, cultural sensitivity, yes, but let me tell you something, there's no such thing as Indian math or white math; there's just math, mathematics, and you need to learn it, so suck it up, learn it, and get a good job. That's what you're here for. So he could be

direct and blunt in some ways, and I will certainly miss that part of Oscar because I like that directness.

I will always cherish his memory as a good friend. I think, probably, there are a lot of critics of Oscar around right now, that they're hanging their head in shame, but, I guess that's very human, too, because I shouldn't talk, because one of the things that bothers me a lot is that I remember when another member died in this House, Neil Gaudry. I had the insensitivity, in fact, the stupidity of saying some things to him one day that I knew hurt him very badly and he was very upset. He was very emotional about it and I always wanted to apologize and I never did. I never had the chance.

I was at the funeral and if Neil is listening right now, Neil, I am sorry. I should have done that and it didn't happen. I guess it teaches us all a lesson, Mr. Speaker, that sometimes we don't appreciate those around us. We get into these heated political debates and we're very partisan and we forget that human element in all of us. So, anyway, that was Neil Gaudry as well as Oscar Lathlin. I guess I miss both of them a great deal.

The context of the Throne Speech came at a rather unfortunate time in our history and particularly at the federal level. Things have changed so much in the last several weeks. It only seems like yesterday when the Prime Minister was talking about steady as she goes, balanced budgets, no deficits, lots of tax cuts, particularly to big companies that, in my opinion, didn't need it at that time, maybe they do need it now, I don't know, telling us that the fundamentals of the economy were solid and so on and so on. Now there's a different refrain. Times are tough and getting worse and that's true. We'll have to run a deficit. We're in a technical recession, although I don't know what's technical about losing your job or your house or both, or what's technical about watching your mutual funds and RRSPs evaporate. It's a reality, and I guess questions Canadians and Manitobans could logically ask: How did we come to such an impasse? There are certainly lessons to be learned here, particularly as they allege that this only happens twice in a century, these meltdowns.

*(16:50)

Regardless of the meltdown, it threatens both the perpetrators of it and the victims, and, I guess, the question we should ask: Is it caused by greed? I fear, from my own perspective that it is so, I could be wrong. I think this greed, Mr. Speaker, particularly south of the border where there is such an emphasis

on right-wing, speculative, wide-open, unregulated or under-regulated, no-holds-barred, red-in-tooth-and-claw capitalism, looking only at that bottom line and so on. The tragedy is that it not only wounds the United States' economy as it is now, it wounds the rest of the world because it ripples outward to the rest of the world as well. No one is immune. All economies are intertwined, and we are, after all, the United States' greatest trading partner.

It is ironic, however, that those down south are talking about trillion-dollar stimulus packages, and they're using methods, really, that they condemned before when other left-wing governments or progressive governments tried to use them. In the past, if you said central planning, they would throw up and say evil. Nationalization, even if a little bit of the banking system, was evil. Intervening directly in the marketplace was heresy.

Then, of course, there was always this old chestnut about that government which governs least, governs best. Well, those verities are gone, Mr. Speaker. There's a new truth emerging.

Now there is intervention in the marketplace, and they need to, just as Franklin Delano Roosevelt had to, use a new deal to pull the United States out of the Depression.

It's interesting, though, that what right-wing governments condemn about left-wing governments, they practise immediately when economic collapse threatens. So I would say, why not be consistent? Choose a social democratic government. They don't have these wild ups and downs.

Now I know that the elder Republicans and fiscal geniuses of the right do not believe for one second that anyone other than themselves can be good fiscal managers. Yet I truly believe that nothing could be further from the truth.

I know that Tommy Douglas and the CCF, and it was a relatively new party then, had to rescue Saskatchewan from previous debacles and previous governments.

I know that Roy Romanow and Lorne Calvert had to physically resurrect a Saskatchewan economy that was totally wrecked by the Conservative Party under Grant Devine in Saskatchewan. When the dust settled, in fact, in Saskatchewan, when a number of Tories were put in jail, they even had to change the name of the party because they couldn't get elected as Progressive Conservatives in Saskatchewan. So they wrapped themselves in the Saskatchewan flag,

called themselves the Saskatchewan Party, and eventually won a victory. But take a good look at how that economy was when they won that victory. It was in very good fiscal shape. I really do hope that the Premier of Saskatchewan, Brad Wall, will keep it that way. That is my hope. But I'm not terribly sure of that.

Although Mr. Filmon did not leave this province in quite as bad a shape as Mr. Devine did in Saskatchewan, still, since 1999, we've had to clean up a lot of stuff and had to rebuild a lot of stuff as well.

Mr. Speaker, I am a northerner, and I like to look at the Throne Speech through a bit of a northern lens. That's what I'd like to do now. Let's take a look at some of those highlights, some of the main points.

