

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

Official Report
(Hansard)

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MANITOBA LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
Thirty-Ninth Legislature

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.
BLAIKIE, Bill, Hon.	Elmwood	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.
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, Hon.	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.
MAGUIRE, Larry	Arthur-Virden	P.C.
MARCELINO, Flor, Hon.	Wellington	N.D.P.
MARTINDALE, Doug	Burrows	N.D.P.
McFADYEN, Hugh	Fort Whyte	P.C.
McGIFFORD, Diane, Hon.	Lord Roberts	N.D.P.
MELNICK, Christine, Hon.	Riel	N.D.P.
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.
ROBINSON, Eric, Hon.	Rupertsland	N.D.P.
RONDEAU, Jim, Hon.	Assiniboia	N.D.P.
ROWAT, Leanne	Minnedosa	P.C.
SARAN, Mohinder	The Maples	N.D.P.
SCHULER, Ron	Springfield	P.C.
SELBY, Erin	Southdale	N.D.P.
SELINGER, Greg, Hon.	St. Boniface	N.D.P.
STEFANSON, Heather	Tuxedo	P.C.
STRUTHERS, Stan, Hon.	Dauphin-Roblin	N.D.P.
SWAN, Andrew, Hon.	Minto	N.D.P.
TAILLIEU, Mavis	Morris	P.C.
WHITEHEAD, Frank	The Pas	N.D.P.
WOWCHUK, Rosann, Hon.	Swan River	N.D.P.
<i>Vacant</i>	Concordia	

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Tuesday, December 15, 2009

The House met at 1:30 p.m.

Mr. Speaker: O Eternal and Almighty God, from Whom all power and wisdom come, we are assembled here before Thee to frame such laws as may tend to the welfare and prosperity of our province. Grant, O merciful God, we pray Thee, that we may desire only that which is in accordance with Thy will, that we may seek it with wisdom, know it with certainty and accomplish it perfectly for the glory and honour of Thy name and for the welfare of all our people. Amen.

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

PETITIONS

PTH 15–Traffic Signals

Mr. Ron Schuler (Springfield): Mr. Speaker, I wish to present the following petition to the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba.

These are the reasons for this petition:

In August 2008, the Minister of Transportation stated that traffic volumes at the intersection of PTH 15 and Highway 206 in Dugald exceeded those needed to warrant the installation of traffic signals.

Every school day, up to a thousand students travel through this intersection in Dugald where the lack of traffic signals puts their safety at risk.

Thousands of vehicles travel daily through this intersection in Dugald where the lack of traffic signals puts at risk the safety of these citizens.

In 2008, there was a 300 percent increase in accidents at this intersection.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To request that the Minister of Transportation (Mr. Ashton) consider the immediate installation of traffic signals at the intersection of PTH 15 and Highway 206 in Dugald.

To request that the Minister of Transportation recognize the values of the lives and well-being of the students and citizens of Manitoba.

Signed by Doug Raynard, Louise Bass, Juergen Hartmann and many, many other Manitobans.

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

Ophthalmology Services–Swan River

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

These are the reasons for this petition:

The Swan Valley region has a high population of seniors and a very high incidence of diabetes. Every year, hundreds of patients from the Swan Valley region must travel to distant communities for cataract surgery and additional pre-operative and post-operative appointments.

These patients, many of whom are sent as far away as Saskatchewan, need to travel with an escort who must take time off work to drive the patient to his or her appointments without any compensation. Patients who cannot endure this expense and hardship are unable to have the necessary treatment

The community has located an ophthalmologist who would like to practise in Swan River. The local Lions Club has provided funds for the necessary equipment, and the Swan River Valley hospital has space to accommodate this service.

The Minister of Health (Ms. Oswald) has told the Town of Swan River that it has insufficient infrastructure and patient volumes to support a cataract surgery program; however, residents of the region strongly disagree.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To urge the Minister of Health to consider rethinking her refusal to allow an ophthalmologist to practise in Swan River and to consider working with the community to provide this service without further delay.

And this is signed by Dori Driedger, Lily Grieger, Mary Ann Blythe and many, many others.

Manitoba Liquor Control Commission— Liquor Licences

Mr. Cliff Graydon (Emerson): Mr. Speaker, I wish to present the following petition to the Legislative Assembly and these are the reasons for this petition:

The Manitoba Liquor Control Commission has substantially raised the cost of annual liquor licences for restaurants, cocktail lounges and other Manitoba businesses.

The MLCC justifies this increase by stating that the cost of an annual licence is being increased to better reflect rising administration costs.

For some small business owners, the cost of annual liquor licences has more than doubled. These fee hikes are a significant burden for business owners.

The decision to increase the annual licence fee, while at the same time eliminating the 2 percent supplementary licence fee payable on the purchase of spirits, wine and coolers, has the effect of greatly disadvantaging smaller businesses. Small businesses which do not purchase liquor from the MLCC in large volumes will not receive the same benefit from the elimination of this supplementary fee. Instead, they are facing substantial increased costs simply to keep their doors open.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To request the Minister responsible for the administration of The Liquor Control Act (Mr. Mackintosh) to consider working with MLCC to find alternate means of addressing rising administrative costs.

To request the Minister responsible for the administration of The Liquor Control Act to consider working with MLCC to revise the decision to implement a significant annual licence fee increase.

To urge the Minister responsible for the administration of The Liquor Control Act to consider ensuring that the unique challenges faced by small businesses are better taken into account in the future.

This petition is signed by Gord Hoffmann, Roxanne Greaves, Lindsay Kaartinen and many, many more fine Manitobans.

Education Funding

Mr. Rick Borotsik (Brandon West): I wish to present the following petition to the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba.

These are the reasons for this 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 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 owner's ability to pay.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To request the Minister of Education (Ms. Allan) consider removing education funding by school tax or education levies from all property in Manitoba, including commercial property.

To request that the Minister of Education 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, Mr. Speaker, is signed by M. Malcolm, L. Brown, M. Harding and many, many other fine Manitobans.

Seven Oaks Hospital—Emergency Services

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

The background to this petition is as follows:

The current Premier (Mr. Selinger) and NDP government are reducing emergency services at the Seven Oaks Hospital.

On October the 6th, 1995, the NDP introduced a matter of urgent public importance that stated that, quote, "the ordinary business of the House to be set aside to discuss a matter of urgent public importance, namely, the threat to the health-care system posed by this government's plans to limit emergency services in the city of Winnipeg community hospitals."

On December the 6th, 1995, when the then-PC government suggested it was going to reduce emergency services at the Seven Oaks Hospital, the NDP leader then asked Premier Gary Filmon to, quote, "reverse the horrible decisions of his government and his Minister of Health and reopen our community-based emergency wards."

The NDP gave Manitobans the impression that they supported Seven Oaks Hospital having full emergency services, seven days a week, 24 hours a day.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To request the Premier of Manitoba to consider how important it is to have the Seven Oaks Hospital provide full emergency services, seven days a week, 24 hours a day.

Mr. Speaker, this is signed by A. Allard, V. Allard, L. Agapito and many, many other fine Manitobans. Thank you.

*(13:40)

COMMITTEE REPORTS

Standing Committee on Public Accounts First Report

Mr. Leonard Derkach (Chairperson): Mr. Speaker, I wish to present the First Report of the Standing Committee on Public Accounts.

Madam Clerk (Patricia Chaychuk): Your Standing Committee on Public Accounts—

Some Honourable Members: Dispense.

Mr. Speaker: Dispense? Dispense.

Your Standing Committee on Public Accounts presents the following as its First Report.

Meetings

Your Committee met on December 14, 2009 in Room 255 of the Legislative Building.

Matters under Consideration

- *To consider the election of a new Vice-Chairperson*

Committee Membership

- *Mr. BOROTSIK*
- *Ms. BRAUN*
- *Ms. BRICK*
- *Mr. DERKACH (Chairperson)*

- *Mr. DEWAR*
- *Mr. JHA*
- *Mr. LAMOUREUX*
- *Mr. MAGUIRE*
- *Mr. MARTINDALE*
- *Mrs. STEFANSON*
- *Hon. Ms. WOWCHUK*

Your Committee elected Mr. DEWAR as the Vice-Chairperson.

Mr. Derkach: Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the honourable member for Springfield (Mr. Schuler), that the report of the committee be received.

Motion agreed to.

Standing Committee on Legislative Affairs First Report

Ms. Marilyn Brick (Vice-Chairperson): Mr. Speaker, on behalf of the honourable member for Kirkfield Park (Ms. Blady), I wish to present the First Report of the Standing Committee on Legislative Affairs.

Madam Clerk (Patricia Chaychuk): Your Standing Committee on Legislative Affairs presents the—

Some Honourable Members: Dispense.

Mr. Speaker: Dispense? Dispense.

Your Standing Committee on LEGISLATIVE AFFAIRS presents the following as its First Report.

Meetings

Your Committee met on December 14, 2009 at 4:00 p.m. in Room 255 of the Legislative Building.

Matters under Consideration

- *The appointment of the Conflict of Interest Commissioner*

Committee Membership

- *Ms. BLADY*
- *Ms. BRAUN*
- *Ms. BRICK*
- *Hon. Mr. CHOMIAK*
- *Mr. CULLEN*
- *Mr. GOERTZEN*
- *Mr. HAWRANIK*
- *Hon. Ms. HOWARD*
- *Mr. JENNISSEN*
- *Mr. PEDERSEN*
- *Mr. REID*

Your Committee elected Ms. BLADY as the Chairperson.

Your Committee elected Ms. BRICK as the Vice-Chairperson.

Motions

Your Committee agreed to the following motions:

- *THAT the Committee recommends to the Lieutenant-Governor-in-Council that Mr. Ron Perozzo be appointed as the Conflict of Interest Commissioner for a term not to exceed three years from date of commencement.*

Ms. Brick: Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the honourable member for Transcona (Mr. Reid), that the report of the committee be received.

Motion agreed to.

TABLING OF REPORTS

Hon. Diane McGifford (Minister of Advanced Education and Literacy): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to table the following reports: Red River College's Annual Financial Report 2008-2009; and the Assiniboine Community College Annual Report 2008-2009. Thank you.

Introduction of Guests

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. Prior to oral questions, I'd like to draw the attention of honourable members to the public gallery where we have with us from River East Collegiate, we have 17 grade 10 to 12 students under the direction of Ms. Linda LaCoste. This school is located in the constituency of the honourable member for River East (Mrs. Mitchelson).

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

ORAL QUESTIONS

Provincial Debt Reduction Strategy

Mr. Hugh McFadyen (Leader of the Official Opposition): Mr. Speaker, since this is our last question period before the holidays, I think it's—I think it's important to acknowledge the remarkable generosity of Manitobans, as reported in today's *Free Press*, as the most generous people in Canada according to the Fraser Institute. That's something that we all—we're all proud of as Manitobans. It's one more reason why we have such a great province.

Mr. Speaker, one of the—one of the concerns that we have been raising in terms of the forecasts going forward in terms of the incomes and well-being of Manitobans is the rising level of public debt in the province of Manitoba. As the numbers show, Manitoba was the only province in western Canada that increased its debt over the last 10 years, at a time when other provinces were paying their debt down during good times.

Now, Mr. Speaker, this morning there are warnings coming from experts at both the Royal Bank and the Bank of Montreal predicting an increase—predicting an increase in interest rates starting as soon as July of 2010.

So as we see this record level of debt and predictions of rising interest rates, I wanna ask the minister: What is her plan to ensure that her government's NDP debt isn't gonna push down the incomes of Manitobans in the years to come?

Hon. Rosann Wowchuk (Minister of Finance): Mr. Speaker, indeed, the impacts of the recession are being felt around the world; Manitoba is not immune. However, Manitoba has ridden out the recession much better than many other provinces have and many other countries that have managed.

But, Mr. Speaker, the member opposite talks about the debt and debt repayment, and I can assure the member that our debt management strategy has many elements to it and we are committed to it. We have been paying down the debt. We have been paying down pension liabilities. We are funding our share of pensions, principal repayments and capital amortization, even though we are in difficult times. We have made a commitment that we will pay—make a payment on the debt this year, and I would say to the member—

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Mr. McFadyen: Well, Mr. Speaker, the patting of themselves in the back in terms of the economic performance is at odds with what her own—her own chairman of Manitoba Hydro wrote in June. Vic Schroeder wrote that, as the province established for 2007, we were last in dwelling starts; only two provinces have lower average weekly earnings; three have lower per capita retail sales and capital investment; and in none of the categories were we above average.

Mr. Schroeder, the chairman of Manitoba Hydro and former NDP Finance Minister, went on to say: To put it another way, assuming that we are in a race,

even if we're moving faster than the others, when we are further back, running faster does not mean we're in the lead or even in the middle.

This is what—this is what her own Manitoba Hydro chairman, Mr. Schroeder, wrote in June, and I know that Manitobans are concerned with the rising level of public debt, now \$21 billion, which represents \$21,000 for every man, woman and child in Manitoba with the prospect of rising interest rates. What is she gonna do to protect the incomes of Manitoba families?

Ms. Wowchuk: Well, Mr. Speaker, as I said, we all recognize that we are in challenging times, and we have made a commitment to stand by the consumers and the people of this province. We will make a payment on the debt. We will invest in stimulus so that people continue to work, and we will continue to fund and support important services that our people rely on, whether that's health care, education or justice.

But, Mr. Speaker, the member talks about the net debt to GDP as a percentage, and I want to share with the member that since 1999 it has decreased from more than 25—it has decreased from 31.5 percent to 23 percent. The members opposite can't talk to us about how we should manage the debt. We have paid it down, but we are also very considerate of services important to people.

Mr. McFadyen: Well, we're well aware of the—of the profligate spending and their lack of regard for the impact of that spending on the next generation of Manitobans. The debt of the province has gone up from 13.5 billion to over 21 billion today under their watch at a time when other western provinces were paying the debt down during the good years. Mr. Speaker, when the sun is shining, this is the time to fix the roof and instead of fixing the roof they made the hole bigger in terms of Manitoba's debt.

Mr. Speaker, I wanna ask the minister if she will apologize for the mismanagement of the last 10 years and commit—commit today at a time when we're spending more than \$2 million a day on debt servicing, a record high level: What is her plan to deal with Manitoba's debt? Rather than increasing it, what's she doing to protect the next generation?

Ms. Wowchuk: Well, I'm really pleased that the member opposite is interested in debt servicing because when he was chief of staff for the Conservatives when they were in power, the debt-servicing costs were much higher. They are

down from 13.2 cents on a dollar to point—six cents on a dollar.

The member opposite refuses to accept that we are in a different accounting. He refuses to accept the fact that as well as having debt, we have much more assets, Mr. Speaker, because we have to account for those assets and we have made investments in assets, whether it be the Health science Centre, whether it be schools, whether it be hospitals.

I would stand beside our record of what we have invested into assets in this province anytime when they were in government.

*(13:50)

Provincial Debt Servicing Costs

Mr. Rick Borotsik (Brandon West): Mr. Speaker, I know that my warning about out-of-control debt has fallen on deaf ears.

The previous Finance Minister, now Premier (Mr. Selinger), and the current Finance Minister cannot control their credit card addiction. This fiscal year alone will mean an additional \$1.8 billion of debt, taking us to an unheard of level of \$23 billion.

Mr. Speaker, economists are now warning that higher interest rates and debt-servicing costs are just around the corner. They predict a 1 percent increase in rates in 2010, and they're predicting an additional 2 percent increase in rates in 2011.

Debt goes up; rates go up; debt-servicing costs go up: Program funding has to be affected.

What is the minister's long-term strategy for increased interest rates?

Hon. Rosann Wowchuk (Minister of Finance): Mr. Speaker, the member opposite is complaining about the amount of money we are spending on infrastructure.

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Ms. Wowchuk: Well, I—well, I wonder, Mr. Speaker, I wonder if he is complaining about the money we spent on the health—on the hospital in Brandon.

I'm wondering if he's complaining about the money that we spent on waste-water treatment—

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Ms. Wowchuk: –in Brandon.

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Speaker: Order. Order.

Ms. Wowchuk: I wonder, Mr. Speaker–

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Ms. Wowchuk: I wonder, Mr. Speaker, if he's complaining about the bridges we spent in Brandon that he's trying to take credit for.

Mr. Speaker, you can't have it both ways. You can't ask for stimulus which we believe in and we have invested in because it keeps people working and then complain that there is money being spent.

Financial Statements Tabling Request

Mr. Rick Borotsik (Brandon West): Well, Mr. Speaker, if the Finance Minister wants to play that game, I would suggest that I'm complaining about \$640 million that's being wasted on the west-side hydro.

I'm gonna complain about \$14 million that they're wasting on an enhanced ID.

I'm gonna complain, Mr. Speaker, about \$250,000 that's been spent on advertising on *The Simpsons*. That's what I'm gonna complain about every day.

Every day, for the past two weeks, I have asked the Finance Minister for her to table the second-quarter financials. When I see her in the hall, Mr. Speaker, I ask her to table the financials.

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Mr. Borotsik: Here in the Chamber, I ask her to table the financials. In question period, I ask her to table the financials, and what do I get? All I get is her thumbing her nose at me, Mr. Speaker.

I can tell by the number of pizza boxes outside the minister's office last night that she and her staff have been working on the NDP spin. Mr. Speaker, the pizza boxes were out. The lights were out. The minister wasn't home. Will she table the financials right now before we rise?

Hon. Rosann Wowchuk (Minister of Finance): Well, Mr. Speaker, the member–

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Speaker: Order. Order. Order. Order. The honourable minister.

Ms. Wowchuk: You know, Mr. Speaker, the member opposite just complained about the money that would–being spent on Bipole III. The member opposite–

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Ms. Wowchuk: The members opposite would–just can't get it through their heads that building a line on the east side will not fly, Mr. Speaker.

And I want to table for the House a report that came out today that says the boreal forest is the world's richest carbon storage, and a spot in Manitoba–

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Speaker: Order. Order.

Ms. Wowchuk: –a spot in Manitoba is the only place in the world that is identified as a pristine boreal forest, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, I'll table this for the members opposite to see how far off target they are when they start talking about where the line should go.

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Manitoba Hydro Bipole III West-Side Location

Mr. Cliff Cullen (Turtle Mountain): Well, Mr. Speaker, the minister already has a hydro line running through the boreal forest and now the NDP government's gonna build a road through the boreal forest.

Mr. Speaker, the Premier's (Mr. Selinger) been telling Manitobans that government must tighten its belt and reduce spending. Meanwhile he has instructed Manitoba Hydro to do exactly the opposite. Hundreds of millions of dollars will be wasted on their west-side route running over to the Saskatchewan border.

It's unfortunate that Manitoba Hydro employees won't speak up on the issue, but we know how this government treats whistle-blowers.

Mr. Speaker, one retired engineer from Manitoba Hydro with 30 years service did write to the NDP government, and he said: certainly a bad decision economically, technically and developmentally. He goes on to say that it will cost each of us as Manitobans \$500 to \$1,000 in addition to

ongoing operating costs. Allowing politics to override sound and proven decision making is surely a mistake.

Will the minister now do the right thing for Manitobans, heed the advice of Bill Stephens and reverse this decision in the best interest of all Manitobans?

Hon. Rosann Wowchuk (Minister charged with the administration of The Manitoba Hydro Act): Mr. Speaker, as I said yesterday, I have a lot of respect for engineers. I have a brother who's an engineer, and I listen to him. But I would encourage the member also to look at what engineers do, and their job is to build lines. But I would ask him to—I'd ask those engineers to talk to the sales department, because it is the sales department that negotiates sales, and this government is not going to put at risk \$20-billion worth of sales because of the members' opposite desire to have a shorter line. It may be shorter, but the price we pay will be much, much higher.

Mr. Speaker, it will never get built, and we will never get the benefits that are outlined for us by maintaining that boreal forest that benefits the whole world.

Mr. Cullen: Well, Mr. Speaker, Manitobans are looking for some leadership from government to stand up to the American environmentalists. What have we got from the NDP leadership? We've got hydro rates up 16 percent. We're looking at at least another 6 percent over the next two years. Manitoba Hydro's looking at 3.5 percent annually, long-term.

We no longer have the lowest rates in Canada, let alone the United States. Second-quarter reports show our export sales down 42 percent year-to-date. Long-range forecasts from Hydro show net income—net income dropping off dramatically. We've got independent consultants raising issues on this management at Hydro. We've got the Premier (Mr. Selinger) making jokes about it in public, and, meanwhile, Manitobans are on the financial hook from decisions made by this NDP government.

When will this government take the serious issues at Manitoba Hydro—when will they take those issues seriously?

Ms. Wowchuk: Mr. Speaker, we take all of these issues very seriously, and we take Manitoba Hydro's very seriously, very different from what the members opposite did. That was the mothball party

with the—when the Conservatives were in power. We're building Manitoba Hydro. We're building dams and we have to—Hydro has to build a transmission line for reliability and also to ensure our sales.

Now, the member opposite talks about cost. He's willing—he's willing to take the chance on a—on a—on a line that will never be built but—and then give up \$20-billion worth of sales, Mr. Speaker. That's an unacceptable position, and it's unacceptable for the member opposite to say we do not have the lowest rates in North America because we have the lowest rates.

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Court Orders Enforcement

Mr. Kelvin Goertzen (Steinbach): Mr. Speaker, today police charged an 18-year-old, high-risk, level 4 car thief with killing a 47-year-old father this past Friday. It is reported that this high-risk car thief had several court orders against him, which he clearly wasn't following.

Over and over, time and time again, car thieves and gang members and others who have court orders against them ignore those court orders and are responsible for violence and death in the city of Winnipeg. They are not being enforced. They take them as a joke because this minister takes them as a joke.

Why won't this minister acknowledge that his failure to enforce court orders is putting Winnipeggers and Manitobans at risk, Mr. Speaker?

Hon. Andrew Swan (Minister of Justice and Attorney General): Mr. Speaker, on behalf of all members of this House, I think we should congratulate the Winnipeg Police Service for making an arrest in this case. We're very pleased they've been able to do that.

I think the member opposite needs a little briefing and needs to understand how criminal law works in this country, and at past federal-provincial meetings, my two predecessors have pushed strongly to make sure there are changes to the Youth Criminal Justice Act.

I don't believe the members opposite like the way the act works. We certainly don't and we have called upon the federal government to change the Youth Criminal Justice Act to make sure that deterrence is taken into account in sentencing. That

hasn't happened yet. We hope to continue raising our voices, and I actually hope the member for Steinbach and his colleagues work with us to make changes to that act, because that would be a very good thing for safety in this country.

* (14:00)

Mr. Goertzen: The minister either doesn't understand or chooses to ignore the fact that it's a provincial responsibility to enforce court orders when an individual is out, Mr. Speaker. It would save lives if those orders were enforced, yet this known car thief, this level 4 car thief, the worst of the worst, was out and clearly didn't have the enforcement of his orders, and a father died as a result.

These criminals know that those court orders are not going to be enforced under this NDP government. I will ask this minister: Mr. Minister, will you today finally do something to stand up for Manitobans, for the safety of Winnipeggers and Manitobans, and ensure that all of these court orders are strongly enforced so that there can be safety on the streets of Winnipeg, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Swan: I'm not certain if the member opposite has heard of the Winnipeg Auto Theft Suppression Strategy. That strategy combines the efforts of our Winnipeg Police Service, who I know members on this side certainly respect. I thought the member for Steinbach did, but now I'm not so sure.

Certainly we work with Crown attorneys. We have excellent staff in Probations and Corrections to do their best to enforce those orders. And certainly we've been—we've been successful at reducing auto theft by some 70 percent since 2005. It's lower than it's been in any year since 1992 when auto theft became a major problem in this city and, frankly, there is more work to be done.

There are more tragedies that have happened and we will continue to work on that, but we are moving in the right direction, Mr. Speaker.

Diagnostic Services of Manitoba Review of Mismanagement Allegations

Mrs. Myrna Driedger (Charleswood): Mr. Speaker, under this Minister of Health's watch there is a crisis brewing at Diagnostic Services Manitoba, yet she is calling a whistle-blower, a doctor, a liar and, once again, as she has done with the death of Brian Sinclair, she's covering up the facts.

One of the whistle-blower's allegations is that there is unsafe care going on in the labs, and yet this Minister of Health has been saying, and I quote: ". . . no patient harm was done." And on Friday, here in question period she said, and I quote: "There was a specific case in the allegations that was very concerning. That case was investigated immediately. Indeed, it was determined that the allegations did not match the actual facts and that, in fact, there was no negative impact on that patient's outcome."

Can the Minister of Health then tell us, if that was the case, why was a critical incident called on that case?

Hon. Theresa Oswald (Minister of Health): I want to be explicitly clear that the member across the way is the one who's using words like "liar" and so forth. I want to be very clear with her and with all members of this House that we are taking the allegations of this doctor very seriously. That's why there is an internal review. That's why there is an external review being led by Dr. Macdonald, a very well-respected doctor.

She, in turn, has sought the expertise of a pathologist from out of the province. There was a very specific case in the document that the doctor wrote that was investigated. I reiterate to the member that the facts did not match the allegations but, in fact, the review continues.

Indeed, we are taking the allegations of this doctor very seriously. That's why there is a review. It's actually the opposite of not believing him.

Mrs. Driedger: Mr. Speaker, this Minister of Health is trying to talk out of both sides of her mouth.

A critical incident is called when a patient is harmed, and yet this minister keeps saying that no harm was done. And when a critical incident occurs, the Minister of Health must be notified about the incident. So the minister would have known about this particular situation for many, many months and yet she keeps saying that no harm was done.

So can the Minister of Health please explain her misleading comments and tell us: Why is she trying to cover up the facts about this situation?

Ms. Oswald: I will say very clearly that this review is being done after allegations were brought forward. Patient safety is at the forefront of this investigation. There are other allegations that have been made concerning issues of remuneration, issues

of administrative discord, of infighting. All of those are going to be investigated, Mr. Speaker.

I can say to the member opposite that we're taking these allegations very seriously. We will make the findings of this review public. There's absolutely nothing about this that's being covered up. No matter how many times the member opposite tries to use this particular smear campaign against me, it's not going to work. We're being open and transparent, Mr. Speaker.

Mrs. Driedger: Mr. Speaker, a minister with the track record she has on cover-ups has no credibility with her answers in this House.

Mr. Speaker, pathologists, lab technologists are all saying that there is bullying, intimidation and abusive behaviour happening in Manitoba labs. Because of this toxic environment, many in the labs are too afraid to come forward and speak to the review committee. In fact, on Friday, the lawyer on the review committee told pathologists that he can't guarantee that there will be no consequences for pathologists who speak out.

So, Mr. Speaker, I would like to ask the Minister of Health today to commit to ensure that all pathologists, technologists and other lab personnel who speak to the review committee will be guaranteed total and absolute anonymity, or is it her intent to have this whole review a whitewash?

Ms. Oswald: Well, again, Mr. Speaker, I made it clear, on the first day that I was asked this question, that these individuals are protected under the whistle-blower legislation.

And on the subject, Mr. Speaker, of credibility, as raised by the member opposite, when we received these allegations we immediately sought to review them and protect patient safety. When the member opposite received this document, she phoned a reporter, begged to get her picture in the paper, but didn't do a thing to help patients. It's a classic tactic by the member opposite. We care about patients. She cares about publicity. It's the same old, same old.

Thomas Lake Water Levels Flooding Concerns

Mr. Leonard Derkach (Russell): Mr. Speaker, last spring I asked the Minister of Water Stewardship (Ms. Melnick) to come to the aid of cottagers and home-owners along the Thomas Lake shores to help to alleviate the flooding that was occurring and to

allow them to open up an outlet that had been silted over. The summer went by and nothing happened.

Mr. Speaker, today those same home-owners and cottage owners are facing flooding next spring when the melt waters come down, and, indeed, some of those cottages will be unusable, as will an access road and a connecting road.