First of all, \$4.7 billion and a four-year capital plan which will be invested in such key areas as schools, hospitals, roads, universities and colleges, including the University College of the North. We're going to continue with a 10-year, \$4-billion highway improvement program. That is at least twice as good as anything we ever had under the Filmon Conservatives. There is a modernized apprenticeship training program, or programs, that are especially needed in northern Manitoba where hydro expansion, forestry and mining create most of the jobs. Right now there are many more skilled job openings than there are people to fill them, and we need to do that in the north.

I'm especially pleased with the announcement of an additional training program for mining to be located in Flin Flon. It will be headquartered in Flin Flon. The core program will be there, although it will move to other communities as well.

The amendment to The Workers Compensation Act has strengthened further coverage to firefighters. I think it is a step in the right direction.

I was also happy a few days ago to be present when the Minister of Competitiveness, Training and Trade (Mr. Swan) and the Minister of Advanced Education and Literacy (Ms. McGifford) announced \$4.5 million for a Northern Essential Skills Training Initiative. A key partner in this will be the Northern Manitoba Sector Council.

I can only say that, if Oscar were alive today, he would be so thrilled that we're doing this educational initiative, or proceeding with it.

I'm happy to see the elimination of tray fees on publicly insured services starting April 1, 2009. That is helpful to a lot of Manitobans, particularly seniors.

I like the Caregivers Tax Credit of up to \$1,020 annually for those who look after their loved ones at home. That's a very positive and progressive step. Of course, others have talked about the CentrePort initiative and how positive that will be in the future for Manitoba's economy.

So, Mr. Speaker, I know we're in a global financial crisis. I know that there is instability everywhere, but it's not nearly as bad in Manitoba, I believe, as in other jurisdictions. We are well positioned; our economy is well diversified. We will never be completely shielded, however. The Fiscal Stabilization Fund, after all, is over \$800 million, and none of it came from selling a Crown corporation, and that is really four times as much, roughly, as it was under the Tories, who did sell a Crown corporation.

We've had six credit upgrades since 1999. We reduced the net-to-GDP ratio by roughly a third. The 2009 growth rate of our province is projected to be over twice that of the rate projected for the rest of Canada. Debt servicing cost of every revenue dollar is projected to be 6.6 percent this year, which is exactly half of what it was under the Tories, because, for every revenue dollar, they were spending 13.2 cents to service that debt. In 2007-2008, we reduced debt by \$277 million. That's a significant amount of money, Mr. Speaker.

Manitoba and northern Manitoba will not be immune from the global economic crisis, as I said earlier, but relative to other provinces, we are well positioned. We didn't reach the dizzying heights that propelled Alberta and, to a lesser extent, Saskatchewan into the stratosphere. But, on the other hand, they won't fall as far either when their petrodollar economy collapses. We have a truly diversified economy.

Let me close, Mr. Speaker, by once again thanking my constituents. I know that I, like every other member of this House, try to represent my constituents to the very best of my abilities. I realize that, despite our genuine differences, tactics, ideology and temperament, we all want to do what is best for Manitobans.

I particularly enjoy working with my northern colleagues, the members for Thompson, Swan River and Rupertsland. That fifth voice, that of

Oscar Lathlin's, is, at this point, silent. But the four remaining MLAs will see to it that the legacy left by Oscar Lathlin will be honoured. In fact, we will strive doubly hard to achieve the economic, social and educational goals set by Oscar for northern Manitoba. Also, there's no doubt in my mind, Mr. Speaker, no doubt whatsoever, knowing the generous and fair-minded nature of all my colleagues in this House, that they will assist us in that endeavour.

Finally, this Throne Speech augurs well for northern Manitoba, it augurs well for all of Manitoba and the future for Manitoba. I am proud to fully endorse this Throne Speech, and thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Stuart Briese (Ste. Rose): It's a pleasure to rise on the motion by the Leader of the Opposition (Mr. McFadyen) to the Speech from the Throne.

Once again, we've seen another rehash of old announcements touted as new spending. The list went on and on and on. I think the most glaring example would probably be the personal care home in my own community. It's been announced—Glen Cummings made the first announcement in 1999—at least twice a year every year since. It was announced as supposedly part of the big spending undertaking of this government, right now. The home is in place, by the way. I'm not sure what they're spending on it

right now because it's done. They expect to be moving into it in March. So I don't know how that enters into this \$4.7 billion of supposedly new spending. It certainly is an interesting statement.

Instead of a long-term plan for economic recovery, we have a formula for building more debt into Manitoba in this Throne Speech. We continue to hear that the NDP are well positioned and insulated from the global slowdown, and that is simply not true. They take the Alfred E. Neuman position of, what, me worry?

We cannot bury our heads in the sand and pretend that nothing is happening. We have significant sectors of our economy in turmoil, and we must hear their concerns and address their issues. We in Manitoba are far too reliant on the federal government for our financial security. Over a third of our revenues is provided to us by other jurisdictions, and that is just not a sustainable practice.

We're turning into, quite basically, a—

Mr. Speaker: Order. When this matter is again before the House, the honourable member will have 27 minutes remaining.

The hour being 5 p.m., this House is adjourned and stands adjourned until 10 a.m. tomorrow (Friday).

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Thursday, November 27, 2008

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