I want to ask the government whether or not they are prepared to come to the aid of these cottage owners between now and spring so that, indeed, their cottages and their property will not be valued useless once the high waters hit the area.

Hon. Stan Struthers (Acting Minister of Water Stewardship): Mr. Speaker, I know the questions that the member for Russell asked of my colleague. I know of the content and I know that my colleague has undertaken to make sure that everybody who needs to be heard on the issue will be heard and that there is work being done towards finding a solution to this—to this unfortunate situation.

Mr. Derkach: Mr. Speaker, time has literally run out. When the cottage owners wanted the department to intervene, they were told that they had to get permission from landowners downstream before the outlet could be opened. That happened last June.

Mr. Speaker, the First Nations people have said they understood the problem and they were prepared to have the water go through their property and through the creek—or a river that runs through their property, but the department would not allow the outlet to be opened.

Mr. Speaker, today those cottagers are facing a devaluation of their property and perhaps unusable cottages because water will flood them in the spring. In addition, the main road will be flooded in the spring, as will connecting roads between the developments.

I ask the minister whether or not he's prepared to meet with these people and ensure that a solution is found before these waters start to impede the use of their property, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Struthers: Certainly, the Minister of Water Stewardship (Ms. Melnick) is—has been working with the R.M. of Strathclair. My understanding—my understanding is—my understanding is that the R.M. of Strathclair has promised the minister some information that she has requested, and when she receives that information from the R.M., she will be in a position to deal on a—on an ongoing basis with

an issue that I know is frustrating for the member for Russell's constituents.

So I believe when the minister gets that information, she will be moving forward with it.

* (14:10)

Mr. Derkach: Well, Mr. Speaker, perhaps the minister better get a better briefing on the whole issue than he has because the only thing that they received from this minister was a request that the municipality do a \$50,000 environmental study before any action can be taken.

Mr. Speaker, there has been no consultation with either cottagers or the municipality, except for that one request. Since then, cottagers have been appealing to the department to get something done and nothing has been done.

Mr. Struthers: Mr. Speaker, if there is a holdup anywhere in the system, I would assume that the member for Russell wants to work its—work his way through that. And I would assume the member for Russell would want to be helpful in making sure that all the information that is needed to make decisions and to move forward to help his constituents—he'd be more than co-operative in trying to get the information that I have.

The most information—the most up-to-date information is that the Minister of Water Stewardship (Ms. Melnick) is waiting for some information from the R.M. of Strathclair so they can make some decisions. If that's—if that is the case, I would assume the member for Russell would want to help and be co-operative to help his constituents out. I'm sure he would.

Harmonized Sales Tax Government Strategy

Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights): Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Finance has done a rather poor job of releasing a report on the harmonized sales tax. First of all, she says it's on the Web and we've tried with various computers in different ways to download it—download it and must conclude that the site's nonfunctional. We've gone to the minister's staff in her office and they say they don't have a hard copy and they have no idea where to get one. I ask the minister—in her short summary she says that they won't put an HST on in—with the global recession.

I ask the minister: Does this mean that the minister will consider imposing an HST next year after the recession is over?

Hon. Rosann Wowchuk (Minister of Finance): Mr. Speaker, the HST report that the member is referring to was released today. If he hasn't been able to get one, I can—I can assure him that I will provide him with one.

But the report that was released today indicates—and the review that people have done indicate to us clearly that this is not the time to implement the HST, in a time of recession. We've looked very closely at the numbers and this would, indeed, be a burden for our lowest-income people, to have these additional kind of costs put on them—on these.

Mr. Speaker, the member opposite says: Will we implement it at another time? Now is not the time to do it. Is it—if it is a time to review it at another date, certainly we would look at it.

Budget Deficit Prediction

Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights): Mr. Speaker, you know, we know that the Minister of Finance has difficulty getting things done well and releasing financial reports and so on, but last year we note that the new debt of the—the debt of the government went up by \$800 million or \$900 million. In this year's budget, the government has released its budget plans for an \$88-million deficit in the core operating budget.

I ask the Minister of Finance: We're now three-quarters of the way through the year. She must know, hopefully, where she's going in this respect. Can the minister tell us now what her current projection is? Is the deficit going to be more than 88 million or is it gonna be less than 88 million?

Hon. Rosann Wowchuk (Minister of Finance): Mr. Speaker, related to the—to the previous question, what I said was that although the federal government was trying to convince us to move towards the harmonization of GS—to HST we've conducted the review and the report just says that there are too many risks for Manitoba to—and Manitoba families in this time of recession to implement HST.

Mr. Speaker, with regard to—and I would report to the member that the HST report that he is looking for is on the Internet. It's the Finance Web site. It's there, but if he can't find a copy, we would be prepared to provide him with one.

Mr. Speaker, in regard to spending and debt, the member opposite has to remember that we've gone to

summary financing, and he also has to look at our assets.

Boreal Forest Protection

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Inkster): Mr. Speaker, as we all witnessed, the Deputy Premier got fairly excited this afternoon as she jumped to want to table the boreal forest and how the NDP are protecting the boreal forest, you know.

And as she's doing that, I'm looking at this picture of the boreal forest with this big tractor and it's clearcutting 19 kilometres of the boreal forest. There seems to be a little bit of inconsistency. On the one hand, she's glowing about how wonderful she is in protecting the boreal forest; on the other hand, I'm looking at a tractor that's orange—it probably could have the label NDP labelled across it—that's clearcutting the boreal forest.

My question is to the Deputy Premier: Will she be as passionate in going to Manitoba Hydro and ask them why are they clearcutting the boreal forest in order to accommodate a few cottage owners, Mr. Speaker? Will she make that commitment and have that discussion with Manitoba Hydro?

Hon. Rosann Wowchuk (Minister charged with the administration of The Manitoba Hydro Act): Well, Mr. Speaker, I'm really pleased the member opposite has looked at the map that I have provided with him and shown where the one last pristine boreal forest is in the world and how it—important it is to climate change.

But I'm really disappointed in the member opposite. He tries to have it both ways, you know. Put the line on the west side, put the line on the east side, but don't give power to put in a small line from a main line for some cottagers.

The member opposite doesn't want to accept that there are people who have cottages who are trying to reduce their use of propane and diesel fuel and convert to electricity, Mr. Speaker. It's a local project. It is not a major line like the line that would have to go for Bipole III on the east side if he got his way.

Boreal Forest Protection

Mr. Drew Caldwell (Brandon East): Mr. Speaker, there is no government in North America as green as the New Democratic government in Manitoba.

The—our record has been—our record on the environment has been recognized by no less—

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Speaker: Order. Order. Order.

Mr. Caldwell: —of an authority—

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Mr. Caldwell: —than Dr. David Suzuki, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, while the Premier (Mr. Selinger) and Minister of Conservation (Mr. Blaikie) are in Copenhagen this week acting on Manitoba's clean energy advantage and promoting our boreal forest protection as action to curb climate change, could the Acting Minister of Conservation please inform the House today if any new information has been released regarding Manitoba's east-side boreal forest?

Mr. Struthers (Acting Minister of Conservation): You know, Mr. Speaker, I'm reminded of the Tory position in the 1980s where they didn't have the courage to make the big decisions that are good for Manitobans, when they opposed the construction of Limestone. I'm reminded of the 1990s, when they bungled the Conawapa deal, another big project that they could have been the heroes on that they totally screwed up.

In the 21st century now, they're asking us—the Tories across the way are asking us to forgo the market in Wisconsin and in Minnesota, other U.S. markets, because of their concerns over the bipole.

Mr. Speaker, we're gonna make the big decisions on this side of the House that are good for all Manitobans, and there are people around the world who are cheering us on, including, today, the Boreal institute who said and released data and maps that showed the uniqueness, the uniqueness, Mr. Speaker, of the area that we're going to protect, the area that members opposite would bungle like they did in the '80s and in the '90s.

Pension Regulations Amendment Consideration

Mr. Cliff Graydon (Emerson): Mr. Speaker, when the members opposite attempt to justify cutting back services or their inability to budget, they're quick to reference the economic challenges that the global economy is facing.

However, they're not taking enough steps to protect Manitoba workers from the downturn. As we

know, many pension funds have taken a hit over the last year. Some provinces have taken steps to reflect the downturn by amending their pension regulations.

Mr. Speaker, can the Minister of Labour and Immigration tell us that the Province of Manitoba is considering amending Manitoba's pension regulations to reflect what has happened in the markets?

Hon. Jennifer Howard (Minister of Labour and Immigration): I'm pleased to let the House know that those regulations are being examined right now by the Pension Commission and by the capable staff in my department.

We are looking at changes that are going to make the pension system in Manitoba one of the most progressive and, certainly, one of the best systems of protecting pensions for all Manitobans.

*(14:20)

Mr. Graydon: Mr. Speaker, as far back as 2008, other provinces were addressing the pension issues they knew were coming, but the NDP government was cruising full speed ahead with a \$4-billion transfer of money and immune to the recession, they said, that type of strategy, steady-as-she-goes downhill.

Mr. Speaker, the First Minister failed to protect the Crocus investors. He made off with taxpayers' dollars through rebate-gate. He failed workers at Tembec, and now the NDP government is failing pensioners.

Other provinces have taken real steps—already taken real steps to protect their pensioners. Alberta changed the way that the pension values were calculated to reflect changes in the market. As a result, pensioners aren't seeing decreases to their pension cheques.

Mr. Speaker, will the Minister of Labour and Immigration today tell us when these changes will take place in Manitoba?

Ms. Howard: Mr. Speaker, on the topic of pensions, I'm certainly proud to be part of a government that for the first time actually funded the pension plan for the civil servants, and we'll continue to move forward to look at modernizing and making sure that pensions are protected.

On the topic of the situation in Pine Falls, Mr. Speaker, I would like to let the House know that today we made an announcement with the federal

government to fund the Winnipeg River Learning Centre, committed \$600,000 to that initiative to help the people in Pine Falls and in that area get the training and education that they will need to compete in today's economy. Thank you.

Parkland Regional Health Authority Ambulance Services

Mr. Stuart Briese (Ste. Rose): Mr. Speaker, I've raised the matter of ambulance services for Eddystone, Bacon Ridge and Ebb and Flow First Nations in this House many times. People in this area of the province are being ignored by this NDP government. The closest ambulance service is 45 minutes to an hour away.

When is the Minister of Health going to do the right thing and provide more timely emergency services to this area?

Hon. Theresa Oswald (Minister of Health): As the member knows, we work with our regional health authorities to ensure that we continue to provide the best emergency medical services that we can to Manitobans. We know that our investment in the Medical Transportation Co-ordination Centre in Brandon has enabled us to capture, to collect data on response times as we've never been able to do before in Manitoba, and that data helps inform regional health authorities about prioritizing where it is that they need to put EMS stations, and we'll continue to work with this community and the region to provide the best service that we can.

Mr. Briese: Mr. Speaker, there are approximately 2,500 people in the area and there are over 200 emergency calls per year. There are trained EMS providers at the Ebb and Flow First Nation, but they need an ambulance to provide their services.

When is this minister going to listen to the people and correct this dangerous situation by placing an ambulance in the Eddystone, Bacon Ridge and Ebb and Flow First Nation area of the province?

Ms. Oswald: And again, the MTCC allows data to be captured about response times. Regional health authorities work with the communities in their region to ensure that the response times are as expeditious as they can be. They monitor safety as being paramount in these situations. And, again, they'll continue to work as a group to provide the most responsive time with the best educated paramedics and emergency medical professionals that are—that are available in the area.

I will continue to work with the member on this issue, and we'll continue to keep growing the emergency medical system as we have done since 1999.

Mr. Speaker: Time for oral questions has expired.

Order. Order. Order.

* * *

Mr. Speaker: I'd like to ask the House to assist me in thanking Jean Speers, who works in *Hansard*, who will be retiring. She has given 20 years' service to the Assembly and has done a wonderful job in her time with *Hansard*, and I would like to ask all members to assist me in saying thank you, Jean, for a job well done.

[Applause]

And also I would like to remind the members that we'll be recessing today until the new year, and particularly because we will have Youth Parliament—will be meeting here in the Chamber later this month, I'm asking that all members empty the contents of their desk before leaving today. And I encourage members—[interjection] Order, please. Order, please.

I encourage members to use the blue bins here in the Chamber to recycle their *Hansards* and copies of the bills. Any other material you have to recycle should be placed in the larger blue bins in the two message rooms, and I thank all members for their co-operation on this matter.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

Bill 208—Government Support

Mrs. Bonnie Mitchelson (River East): Mr. Speaker, I rise today to express profound disappointment that this government's lack of support for legislation that will protect and enhance the well-being of Manitoba's most vulnerable.

For those neediest of government support, a cheque-cashing fee is often an added burden to an already tight budget. A \$13 fee on a \$500 cheque may seem like pocket change to the Minister of Family Services (Mr. Mackintosh) and this government, but for our most vulnerable it's significant.

Mr. Speaker, Larry Updike, spokesperson for Siloam Mission, understands the differences small amounts such as this one can make in strained budgets, and he recognizes the value of this bill. In support of this bill, he said, and I quote: It is one

small step the Province can take toward helping our city's most vulnerable.

This minister's inability to recognize the unwarranted hardship these fees represent on Manitobans—on Manitoba's most vulnerable, and his refusal to see the value of passing this bill is shameful. Yesterday when I asked the minister if he would consider passing Bill 208, he answered, and I quote: It's very important that we not put in place legislation that will stop retailers from honouring these cheques.

But the truth is that this legislation would not stop retailers from honouring these cheques, as similar legislation exists for cheques from the federal government. Banks cannot charge fees on federal government support cheques.

Mr. Speaker, I strongly urge the government and this minister to support and pass Bill 208. It would be extremely disappointing if this government missed this opportunity to help those who need it most. This bill is a small step that would remove an unwarranted and unnecessary burden on Manitoba's most vulnerable at no cost to Manitoba's Treasury.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Abby Constant-Bercier

Mr. Frank Whitehead (The Pas): Mr. Speaker, today I rise to recognize an inspirational young woman from Opaskwayak Cree Nation, Abby Constant-Bercier. Abby is an outstanding athlete and young scholar who is being recognized nationally for her considerable athletic abilities.

A talented hockey player, 13-year-old Abby was the assistant captain of the OCN Flin Flon Female Pee Wee Blues during the 2008-2009 season and played as the only female on her team, Norman Pee Wee development team, that competed against all other regions in Manitoba.

For the current 2009-2010 season, she is playing for the Aboriginal Team Manitoba Midget Girls, competing in the National Aboriginal Championships. She is the youngest female to ever make this team. She is also playing for Team Norman Midget AA Midget Girls competing in Manitoba Winter Games.

Abby is very committed to her Aboriginal heritage. She competes as well in winter and summer events such as the Trappers' Festival, Opaskwayak Indian Days, where she participates in competitions

such as fire-starting, bannock baking, snowshoe races and other events.

She trained every day this summer with her grandpa to prepare for tryouts for these events. She worked very hard to keep up with her 15- and 16-year-old male cousins who were also training, and this helped her to make Team Manitoba.

* (14:30)

Not only is Abby a gifted athlete, she is also an exceptional student. She has received an honours award for the last two years in junior high and currently boasts a 91 percent average in school.

Mr. Speaker, given the challenges that many northern communities face, we are fortunate that they can look to the leadership of people like Abby. I want to congratulate her on her numerous achievements and wish her luck in her future endeavours. I also want to recognize her parents, family members and the community that supports her because without them her dreams will—may never become reality.

Thank you.

Dairy Farmers of Manitoba Awards Banquet

Mr. Blaine Pedersen (Carman): Mr. Speaker, the dairy industry is very important in both Manitoba and, particularly, my constituency. A number of my—a number of my constituents were recognized for their contributions to the dairy industry at an awards banquet that was put on by the Dairy Farmers of Manitoba on Thursday, December 3rd.

While most people associate the black-and-white Holstein cow with the dairy industry, many producers are using Jersey cows for an increased butterfat quality in the milk.

Isidore Jerseys, which is operated by Henry and Meredith Delichte of St. Alphonse, won the award for the Highest Classified Jersey Herd in Manitoba at the awards banquet. The Delichte family operates a century farm in the picturesque hills surrounding St. Alphonse.

In the 2009 Top 10 Milk Quality Awards category over—for over 500,000 litres marketed, Michael and Darlene Carels of Bruxelles placed first, Daniel and Joann Van Deynze of Holland placed third, and Lakeshore Holsteins of Bruxelles placed fifth. Under the category of Top 10 Milk Quality Awards for under 500,000 litres marketed, Gabriel Fifi of Bruxelles placed first, Sandtree Farms of

Haywood placed fourth, Maurice and Henry Delichte of St. Alphonse placed fifth. It should be noted, also, that Gabriel Fifi was also named the overall champion of Milk Quality Awards.

The dairy industry remains an integral part of the Carman constituency. All of us need to be mindful of the contribution, the hard work and the adherence to quality from our dairy farmers in Manitoba. We often take it for granted when milk shows up on our grocery shelves.

Congratulations to these producers, and to all dairy farmers of Manitoba, for their dedication in producing a home-grown, quality product for all of us to enjoy.

Mining Industry Initiatives

Mr. Gerard Jennissen (Flin Flon): Mr. Speaker, mining is vital to Manitoba. The global economic downturn has had a significant dampening effect on the mining industry. However, I am pleased to inform the House about two promising initiatives in northern Manitoba: Victory Nickel near Grand Rapids, and HudBay Mineral's Lalor site near Snow Lake.

Victory Nickel is continuing exploratory work and has plans to develop an open-pit mine and concentrator at Minago. Should Victory Nickel proceed, the mine would be one of the largest industrial undertakings in the province for many years, requiring more than 600 people in its construction and more than 400 employees in its operation.

HudBay Minerals has restarted operations at its Chisel North mine and concentrator near Snow Lake, Manitoba, with full production expected in the second quarter of 2010. The very exciting Lalor deposits will be accessed via ramp from Chisel North. Apart from excellent copper and zinc indicators at Lalor, the value of gold is estimated at between three and four billion dollars; \$450 million are committed to completing all three phases at Chisel North and Lalor. The benefit to the entire region will be substantial because HudBay expects to employ up to 100 people at Lalor, once full production is achieved. This will also provide economic opportunities for those employees impacted by the anticipated copper smelter closure in 2010.

Mr. Speaker, these exciting new initiatives, as so many other mining exploration initiatives in Manitoba, were supported by the Mineral

Exploration Assistance Program, MEAP, available through the department of innovation, technology and mines. MEAP increases and stimulates exploration activities, leading to the development of new mines and industrial mineral deposits. The program has—the program has been wildly successful. Since 1999, 539 projects have been completed and approximately \$19 million of assistant funds—assistance funds have been issued.

Congratulations to the department and to the northern mining sector for the two current initiatives that I have mentioned earlier, which will not only improve the economy and quality of life in northern Manitoba, but will also have a significant positive economic impact on all of Manitoba.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Elton Sabres Girls Volleyball Team

Mrs. Leanne Rowat (Minnedosa): Mr. Speaker, I rise in the House today to recognize a team of female athletes from my constituency.

I had the honour of witnessing the Elton Sabre girls' volleyball team bring home the AA provincial championship for the first time in history this November in Lac du Bonnet.

Under the competent leadership of head coach Jeff Maxwell, the Sabres entered the tournament ranked third. After falling to the—to the No. 1-ranked Killarney Raiders in round-robin play before beating both Rivers and Souris, the Elton girls finished the tournament with a hard-fought win over the Niverville Panthers to take the gold.

Sabres Jenna Moffat and Stephanie Penner were named to the all-star team, and Brooke Hucaluk was distinguished as the championship MVP. Congratulations to these young women.

High school athletes from my constituency have been a dominant force in the province. Both the Souris and Elton male and female volleyball teams have consistently ranked in the top four provincially for the past many years. Rivers, Minnedosa and Wawanesa teams also make frequent appearances at provincial championships in sports, including fastball, soccer and hockey. The fact that rural athletes have taken a crucial role amongst Manitoba's best and brightest is simply undeniable.

Next year, the Elton Sabres will host—play host to the Manitoba High School Athletic Association's AA provincial championships. I look forward to the

opportunity to play spectator to Manitoba's top young athletes in my own backyard.

So, again, congratulations to Jeff Maxwell and the ladies of the Elton Sabres. They have shown that our rural communities and small schools do produce talented and devoted student athletes. To all student athletes across the province, keep up the good work.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

ORDERS OF THE DAY GOVERNMENT BUSINESS

THRONE SPEECH (Eighth Day of Debate)

Mr. Speaker: Resume adjourned debate on the proposed motion of the honourable Member for The Pas (Mr. Whitehead) that the following address be presented to His Honour the Lieutenant-Governor: We the members of the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba thank Your Honour for the gracious speech addressed to us at this Fourth Session of the Thirty-Ninth Legislature of Manitoba, and the debate remains open and it should be on this side.

Ms. Erna Braun (Rossmere): Mr. Speaker, it's a privilege to rise today to speak in support of the Speech from the Throne for the Fourth Session of the Thirty-Ninth Legislature. I'm very pleased to be speaking in response to our government's blueprint for Manitoba's future, especially since this fourth session marks a new chapter for this government with a new leader and Premier (Mr. Selinger) and new additions to the Cabinet.

I wish to congratulate our new Premier and wish him well as he continues to move Manitoba forward with a strong vision and purpose and that this was recognized by Manitobans in a recent poll in today's *Free Press*. I also want to congratulate two members from our class of 2007, my colleagues from Fort Rouge and Wellington, on their appointments to Cabinet. I know they will bring great skill and ability to their new positions, and I wish them very well.

And I can't forget the member from Elmwood, one of our most recently elected members. What an asset he is. He brings his commitment to the environment, to his role as Minister of Conservation (Mr. Blaikie), and I wish him well in Copenhagen this week as he represents our duty to the environment to the UN conference, and, of course, his many years of experience at the federal level,

which, I think, make him a natural choice as House leader.

Congratulations and best wishes to all my colleagues in Cabinet and the back bench as you embrace your new roles with the enthusiasm and dedication that I have seen over the past two years. This enthusiasm and energy that I see with my colleagues is the fuel that will continue to move Manitoba forward, and I guess this is a good time and an opportunity that I would like to take to say a few more thank-yous.

I also wish to thank our table officers. Their hard work and diligence keeps our House focussed and running smoothly. They keep us on track with rules, points of order and points of privilege and especially their work on committee. I would like to acknowledge that in particular. Their patience and guidance through sometimes rough seas is very appreciated and helps us get the work done, and the committee work also includes that of the *Hansard* folks, and I certainly want to extend my thank-yous to the work of the Clerks as well as *Hansard* through the many meetings and travel that we had through the province of Manitoba for our work on the Special Committee on Senate Reform. So I thank you very much for that. Also, to the pages, and I'm always so impressed with their hard work and their ability to quickly respond to our needs and our requests. So, thank you for your hard work and keep it up.

Mr. Rob Altemeyer, Acting Speaker, in the Chair

I obviously can't overlook an opportunity to say thank you to my constituents in Rossmere. Rossmere is such a delightful community to work in, and especially since it is the community that I was raised and grew up in and have spent the better portion of my life. It's an energetic community. Its citizens are dynamic and forward-thinking and have taken on a variety of initiatives that are always wonderful to watch.

* (14:40)

I think one of the groups that, in particular, absolutely astonishes me, is the group that works on the Northeast Pioneer Greenway and their good work continues, and they continue to embrace the community and tie Elmwood, North Kildonan and East Kildonan together.

Our road map for the future, outlined in our Throne Speech, will resonate well with my constituents in Rossmere. The themes of the Throne Speech focus on investing in the health and

well-being of Manitobans and also bringing a stronger Manitoba.

On many occasions, the constituents of Rossmere have expressed to me how pleased they are with the direction this government has taken Manitoba, especially that our programs and measures have helped our province weather the economic storms that have battered many around the country and the world. They feel confident that we have a steady and even approach that will serve us well into the future.

Our Throne Speech continues that model of a sure hand on the province's rudder. Our theme of investing in the health and well-being of Manitobans is one that all Manitobans will benefit from and that lets every citizen know that we are continuing to move forward with their health and well-being in mind. We are investing not only in the social health of our people, but also the economic and environmental health of our province.

In spite of the recent economic challenges, Manitoba has one of the strongest economies in Canada. We are building on our economic health of our province through a variety of commitments. We have committed to invest \$545 million in roads and bridges in 2010 as part of the Province's plan to stimulate the economy and create public assets with long-term benefits. So far the Manitoba government has invested in 1,500 stimulus projects, creating more than 12,000 direct and 10,000 indirect jobs.

In my community, the infrastructure project most closely to their hearts is obviously the Disraeli Bridge. This bridge is of great importance to East and North Kildonan residents. It is our northeast link to downtown. I can still remember how the only route to North Kildonan, when we first moved there, was over the Redwood Bridge, and what a boon the Disraeli Bridge has been to us. And with our investment, it will continue to flow traffic during the construction but, more importantly, it will also be constructed for a lifespan well beyond the initial 40 years that the City of Winnipeg had planned for.

Building cranes and heavy equipment can now also be seen in the Rossmere community. In fact, I could almost say that there's a hive of activity in and around our furniture park that's happening in Rossmere. The government's investment, by building an MPI claim centre on Gateway, is creating jobs not only in its construction, but with the ongoing enterprise that it has built.

Our economic plan also will eliminate both the corporation capital tax and the small business tax in 2010. I know this will be well received in my community, which is sprinkled with many businesses and industry of various sizes. When I drive through my neighbourhood, whether on Henderson Highway, Springfield or Gateway Road, I see shops of a variety: automotive, masonry companies, cabinet-makers, furniture manufacturers. I often think of Rossmere as being a one-stop shop for almost any of your household and family needs. *[interjection]* True. All of these enterprises will see benefits from the initiatives of this government.

We will build on our economic health by ensuring that Manitoba remains one of the most affordable places in Canada to live, work and raise a family. The northeast corner of Winnipeg has a wonderful selection of homes, both older and newer homes, homes which fit a wide variety of budgets.

One of the things which I find that has added a wonderful dimension to our communities are the building of homes through Habitat for Humanity. Over the years, Rossmere has seen its share of Habitat homes. But, just over the last number of months, a project of grander scale has been built in my neighbouring constituency of Concordia. I had the privilege of attending the groundbreaking with the previous MLA for Concordia back in the springtime, and I was recently invited again to attend the blessing of two homes on a street of 12 Habitat homes.

The opportunity for home ownership is very special, and meeting the two families that will be moving into these homes was quite an emotional experience. The look on the faces of the parents and of their children when they were handed the keys to their home and held these keys in their hands tells me how important it is that we work hard to make our province a place where families can afford to live and raise their children.

It is also interesting to note that the affordability for which Manitoba is known is now also attracting people back to our province. Friends of mine have commented on how members of their family are returning to work in Manitoba after years of living in other provinces because they see a better future here in Manitoba for themselves and their families.

And in talking with former colleagues in the teaching profession, they have also noticed a number of teachers who have returned from places like B.C. and Alberta because not only do they see Manitoba

as being far more ahead of things in terms of education, but also, again, as a better place to move to and raise their children.

And another example of affordability that I took note of was an article I read in the *Free Press* not too long ago about our Winnipeg Symphony music director and how in Winnipeg he and his wife have finally been able to purchase a home. Having worked in many places around the world, it is here in our fair province that they have been able to realize their dream of home ownership.

Health care is obviously something that's very important to the constituents of Rossmere, and health care is a key priority for this government. From H1N1 to emergency care in rural areas, to helping people live longer through healthy living, we are committed to improving the physical health of Manitobans. And I guess one example, and my compliments to the Minister of Health (Ms. Oswald) with the H1N1 clinics around the province and in the city of Winnipeg, I have to state that the efficiency with which the clinics were held was quite astounding, and as I went for my H1N1 shot two weeks ago, I was so impressed with the—with the patience and respectfulness that the staff and the volunteers at the—at the clinic dealt with everyone who was there. At first I thought that it would be hours to get through because the parking lot was filled with cars, but everything was done so well and so efficiently that, within 45 minutes, I was in and out of the door.

Other commitments that we have made are building a new women's hospital at the Health Science Centre and the other is providing access centres to St. James and northwest Winnipeg, and I know that these communities in both areas of Winnipeg will be very well served by the access centres.

Our River East Access Centre certainly provides a whole host of services all within one facility. Many of my constituents have remarked to me on numerous occasions of the good quality service they receive, as well as the range of services. One, in particular, stands out for me, and that is the midwifery unit located at the River East Access Centre. And I've had a couple of new mums who have let me know how pleased they were that they were able to have their children arrive in the world with the support of a midwife.

Building these centres in St. James and northwest Winnipeg will certainly enhance access to

medical centres for—services for our citizens in these areas.

So I've touched on but just a few things that this government is ensuring for the long-term health of Manitobans. We are being fiscally prudent as we build our rural and urban areas, our health care, our infrastructure, as well as justice, and we will continue to build on our strengths to ensure a prosperous future for all our citizens.

Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Mr. Rick Borotsik (Brandon West): Mr. Deputy Speaker, thank you very much for allowing me the opportunity to rise and respond to a Throne Speech, but, before I do that, I, like others, would simply like to thank a number of people. Obviously, the first ones I would like to thank are my constituents, the constituents of Brandon West, who have allowed me to stand in this Chamber, who have allowed me to walk into the front doors of this Legislature, who have allowed me to represent them for many years, the last few years here in this Legislature, and I don't think any one of us should ever, at any point in time, take for granted the responsibility that we have with not only our constituents, but, obviously, the constituents for the whole province of Manitoba.

* (14:50)

And I know that all members in this Legislature are honourable members, and they do come into this House recognizing the responsibility that they have to make sure that we, as Manitobans, have a much better quality of life, a much better opportunity for ourselves and for our children. And I say that, obviously, very open and honest with respect to both sides of this Legislature, Mr. Speaker.

I would like to thank the table officers who perhaps don't get as much recognition as they should but who certainly keep us, as members of this Legislature, on the straight and narrow with respect to the rules and regulations that we do follow on a regular basis.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I'd like to thank our caucus staff, the PC caucus, and I know that I would also—I suggest that the members opposite would like to give their own caucus staff their thanks for the energy, the effort, the time that they put into their jobs here in this Legislature on behalf of not only us as members but certainly the constituents in Manitoba.

Others we talk about, the Speaker, earlier today, had congratulated a member of the *Hansard*, and

what we don't recognize and what we sometimes take for granted is the effort that *Hansard* members put into this Legislature. And if you haven't seen the *Hansard* office in the bowels of this building, I would ask that each member go down there and just have a look to see how *Hansard* is produced on a very timely basis; how our every word is being transcribed by people who are very dedicated to make sure that what we do say is placed in a record for posterity's sake.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank those people who keep our offices clean, the security and the maintenance that we have in this building 'cause sometimes we don't appreciate the job that they do to make sure that our job is so much easier to perform. And, being that it's Christmas, I would also wish them a very merry Christmas going forward.

As for the Throne Speech, the—one of the members of the government—and I won't mention any names—one of the members of the government, after the Throne Speech, did in fact indicated that the Throne Speech was perhaps a little thin gruel. I would say that that was the case. Not only was it thin gruel, but it was perhaps somewhat mediocre, although this government does embrace mediocrity in all that it does. It certainly embraced mediocrity in this Throne Speech as well when they put it forward.

The fact that we're here, Mr. Speaker, Mr. Deputy Speaker, the fact that we're here two days after the Throne Speech session was supposed to be completed speaks to the inability and the mismanagement of the government not only in being able to control the operations of this Legislature and this House but the—but the operations and the mediocrity that they bring forward in managing the affairs of the Province of Manitoba.

A member from opposite said, what about the bells ringing? Well, Mr. Deputy Speaker, when one knows the rules of the House, one does not call a Throne Speech specifically for the number of days it is necessary to debate a Throne Speech.

The member that just spoke congratulated the member from Elmwood, the new—the new House leader. Well, I should say that the member from Elmwood did not, and perhaps does not understand the rules as he should understand the rules; otherwise, Mr. Deputy Speaker, we would not be here today speaking to the Throne Speech. We would've had an extended sitting of this Legislature and then the embarrassment that falls on the NDP's

mismanagement of the Legislature and this House would not have been necessary.

So I would not congratulate the member from Elmwood. I would suggest that he should probably sit down and in fact learn the rules of this Legislature. I know the table officers would be happy to explain to him the rules of this Legislature.

The Throne Speech, Mr. Speaker, when I was asked to respond to it after the Throne Speech—and I didn't say thin gruel. I didn't say mediocrity. I didn't say mediocre. What I said was it was the opportunity of a new Premier to set the direction of his government. It was the opportunity of a new Premier to give a vision and a direction as to how he wanted his government to operate over the next two years. I saw none of that.

What I wanted to see was a Premier to stand up and say, I've had it with the same old, same old, steady as she goes. I want Manitoba to be a have province. That's my vision for the province of Manitoba. That's what I wanted him to say. I wanted him to say that agriculture in Manitoba is the economic backbone of our—of our economy. I wanted him to say that no longer are we gonna depend on others, handouts from Ottawa, and I don't want to depend on other policies coming from other provinces. I wanna make sure that Manitoba puts its own agricultural policy forward that's gonna support agriculture. I heard none of that, Mr. Speaker.

I wanted a Premier, a new Premier, to stand in this House and say in his Throne Speech, I want opportunities for rural Manitoba. I want opportunities beyond the Perimeter Highway. I want to have rural Manitobans represented in our economic vision going forward. I heard none of that, Mr. Speaker, from this Throne Speech.

I wanted a Premier to stand up and say, we are going to change the direction of our fiscal policy. We are not going to borrow our children and grandchildren into bankruptcy. What we're going to do is we're going to have a plan set out where, in fact, we're gonna pay back all of that debt that we now have so that we're gonna leave a legacy for our children and our grandchildren of no debt, not debt that they can drown in. I wanted a fiscal policy where the Premier stood up and said, for the people of Manitoba, we're gonna be competitive with respect to tax regime in this province. No longer are we gonna tax the men and women, the hard workers of this province to the point where we're the highest taxed in the country. I wanted the Premier

(Mr. Selinger) to stand up and say, we're gonna change that policy. We're gonna become better than what we are right now.

But you know what, Mr. Speaker? I heard absolutely nothing that would say that we would do that.

Right now, Mr. Speaker, and I've heard all of the accolades, all of the platitudes that come from the other side of the House, the fact of the matter is there is a reality. The reality is in Manitoba we have some very, very serious financial issues—not dressed—not addressed by the Throne Speech in any way.

We have—and I talk about a have province, Mr. Speaker. Our province right now is dependent for 40 percent of its total budget on the federal government. That's like each and every one, as members of this Legislature, if we had to depend on our parents or our aunts or our uncles or someone else to fund our lifestyle by 40 percent, we would be dependent on those people. We cannot afford to be dependent on the federal government for 40 percent of our lifeline. We have to be dependent on our own resources.

Ms. Marilyn Brick, Deputy Speaker, in the Chair

And no where in the Throne Speech does it say, let's become much more reliant on ourselves, self-reliant. No where does it say that. It says, in fact, quite the opposite. We're going to continue to go and beg the federal government for more money so that we can squander it on wasteful mismanagement.

No where in this budget did it talk about tax cuts. It's talked about it before, Madam Deputy Speaker. It's talked about 'em before in budgets that have been put down. It's talked about trying to become a little bit more competitive with respect to our basic personal exemptions, a little bit more competitive with our tax rates, a little bit more competitive with our brackets. But no where does it talk about that. It's gonna maybe talk about it in the budget, but I doubt it because we've already got the foreshadowing from the Finance Minister that we are in some challenging times, and we are. Make no mistake about that. But they're challenging financial times of their own making.

Madam Deputy Speaker, I talk about the debt. I said it today in question period, no where in this Throne Speech did it talk about becoming much more reasonable with the debt loads that we have. If you look at the first-quarter financials, because we

can't have the second-quarter financials 'cause that—that's not gonna happen until December the 24th.

An Honourable Member: Everything's changing. You don't understand. Everything's changing.

Mr. Borotsik: Everything's changing, but, unfortunately, they keep the same schedule. You see, I asked the Finance Minister if she wouldn't mind tabling the second-quarter financials, and she said, oh, no, no. We're just gonna do it the same we's—we've always done it. And that'll be, oh, 1 o'clock on December 24th. Well, Madam Deputy Speaker, there was no need for that, but if we go back to the first-quarter financials, it says right here that this budget year there's going to be new cash requirements of \$1.8 billion. Those new cash requirements are borrowing debt of another \$1.8 billion. It's gonna take our debt to \$23 billion in this province. It's gonna take the debt to an unbearable level. And there's no blue sky; there's no light at the end of the tunnel. It's just going up and will continue to go up. And I'm very concerned. And there was no speech—no speaking to that in the Throne Speech.

* (15:00)

Fiscal constraint—restraint. It was talked about that they're going to have some programming looked at to ratchet it back on programming. We know that there was a letter that was sent to all ministers and deputy ministers that said that they were going to change their operations the way they spend our money.

Well, we know there's wasteful spending. We know there's \$14 million that we could save right off the bat by these enhanced identification cards, which are not being accepted by residents of the province of Manitoba and, quite frankly, the opposite. The people that I talk to that come into my office and who have tried to go through the process of the enhanced ID say, this is absolutely the most ridiculous program I've ever seen in the province of Manitoba, and I will get a passport. So we could've saved \$14 million.

Madam Deputy Speaker, 370-odd million dollars that they want to spend—waste on nitrogen coming out of the effluent in the city of Winnipeg, 640 million that they want to spend or waste on a west-side—a west-side Hydro line, Bipole III, which I find there's not a logical individual in this province that can understand why they would continue to want to waste \$640 million of our money for absolutely no reason at all.

But the one that I really enjoy, if you want to talk about wasteful spending mismanagement, is the new Minister of Justice (Mr. Swan), who's just spent a quarter of a million dollars. Now it doesn't sound like a lot of money, but a quarter of a million dollars, ladies and gentlemen, is a lot of taxpayers' dollars, borrowed dollars, because you're going out and borrowing \$1.8 billion. Madam Deputy Speaker, \$250,000 has gone into an advertising campaign to keep people out of gangs.

Now, we heard yesterday that the advertising is being placed on wonderful programs like *Ellen DeGeneres*. I don't even know the soap operas. What is it, *The Young and the Restless*? I would suspect that they would be better off putting the advertising during *The Simpsons*, Madam Deputy Speaker. At least, at that point in time, when they have *The Simpsons* advertising, that Homer could actually look at it, and say, d'oh. Now for *Hansard*, for *Hansard* that's d-o-h. Okay, that's d-o-h. *Hansard*, you can report it as that, because Homer Simpson says d'oh, and I'm going to say, d'oh, to \$250,000 wasted, absolutely wasted on a stupid advertising program that is going to accomplish nothing. But that wasn't in the Throne Speech. That wasn't in the Throne Speech, that we would just simply waste money, as we always have and will continue to waste money.

I'm going to talk about my constituency. I told you at the very beginning of this that I am very, very thankful and somewhat humbled by having my constituents send me to this august place. I looked at the Throne Speech and I read the editorials after the Throne Speech, and I found that actually Brandon was short shrift. And I know you can stand up and talk about all those wonderful capital projects that are ongoing in Brandon, but I should also say, first of all, that those capital projects should have been done within the first 10 years of your mandate. And, quite frankly—quite frankly, you cannot continually take credit for projects that were done 10 years ago.

You've reannounced and announced and reannounced and announced so many times, the bridge construction, the hospital construction, the CancerCare construction. I'm even confused as to when and should and could've been built. Too many of the projects have already been started or completed but reannounced in a Throne Speech, which I find very ludicrous, Madam Deputy Speaker.

We talked about the ACC trade building. Well, I drive by First Street all the time, and it's almost complete, but it was mentioned in the Throne

Speech. I drive—I drive in Brandon, and I see the BU physical plant, which is completed now, but it was mentioned in the Throne Speech.

I don't know if there was anything new that was mentioned in the Throne Speech. Actually, there wasn't anything new that was mentioned—ah, that's not true, that's not true. There was one thing new about Brandon in the Throne Speech, and they talked about TIF, which is the tax incremental financing program that's suggested by this government, which really is simply another revenue centre taking money out of schools and property tax owners to put into their own pet projects. So let's get things straight here.

They did mention TIF for the Strand Theatre project, but it was gonna be funded by the school divisions and the municipality. Oh, isn't that wonderful. But that was mentioned in the Throne Speech. It was the only thing that was mentioned for Brandon.

One thing they didn't mention in Brandon, Madam Deputy Speaker, in the Throne Speech, was their absolute abysmal record when it comes to crime and crime prevention. I travel across the country on a fairly regular basis and I have to admit I fly the Manitoba flag. I believe strongly in this province. I believe we have great opportunity in this province. I believe in this province. It's been very good to me and I would like to, and I believe I have put back into the province as much as I possibly could. But, when I go and I travel across the country, I hear, and I think if they opened their ears they would hear as well, the comments that come from other jurisdictions.

They're now coming from Saskatchewan, Alberta, British Columbia, Ontario. I hear them and, unfortunately, they say, what's happening in Manitoba? Why is it that you're the murder capital of the country? Why is it that you're—why is it that you're the auto theft capital in the country? Why is it that every time we turn on a television set in the evening we hear about another serious assault or a serious incident in Winnipeg, Manitoba? And that hurts. That hurts because I depend on the government to put in place proper policies to solve those problems and this government has no idea, has no desire to be able to fix those problems.

I also, in talking to people from Saskatchewan, who now look down their nose at Manitoba, which, I find, when I was growing up in Manitoba, it was quite the opposite. We always thought perhaps

Saskatchewan was the poor cousin. We're now looking at Manitoba as that black hole, that poor cousin. See, you see, Saskatchewan has now got—has now got the strongest economy in the country.

Saskatchewan now has less debt than they had when the recession started. Saskatchewan—Saskatchewan now has—now has, Madam Deputy Speaker, a have province status and they throw it in my face constantly. And you know what? These people across the way saying, oh, how's that working, oh, so they're a have—they're a have province now. Isn't that just wonderful. We can depend on the federal government for money that we can waste. We don't have to be a have province. Well, I wanna be a have province and that should've been reflected in the Throne Speech.

Madam Deputy Speaker, I was very happy to hear the Throne Speech to know exactly where this government stands, which, in my opinion, is nowhere. Mediocrity is their mantra. It's what they scream from the opposite sides of the benches. And we will vote against this Throne Speech and we should vote against this Throne Speech because the direction that was put in this has nowhere to go.

In fact it's the first Throne Speech that I know of that the Premier will not speak to and the Premier will not vote for. And I've always said if you're not gonna vote for it, then I would just assume at that point that you're opposed to it. So I would say I'm really apologetic for the NDP, why their own Premier will not support his own Throne Speech. Thank you, Madam Deputy Speaker.

Hon. Steve Ashton (Minister of Infrastructure and Transportation): Madam Deputy Speaker, I want to start by saying how great it is to be able to speak on the Throne Speech once again. I always say the Throne Speech can bring out the best in debate in this House because it gives us all an opportunity to talk about our vision for this great province of ours.

And I must admit, by the way, I have been—I won't say I've been keeping notes. I'm not sure there was a lot of noteworthy comments from members of the opposition but, you know, whether it was the Leader of the Opposition (Mr. McFadyen), or the member for Brandon West, what struck me is really how out of touch they are with what's going on in this province.

I mean, the quote of the day was from the member for Brandon West. He said it's, you know,

the sun isn't shining in Manitoba. There's no light at the end of the tunnel. I don't know if he stepped outside of this building, but it's a classic cold winter day in Manitoba. The kind of cold winter day that defines this province that we want to save from climate change. And it's a bright sunny day out there but, you know, it's not just a bright sunny day in terms of the climate. We have seen in this province, in this past year, some of the most incredible developments we've seen in a long time.

*(15:10)

We have the highest increase in population in this province since 1971, Madam Deputy Speaker, 1971. No mention of that from members opposite. You know, I want to put it into context. The increase in population year over year is greater than the size of the city of Thompson. That's the third largest city, and it's a result of the growing diversity of this province, the growing Aboriginal population, the increased number of immigrants. Again, something that didn't just happen. We have 14,000 immigrants coming to this province because of the success we made of the Provincial Nominee Program. By the way, we're the second youngest population in the country. Other jurisdictions throughout Canada and throughout the world are looking at what will make them develop in the future and we've got it.

So I don't want to just start off with anything other than a clear statement about the real sense that's out there. I want to also remark on something else that's quite noticeable and that is that we've been in government for 10 years. You know, I think probably one of the reasons as I've seen it is certainly we've seen over the last couple of weeks that the opposition, you know, basically has tactics in search of a strategy. They still haven't, Madam Deputy Speaker, most of their approach in this House hasn't changed in 10 years. Now, I'm not going to give them too much advice, but, you know, I found from previous experience they don't listen anyway.

But, you know, if you look at what happens when members opposite—I mean they're running out of letters in the alphabet to, you know, to point negative things that at the government in their amendments to Throne Speeches. They got to Q this year. You know, it's very difficult for them, I think, to actually get up and say one clear thing, and that is one of the reasons why this government continues to have the support from the people of Manitoba is that in many ways, this province is far better off than it was 10 years ago, far better off. That's the reality.

Now, I want to give you one quick example, one that I have some direct experience with, and it's newly appointed Minister of Industry and Transportation. One of the first things I wanted to do was double check and reference 10 years ago with today in terms of transportation. Now, what's interesting, by the way, some things haven't changed. The Leader of the Opposition (Mr. McFadyen) November 20th in the *Carman Valley Leader* is once again trying to divide and conquer, saying that too much is going to northern Manitoba. Well, I want to put on the record, since we came to government, something is going to northern Manitoba. There was not much in the 1990s. In fact, a significant investment's taking place in northern Manitoba.

We're extending the all-weather road network which is a significant development for those communities, but there's not a region of this province where we're not spending more on infrastructure, rural, in and around the city of Winnipeg and I've—you know, the member for Brandon West (Mr. Borotsik), I would suggest by the way, he go to the 18th Street Bridge, and he may want to stop there. Park on the side and look at it because it's the NDP that, again, is redeveloping Brandon in terms of infrastructure. You know, there's no tunnels in Brandon; there's bridges. He just has to open his eyes. He'll see it.

Now the real problem with this approach, though, is you notice they had little code words that they like to throw out. They don't get up and say if they were elected to government there would be major cuts in spending, but let me tell you what they did when they were in government before with infrastructure. They didn't increase it. At one time, it was less than \$100 million, and I remember—I'll never forget the year they got money from the federal government, they deducted it from how much they were spending. What we've done is we've taken the infrastructure opportunity with a federal government that is talking about developing infrastructure, and we've partnered and I've been the first one to give credit where credit is due. We've accessed \$100 million this year on highways alone under infrastructure funding and whether it be in terms of highways or recreational facilities or sewer and water, we are building, but you know what the code word is?

You know, they talk about debt. You know, I think the Leader of the Opposition talked about debt. I think the member for Brandon West talked about debt. You know, it's kind of stereophonic over there,

the two of them, debt, debt, debt, debt, debt. But you know, what does that debt represent? It represents investment in our highways, \$310 million in terms of education infrastructure. Major construction that's taking place in terms of *[inaudible]* and by the way, including our Justice facilities. Major construction in terms of health. Wherever you go in the province, we are seeing at a time of economic slowdown that Manitoba's leading the way in investing in our infrastructure. That's what they don't tell you because the real code word when they talk about debt is if they get into government, God forbid what they would start cutting first, but one of the things they would most definitely cut is their investment in the public sector.

Now, what's the other theme of this session, this pre-New Year session we're seeing from members opposite? You know, again, we see the whole approach in terms of tactics and strategy here. Well, you know, with all the bell ringing and all the rest of—the other issue they keep raising is Manitoba Hydro. They have not said a good word about Manitoba Hydro since the beginning of this session.

Now that should come as no surprise because they also talk about debt again. Now, what is the debt being invested in, in Manitoba Hydro? Well, right now it's being invested in a hydro dam, the Wuskwatim Dam, in partnership with Nisichawayasihk Cree Nation. And if they took the time to come to northern Manitoba, they would find out that we're seeing significant partnership between the community, many people from northern Manitoba working. Of course, it could always be a greater amount, but, you know, that investment is part of the future of Manitoba Hydro.

You know, they talk about some of the recent trends with Manitoba Hydro. I want to put on the record that, yes, energy prices in the U.S. have dropped; our export markets have been affected. There's cheap natural gas. But the bottom line when it comes to Manitoba Hydro, it's got a strong future. It's a major asset, a public asset that is gonna develop this economy, and not the least of which is because we do have the lowest hydro rates in North America—*[interjection]*

You know, they can't even get up and ask a question without attacking a simple fact, that we have the most affordable hydro rates in this country. And dare I say, with the discussions taking place in terms of climate change, it's clean energy, and we have proven that we are leaders in terms of clean

energy, in terms of climate change. Now, that's the—that's the second theme.

Now, the third theme you'll run into—they like to recycle things, by the way. I'm not talking about environmentally. I loved when the Leader of the Opposition got up and talked about cutting the payroll tax. You know, they were in government for 11 years. They promised they were gonna cut it in five years, and, as a former premier once said, they just didn't say which five years they were gonna cut it in. You know, they—they've recycled pretty well every theme they had from the 1990s. Now, does anybody really wanna go back to that era? I don't believe so.

But I don't—I don't want to assume anything with the members opposite. I've always said they're stuck in the '90s. My view is it's probably the 1890s, in terms of their political philosophy. But at a time when the—when the world has responded to the recession in terms of stimulus, they are attacking the investment. And yes, yes, in some cases it involves debt that is invested, just like when you buy a house and you invest in the mortgage for the house, that's invested in the future productivity of the province.

Well, I wanna paint a very different picture because I can say that one of the strengths of this government, by the way, is the strengths of our team and our support throughout the province. We are the only political party that has support from all areas of this province. And I can tell you—*[interjection]*

Well, the member opposite talks about, you know, support in his area perhaps for a different political party. You know, they don't even try in northern Manitoba. There's been more sightings of the Sasquatch than there have of Tory MLAs, Madam Deputy Speaker. So they make no effort when it comes to huge parts of this province.

But, you know what? I want to—*[interjection]*

An Honourable Member: You say that every Throne Speech.

Mr. Ashton: Well, I know. Members opposite knows that I do talk about the Sasquatch many, many times. Go to Norway House, they've seen a lot more sightings of the Sasquatch there.

But you know, the reality is we've also, I think, shown something that's important the last couple of months, and that is that we are very much a party and a government that is team-based. And I know something about that; we went through a lively

period a couple of months back in a leadership—
[interjection]

An Honourable Member: How'd you do?

Mr. Ashton: And for the member—well, member opposite says how I did. I went for the gold, got the silver. But, you know, I can tell you one thing: This New Democratic Party and this New Democratic government, we're not like Tories in another way, and that is we are united. We have a transition, I think, that's demonstrated that, and the fact that I'm here today speaking on this Throne Speech, and all members of our caucus speaking support of this Throne Speech is indicative of the fact that we are a party that does work together, unlike members opposite.

And I wanna just conclude with this. You've got, really, two clear choices in terms of vision in this province. The members opposite are the dark cloud party, you know, nothing good is going on. In fact, I went through the Leader of the Opposition's speech, and I found maybe one paragraph that was positive. You know, the member for Brandon West (Mr. Borotsik), and member after member after member got up with negative comments. And I realize they've been in opposition for 10 years, and opposition is honourable, and I realize they may be getting somewhat downcast about their continuing ability to be an opposition party not ready for government.

* (15:20)

These—you know, it's interesting, they talk about daytime TV. This—if they—if you're ever at a party that's not ready for prime time, it's the PC Party. I mean, you know, their Finance critic giving impressions of Homer Simpson, you know, obviously, he studied the part very well.

But, you know, we are a government, on the other hand, that has a positive vision for this province. We have dealt with some very difficult economic circumstances, but still are doing better than many areas of the country.

We're investing in our infrastructure, we're investing in our public services, and we represent all of Manitoba—by the way, an increasing Manitoba. And, in the end, I say to members opposite, and I say to the people of Manitoba, one of the reasons that I am supporting this Throne Speech is because it is an optimistic document that reflects what I always say is the quote of a great Manitoban that sums up where we are after 10 years in government; that is we've accomplished a lot. But, to quote Randy Bachman,

you want to look at the future, Madam Deputy Speaker, you ain't seen nothin' yet.

Mr. Kelvin Goertzen (Steinbach): It's always a pleasure to follow my friend from Thompson with his Throne Speech who got a rousing support here in the House, but wasn't able to garner the same sort of support two months ago, Mr. Speaker, when he was entering the leadership race for the NDP.

And I know he quoted some statistics, and statistics can sometimes be deceiving, and 10 different people can quote him 10 different ways. I think he said he finished second in the race. Some would say he finished last in the race 'cause there was only two people who wanted to actually run for the leadership of the NDP. But we know that his position as the former future leader of the NDP is solid and entrenched in that party, Mr. Speaker.

It's always difficult to—it's always difficult to be one of the last speakers on the Throne Speech because, you know, you want to welcome everybody back and welcome everybody back for a new session, but it's been such a short session that's it's almost over. And so welcoming people back wouldn't make a lot of sense.

So, I will, though, say to the—to the Speaker and to the table officers and to those in *Hansard* and those working in the Legislature, I wanna wish you all a Merry Christmas, best of the season, a Happy Hanukkah as you celebrate with your—with your families in the days ahead.

But we still have some work to do and it was difficult to get this government to come back to work. You know, there was many who were trying to have the Legislature recalled earlier so we could debate the issues of the day and ensure that Manitobans were able to have their voice heard here. But over and over the government stalled and decided that they didn't want to come back to the Legislature. And I know that that probably left a number of Manitobans puzzled and wondering why the government was running from the democratic responsibility that all of us who were elected to uphold from our constituents.

And then we realized why when they came back, as they stumbled around trying to organize the House, and they made their mistakes. And the new House leader, the member for Elmwood (Mr. Blaikie), hadn't read the rule book or he read the

wrong rule book, and they continued to get things wrong day after day and has led us to this point where we now are in the extended session. I don't ever remember a time when I've been called back three times to the Legislature within three weeks. But that's what's happened because of how badly the government has managed the House—[interjection]

Well, and I hear the new member for, I think Entrepreneurship, the new member—Minister for Entrepreneurship (Mr. Bjornson) trying to read the paper and talk at the same time. I know he had a difficult time doing even one thing right in his former portfolio. He needs to try to at least to hone in and to focus either to listen or to do something else and not to try to do too many things at the same time.

And I know, Madam Acting Speaker, that when we talk about the government wanting to stay out of the Legislature, try to avoid this place of democracy; we saw the reasons why. We hope that when we come back in the spring and maybe it'll be earlier—you know, there's—just because there's a rule or an agreement that we're gonna come back in the third week of March or something along those lines doesn't mean we couldn't come back earlier, you know. All of a sudden, if the Premier (Mr. Selinger) decides that he wants to work a little bit more here in the Legislature, he could call it back sooner. We could have a good, democratic debate. I would encourage him to do that. If his House leader gets through the rule book and feels that he has a grip and understanding of what's going on here, he absolutely should call it back sooner. We're always ready to come back here and to talk about the issues that are important to Manitobans and important to our constituents.

I noticed in the—in the Throne Speech, Mr. Speaker, that there was a number of things that just simply weren't mentioned. Even the member for Thompson (Mr. Ashton) refused to talk about crime in his—in his address to the Throne Speech, and that's the same member, when he was running for leadership, I remember him saying that crime was out of control, that it was skyrocketing. That's what he said when he was running for leadership, you know, so it was interesting. He talked about team and how there wasn't that division, that, finally, when the chains are off of some of those members who are trying to seek the leadership, we finally heard some of what they actually feel, and we heard it from the member for Thompson. He said crime was out of control, it was skyrocketing.

We heard for the now Minister of Justice (Mr. Swan) who said that we should look at building the Bipole III along the east side of the province instead of the west side of the province. Suddenly, everybody was unshackled, and they were saying what they actually felt and what they knew and what they know that Manitobans have been saying to them. But now they've sort of clustered back in and are trying again to toe the party line and put all of those concerns that Manitobans have brought to them aside and they don't want to have them addressed.

But I wish that they would've spoken more, that the member for Thompson would've spoken more about his feeling about how crime has got out of control, both in the city of Winnipeg and throughout Manitoba. He would've been wise to continue on his path during the leadership in recognizing that crime is out of control under this NDP government. Successive ministers, whether it was the member for St. Johns (Mr. Mackintosh) or whether it was the member for Kildonan (Mr. Chomiak) or now the member for Minto (Mr. Swan), have taken the approach that we're gonna be soft on crime and try to convince individuals that things are gonna get better, and the member for Thompson wanted to compare, you know, how things were in 1999 compared to how they are in 2009.

I wish you would've talked about crime and made that comparison, you know, and looked at how the growth of gangs has occurred in the city of Winnipeg, street-level gangs. We suspect that there are probably six to seven thousand known gang members in the city of Winnipeg in the province of Manitoba, but it's hard to quantify. It's hard to quantify, Madam Deputy Speaker, because of the fact—because of the fact that they unplugged the gang data base. You know, we had a system in place in the 1990s where there was about 1,500 known gang members and we were tracking them and we were using that information to try to see if things were getting better or things were getting worse when it came to crime, and what did the NDP do when they saw that their approach was causing gang activity to increase? Well, somebody ran into the back office and unplugged the database and said, we can't track it anymore. We're not gonna look at it anymore. Let's put our heads in the sand. Let's close our eyes and let's pretend the problem isn't there and maybe it'll go away.

And I know the member for Transcona (Mr. Reid)—I hear him making a couple of comments. I know that his constituents would be concerned. I've

spoken to some of his constituents concerned about the level of crime in Winnipeg, and they might wonder why he is not standing up and saying what the member for Thompson (Mr. Ashton) did, that, under the NDP, crime has been skyrocketing. Maybe he'll have that opportunity in March or sooner if the Legislature comes back sooner. I'd encourage him to go to the Premier (Mr. Selinger) and say, we want to be here a little earlier to deal with some of these issues—if he has that influence. I can't remember which horse he backed in the race, so that may be difficult to have that influence, but I think that he should go—[*interjection*]

What's that? [*interjection*]

Well, you know, and I hear the member for Transcona making disparaging remarks when we talked about crime, when we talk about the concerns of his constituents, and I think that, ultimately, in the long run, that's an approach that will not serve him well as he goes back to them for support. But the issue of crime in unplugging the database is only one thing.

But, you know, we had—in fact, the new Minister of Justice (Mr. Swan) was making an issue about how he wasn't able to use a gang courthouse, and somehow he thought that that made him strengthen his hand; that Manitobans would somehow rally around him because he wasn't able to use a gang courthouse. Well, the reason he wasn't able to use the gang courthouse was he hasn't been able to get the gangs off the street, Madam Deputy Speaker. That's the reason he hasn't been able to use their courthouse. You don't need it if you're not going after the gangs. So, over and over we see these different failures when it comes to the issue of crime.

You know, it was sad. I think it was maybe not the saddest moment that I've seen in the Legislature, but one of the sadder moments when the Minister of Justice stood and said that—yesterday, when we were talking about the 47-year-old father who was killed as a result of a stolen vehicle on Friday—when he said that they were busy celebrating their achievements. You know, at a time when I think all of us should have our hearts going out to the family and redoubling our efforts and looking at what more could be done, he said that it was a time for celebration, and he was glad to be with the member for Kirkfield Park (Ms. Blady) to pat themselves on the back when it comes to auto theft.

* (15:30)

And yet today we have the president of the Winnipeg Police Association, Mr. Mike Sutherland, saying that what's gonna be happening now, what they've already seen to some extent is, because of the immobilizer program, because of the focus of the government to put all of the onus on the victims, and instead of going after the criminal intent of those young people who are trying to steal cars, now there's going to be more carjackings because and, you know, this would be common sense and you don't have to be a lawyer, you don't have to be a criminologist, I think, to understand this, that if you don't go after the—if you don't go after the criminal intention of a person trying to steal a vehicle or commit some other crime, they're just gonna commit some other crime. And, if every car has an immobilizer, they may look at carjacking. They might be doing breaking and enters. There might be violent crime. And so you don't actually have less victims, you have just different kinds of crime.

And that's what this government has never understood. I mean, years ago they looked at a—at a seniors program and said, well, let's hand out deadbolts to the seniors 'cause they're concerned about crime—[*interjection*]

Well what—well, you know, I mean the member for Transcona (Mr. Reid) asked if one of the professors who's involved with the—with the program is wrong.

You know, I'm happy to stand by the police. If he wants to stand by every professor in the province of Manitoba, I'll stand beside every police officer in the province of Manitoba, and we'll have that debate. If he wants to ignore the police—if he wants to ignore what the police are saying on this issue, I'm more than happy to rent a hall, we'll bring in the police officers, he can bring in academia and we can have that debate about how to make our province safer.

But, you know, I think that most individuals would recognize that if you don't go after the criminal intention of an individual who wants to commit a crime, if you just put all of the onus on the victim, you know what's gonna happen. So they went to the seniors and they said, well, here are some deadbolts. Lock yourself in your homes. While the criminals are running outside, you lock yourself as a prisoner in your home, and that'll keep you safe.

Well what approach—what approach to crime is that, Madam Deputy Speaker? And what's the result gonna be? Well, it's clear what the result's gonna be. You're gonna have an increase of crime because

individuals know that the government's gonna focus on the victims instead of focussing on them, and that's what happened. And we saw it, unfortunately, with the accused individual, who now has been charged with manslaughter, the 18-year-old individual, as a result of the death on Friday.

Here's an individual who was a level 4 car thief, and I think most members would know that that's the worst of the worst. That's the—you've been identified—if you're identified as a level 4 car thief, that means they know you're a repeat offender, you're likely to offend again and you have to have intense supervision. Well, you know, according to the initial reports, this individual obviously wasn't following his court orders that he had placed upon him. He didn't have electronic monitoring, he didn't have that supervision and we saw the deadly results, Madam Deputy Speaker. We didn't have that kind of intense supervision.

This wasn't somebody who never had a previous record, who you wouldn't expect would be committing a crime. This was a level 4 car thief who had already been identified as somebody who was likely to reoffend. But because this government refuses to crack down on those court orders, something that's fully in their ability to do, fully in their jurisdiction, in their purview, because they have decided that they're not going to enforce those court orders, we're gonna continue to have this type of violent crime where there's auto theft, gang activity or other kinds of crime and they know, you know.

And, you know, it's so sad because every time you hear of a horrific incident, whether it's a gang incident or some sort of other violent incident, you know that when the perpetrator is caught and charged, you know it's gonna be somebody who is breaching a court order. It's inevitable. We know that it's gonna be somebody who should've had some sort of a court order in force but this government refuses to enforce those court orders and we're gonna continue to have victims as a result.

So, look at their approach. You know the first thing—the first thing that the new Minister of Justice (Mr. Swan) did when he assumed office—and I had some hope, you know, I'd like to think that I'm a person who has hope and I believe I have an optimism, that things could change, Madam Deputy Speaker, so when the new Minister of Justice was sworn into office I said, well, let's give him the opportunity. Let's hope that this'll be different than the member for St. Johns (Mr. Mackintosh) was, and

the member for Kildonan (Mr. Chomiak) was, the two individuals who announced eight gang strategies in 10 years. Let's hope that this would be something different.

But on one of the first days of office, the Minister of Justice announced his new strategy to take gangs off the streets, to wipe them away, to clean up the streets of Winnipeg was to launch an ad campaign on shows like *Ellen DeGeneres* and on soap operas like *The Young and the Restless*, and on *Canada AM* at seven in the morning, and hope that those gang members, instead of being addicted to selling drugs on the streets, were addicted to soap operas. That was his approach to trying to get gangs off of the streets of Winnipeg.

And you know we talk about the carrot and the stick approach, and I've heard the—I've heard the members opposite talk about how you need to have both the carrot and the stick approach. Well, you know, we don't disagree but, you know, there's more carrots over there than Bugs Bunny has and at some point, at some point, Madam Deputy Speaker, you have to bring out the stick, because there comes a point in time where these individual gang members are so entrenched and so hardened in that gang lifestyle, that there's going to be some consequences. You know, and it's not like there's no hope.

I've talked to individuals across North America about gang activity and how to—how to have an impact, and I met with some officials in the office of the mayor of Minneapolis recently. And, you know, Minneapolis is an interesting comparison, because they used to be called Murderapolis in the mid-1990s. That might ring a bell, of course, because of the challenges that we have in Winnipeg.

But they were able to go from one of the most violent cities in North America to one of the safest cities, not just because they extended a bunch of carrots, as the government would do, extended a bunch of carrots and hoped, and hoped that they would get them off the street because somebody was watching *Desperate Housewives*, or was watching a soap opera and decided, oh, look, apparently gangs are a dangerous lifestyle. Well, I've got news for you, you know, some of these young people actually know that gangs are a dangerous lifestyle.

But, when you talk to, you know, 14- or 15-year olds who are at risk or have been lured into that gang lifestyle, they'll tell you, on the one hand they're presented with a gang recruiter, with a gang recruiter who's saying, if you come into this gang, we're going

to give you clothes, electronics, money. And, on the other hand, is a counterbalance, you have an ad running on *Ellen DeGeneres* that's saying, well, it's a dangerous lifestyle, maybe you shouldn't do it. Well, you know, if there's a young person who's watching *Canada AM* at seven in the morning, I suspect he's not at risk. I suspect that he's probably, you know, doing pretty well.

But this is what the government doesn't understand is you've got these gang recruiters out there offering all of these different things for these young people to get involved in gangs, and as a counterbalance, they throw out ads—and look, I mean, we all know why they did it. It was just to try to get those individuals who are watching the ads to try to believe, oh, maybe the government is trying to do something about gangs.

And I think it backfired. And I think it really backfired on the government because everybody that I've talked to about the ads, they've said, well, this is ridiculous. We know this isn't going to work. And I expect the member from Transcona and others, when they go back to their constituency, if they talk to those in their riding, they're probably getting the same comments. They're probably getting people who—[interjection] Well, the member for Transcona (Mr. Reid) says no. He's either living in a bubble or, you know, he's limiting his conversations to those who live within his household, and he needs to go a little bit beyond that, because people are saying this simply is not going to work because they're frustrated, they're frustrated, Madam Deputy Speaker, and I understand why they're frustrated.

Winnipeggers have had it. They're saying enough is enough. It's time that we take some serious action to try to bring order back to the streets of Winnipeg, because it's not that Winnipeg or that Manitoba that any of us remember growing up in. And yet what—you know, and so when the ads came on TV, the people that I've spoken to, from a variety of different ridings, have said this is ridiculous. This isn't going to keep gang members or get gang members out of gangs, and that's before they learnt, when they were running the ads during daytime talk shows and during soap operas. But that's the approach this government has always taken.

One of the first things the member for St. Johns (Mr. Mackintosh) did when this government was elected in 1999, actually, I think it was the second thing, first they took the safer communities act that the Filmon government had passed prior to the

election and they copied that, put it on the photocopier, copied all the pages, re-introduced it and then claimed it as their own, and that worked. And so, you know, kudos to Gary Filmon and to Vic Toews.

So the second thing that the member for St. Johns did was to announce that they were going to have a Project Gang-Proof to drive gangs off of the street. And that was essentially pamphlets that were made up and distributed to parents and to youth.

But doesn't that sound familiar? Doesn't that sound familiar, Madam Deputy Speaker? Ten years later we've gone from distributing pamphlets and having ads on Project Gang-Proof to having ads on this new gang initiative. After a decade, we've come full circle. And all it is, is a media strategy by this government to try to convince people that they're going to get tough on gangs. And I think that most Manitobans recognize that this is not, this is not a party who really is going to ever ensure that there are tough measures placed on gang members. And I think that that's unfortunate, because as we continue along this path, there's going to be more and more crimes and more and more victims and more and more families who are mourning the loss of a loved one.

*(15:40)

The one thing that was mentioned—[interjection]. Oh, I know, Mr.—Madam Acting—Madam Deputy Speaker, that my time is running short. My House leader, who I would like to commend for doing a tremendous job this session—I wouldn't want to say that my House leader could beat up their House leader, but certainly in a mind war, certainly in an intellectual debate, I'll put the member for Lac du Bonnet (Mr. Hawranik) up against the member for Elmwood (Mr. Blaikie) any time, and I think we saw that—we saw that this session.

But I would like to thank the residents of Steinbach, which include the town of Niverville, the R.M. of Hanover and the city of Steinbach, again, for their continuous support. Many of them have wished their good wishes to me and my wife and my son during this holiday season, and we have always appreciated the opportunity to represent I think one of the greatest constituencies in the province, and I look forward to continuing to serve them during the duration of this term.

Thank you very much, Madam Deputy Speaker.

Mr. Mohinder Saran (The Maples): Madam Deputy Speaker, I am pleased to stand in the House today and speak in support of this Speech from the Throne.

The Throne Speech shows that Manitobans have elected themselves the right government for these unsettling economic times. Just think back to what happened when a cold economic wind blew Manitoba's way in the 1990s. Yikes, the Tories said, and slashed funding for our universities, cancelled the bursary program, fired 1,000 nurses and cut medical post spots. Contrast those rash decisions with the steady performance of our government in education and health that the Throne Speech has described. My colleagues have already elaborated on our investments in these areas.

I would only like to add, as a footnote, about recent improvements in emergency services at our local Seven Oaks Hospital that benefit my constituents in particular. Recently, a \$14-million expansion and redevelopment of the ER at Seven Oaks increased its capacity by 50 percent. Now, as part of budget 2009's province-wide improvements in emergency care, the ER will be staffed by additional nurses overnight. In addition, Seven Oaks has been part of a pilot project to add a new category of professionals to the ER team: physician assistants. They are qualified to perform a wide range of duties, including conducting physical exams, ordering diagnostics tests and prescribing medications and other treatment. This is yet another step towards strengthening the emergency team at Seven Oaks.

Manitoba was the first province to institute a children's fitness tax credit paralleling the federal credit introduced in 2007. Now Manitoba is showing the way for other provinces by phasing in a similar fitness tax credit for adults. This incentive to engage in physical activity is something that I have been advocating during my two years as an MLA. The health benefits of keeping fit are well known. Fit individuals are more likely to lead happier, healthier and longer lives. There is also a benefit to society as a whole. A fit population makes fewer demands on our health-care system. A report commissioned by the Fitness Industry Council of Canada estimated that Canadians would have saved \$2.5 billion over the next 21 years if the federal fitness tax credit were extended to adults. The council claims that the foregone tax revenue would be matched by the health-care savings in only three years. The Canadian Diabetes Association estimates that, 2020 are nearly one in 10 Canadians will be living with

the diabetes, at a cost of nearly \$16.9 billion annually. Ninety percent of diabetics have type 2 diabetes, which is brought on by obesity, inactivity, poor diet and aging. Consider what an adult fitness tax credit might do to help Manitobans ward off the disease or keep it in check.

Madam Deputy Speaker, the Throne Speech commits the Province to working with the municipalities to encourage the construction of more secondary or granny suites, as they are called. These self-sufficient suites are added to or created within a single-family residence and provide the basic facilities for living, sleeping, cooking, and sanitation. At the urging of a number of my constituents, I met with the previous minister responsible for housing to propose this move.

Granny suites make good sense socially and economically. First of all, they are an excellent means of expanding the stock of affordable housing. The costs are minimal. Property owners who build granny suites to accommodate low-income seniors or adults with a disability are even eligible for forgivable loans from the Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation in the range of \$24,000 to \$36,000.

Granny suites are also a plus environmentally. They create no sprawl and take less energy to heat and cool than independent residences. Best of all, they enable children, parents and grandparents to be mutually supportive while still affording an appropriate amount of independence and privacy. The older generation benefits from the companionship of their kids and grandkids. They receive assistance with the chores that would be beyond their capacity. There is always someone around to keep an eye on their health and well-being. And the younger generation benefits greatly from the presence of grandparents, particularly if both parents are working. Kids have someone to greet them when they come home from school. They have someone to monitor their activities and ensure that they don't fall in with a bad crowd.

The Throne Speech spoke of our government's desire to make Manitoba the most age-friendly province in Canada. By looking at how municipal planning and zoning regulations could make granny suites an option for more Manitobans, we are taking a step in the right direction.

My constituency, The Maples, is renowned for having the highest proportion of new Canadians in Manitoba. These newcomers in turn help attract

more skilled workers to our province. They can also take a great deal of credit for encouraging these new workers to stay in Manitoba once they immigrate to Canada. In the last year for which we have statistics, over 84 percent of Manitoba's provincial applicants in the economic class who were over the age of 25 had post-secondary education in professional and technical fields; 84 percent. The comparable figure for Manitobans as a whole is around 57 percent. The 71,000 immigrants we have welcomed to our province over the last decade have been increasing our education edge as will the thousands more that will be coming each year as part of our immigration strategy.

I welcome the announcement in the Throne Speech that applications to our Provincial Nominee Program will be speeded up so that would-be immigrants will know within six months whether they have been accepted. Manitoba is also working with Ottawa to fast track the recognition of the credentials of foreign-trained professionals, and it is also good news that our government will be enabling successful applicants to start making work and living arrangements before they arrive in Manitoba.

Our government's continuing support for the smooth integration of newcomers from diverse nationalities into the Manitoban scene is key to their success. The recent budget provides for a respectable increase in funding for multiculturalism. Outreach to Manitoba's ethnocultural communities is not just about cultural diversity and the many benefits that such diversity brings to the fabric of our province. It is also about enabling newcomers who are keen to contribute their skills, knowledge, and experience to our economy to feel that they are included in and respected by mainstream society.

* (15:50)

I would like, Madam Deputy Speaker, to tell a personal anecdote which illustrates this point. Back when I first came to Canada, I was desperately looking for employment. I was not having any luck. Time and again, however, I was told that it was next to impossible to get a job if you wore your hair in a turban as I did in accordance with my tradition. And so one day, I went into the bathroom with a pair of scissors. I cut my hair short, and I wept for betraying my Sikh culture by doing so. Then I composed myself, put on a brave smile and asked my roommates, how do you like my new look? Decades later, the recollection of this incident is still painful to me. But that was long ago. Now, thanks to

the government's promotion of ethnocultural communities and educational campaigns, newcomers are much less likely to feel isolated and much less likely to feel pressure to conform in a way that violates their core beliefs.

Thank you, Madam Deputy Speaker.

Mr. Leonard Derkach (Russell): Madam Deputy Speaker, I rise today to put a few comments on the record with regard to the Throne Speech, and I begin by first of all congratulating the new Premier (Mr. Selinger) on being elected as the leader of his party and also the Premier of our province, and I want to wish him well. And I also want to say to the two runners-up, first of all the member from Thompson who I sat with in this House for a long time who came into the Chamber in 1981, I believe, and who has always been a very outspoken individual, who is charismatic and who is—I think carried the torch for the NDP over the years, and in fine fashion.

I only regret that throughout the campaign for leadership, the minister, in my view, did the honourable thing in trying to ensure that everybody had equal access and equal opportunity in the NDP party, but that was not so from the other candidates who were running for leadership. But that's sort of the history of the NDP party, and it's not surprising that they would conduct themselves in that manner.

And we also had the minister—current Minister of Justice (Mr. Swan) who got the second prize, but even though he quit. And I think we'll probably see more of him down the road, and we'll probably see more quitting down the road from his—from his side.

But, Madam Deputy Speaker, nevertheless we have a new face in the—in the form of the Premier of our province. We also have a new Minister of Finance (Ms. Wowchuk) in our province, but there is much more of the old style of governance from this government that we saw even under the leadership of Gary Doer.

Madam Deputy Speaker, I also want to take the opportunity today to comment and to thank the services that we are provided in this Chamber by the table officers, the staff in the Chamber and also the pages. And I want to say thank you to them for all of their efforts and for ensuring that our jobs are made as comfortable and as easy as possibly can be done in the Chamber. I know that they provide a great service to our Chamber, and I'm never one to complain about the cost of running this Chamber for a day, unlike the NDP, of course.

Madam Deputy Speaker, I also want to say thank you to the *Hansard* staff who record all of the transactions that occur in this House, because I know they work tirelessly and they work long hours and, to them, we wish them the very best. And I want to extend to all of the staff that serve us an extremely happy holiday season, a merry Christmas and also the best in the coming new year.

Madam Deputy Speaker, before I get into the meat of the—of the Throne Speech, I also want to send to my constituents the greetings of the Christmas season. May their Christmas be blessed and also wish them a happy new year and thank them for the support that they have given me over the last number of years. I think this is my 23rd year in the Chamber, and certainly I want to thank them for the support that they've given me over the years.

Madam Deputy Speaker, the Throne Speech that was delivered to us on November the 30th by His Honour the Lieutenant-Governor spoke about some of the things that the government would be doing, but there wasn't anything new in this Throne Speech. The Premier's (Mr. Selinger) comments were flat is now the order of the day, and expectations should be lowered by all Manitobans because we were—this province was starting to face its downturn in the economy. Well, if the NDP had protected what this province was blessed with over the course of the last 10 years, today we would be in a much better position to respond to the needs of Manitobans and to stimulate the economy in a much more positive way.

But, over the course of the last 10 years, Madam Deputy Speaker, we have seen an abundance of wasteful spending by this government, and I say wasteful because, if you look around and where the government's priorities have been, they weren't too concerned about ensuring that Manitoba's debt was maintained. They weren't too concerned about paying down that debt, and they weren't too concerned about the fact that two-thirds of our budgets were being supported by transfer payments from Ottawa.

And, you know, all of those signals out there should have said to them that in—when the sun is shining, let's, as my leader said, let's repair the roof, so that in times of rain we are protected, and that's not the attitude of this government, that's not what they did.

Madam Deputy Speaker, if you look at the sectors of the economy of this province that have

generated the wealth of this province, we see that they have done very well in spite of our government because, if we compare ourselves to other jurisdictions, you will find that our tax rates are higher than they are in other jurisdictions. A family of four in Manitoba pays far more in taxes than they do in other parts of this province, almost in every part of this province and, yet, the government continues to spend money as though it were growing on trees.

Madam Deputy Speaker, when we have the tax regime that we have in our jurisdiction and we have the kind of transfer payments that we're receiving from Ottawa and a government that—it's got a spending habit, we have, indeed, a course for disaster down the road. And that's exactly what Manitoba is going to be facing over the course of the next few years, and we're seeing that the slide is starting to happen again.

You know, Madam Deputy Speaker, I go back to when Howard Pawley was the premier of this province, and when I went back that far, I was sitting in this Chamber at the time when the deficits of this province were roaring out of control and our debt-servicing costs—our debt-servicing costs during lean those years, were about a half a million dollars a day, increasing up to a million dollars a day towards the end of that regime.

And, Madam Deputy Speaker, when you look at where we are today, the Minister of Finance (Ms. Wowchuk) today was trying to defend this, but she couldn't, because today Manitoba's debt-servicing costs are 2 billion—or \$2 million day. Now, that is very, very significant. It's very startling to begin with and I don't know where we're going to be down the road if we continue to support this kind of administration.

Madam Deputy Speaker, there's always somebody who comes up to clean up the mess that the NDP create. And I was told by one of the ministers of this government that it's okay, we know that sometimes we're going to have to lose government and the Tories will come in, and they'll clean up shop and then—and then we'll—they'll get booted out because they tend to focus on debt relief and on paying down their debts and then, all of a sudden, they—we can come back in and we can start spending money again. And that was told to me by one of the ministers of this current government.

An Honourable Member: Yeah, right.

Mr. Derkach: Yeah, that's right, and I don't want to name him, Madam Deputy Speaker but, indeed, he's a prominent member of the—of the current government and the NDP.

Madam Deputy Speaker, we talk about where we should be spending our money and the priorities that we should have. Today, I look at promises that were made to Manitobans, and I go specifically back to my own community of Russell where, since 1999, 1998 as a matter of fact, was when the first commitment was made for a dialysis unit in the Russell Hospital. At that time—and at that time, there was also another commitment made for a physical rehab clinic to be set up in the Russell Hospital as well.

Well, Mr.—well, Madam Deputy Speaker, we have been waiting for the dialysis now for the last 10 years and it hasn't happened. Four times now in throne speech and budget Addresses I have heard that Russell was going to be receiving a dialysis unit. It was also—it was also announced in this latest Throne Speech.

*(16:00)

Madam Deputy Speaker, at AMM, the mayor of Russell asked the Minister of Health (Ms. Oswald) when this was going to happen. She said, imminently. I am awaiting that announcement, first of all but, secondly, the construction of it, because the people in that part of the province—it's not just what they want, it's what they need.

Madam Deputy Speaker, I have to say that the rehab unit was set up in Russell in 1999 while we were still in government. Two years after the NDP took over that was cancelled. Their excuse was that there weren't sufficient trained staff to be able to have that unit operating there. Well, the reality was the three people who worked in that lab had to go and find work elsewhere because they were dismissed as a result of that unit being cancelled in that community.

So, Madam Deputy Speaker, one has to ask where the priorities are. Are they just in NDP-held ridings? And that's the way that this government has been conducting itself. You know, my leader has been asking for a school in Fort Whyte for a long time. Not because he wants to see the government spend money, but the government is supposed to provide services where they are needed, and when you have a population the size of Fort Whyte that doesn't have a high school in it, then you have to

question whether or not the government is really interested in serving all of Manitobans.

Well, Madam Deputy Speaker, just last week I heard an announcement that I could not believe. When we have—when we have people dying in hallways, dying in waiting rooms, dying in emergency wards, lying on a gurney for seven hours before they can be treated and then, unfortunately, because of complications, they die, and the minister and the government can't address those priorities, but they make announcements like a \$31-million polar bear compound at the zoo. They make an announcement at Gordon Bell High School for a green area, which is fine, but don't—but don't go ahead and cancel projects that are needed in this province and make announcements because it's gonna look good in Copenhagen, or it's going to appease some people in the inner city or close to your—close to your election base, and that's how the NDP conduct their affairs as a government, and we have watched this over and over and over again.

Madam Deputy Speaker, all Manitobans deserve services, but I do have to credit the Minister of Health (Ms. Oswald) about some things, because she is somebody who I think has had a broader view of things, and I single her out because I've gone to her on several occasions with constituent issues that needed to be addressed and I have to say she has responded in a very forthright way. Not every demand that goes her way can be accomplished and can be satisfied, but at least, I have to say, to her credit, that she addressed the issue immediately and it was dealt with either positively or less positively. It didn't matter, for that matter, as long as there was good rationale and as long as somebody looked at the issue, and that's what I have to credit her with because she has been very open in that regard and she's been very approachable. That's not—that's not the norm for this government, unfortunately, and I wish that some of the members on that side of the House, some who've been sitting in their chairs for a long time perhaps could take a lesson from the way that this minister has been conducting herself.

Madam Deputy Speaker, the government has also talked a lot about the environmental issues. We have a Minister of Conservation past who now takes over the reins of the Department of Agriculture and, you know, when I heard that, I just about had to go to the washroom because I said to myself, now, that's about tantamount to appointing somebody off the street as the Minister of Justice for the province, because here is a guy who—what did he do for

agriculture in the last 12 months? Well, I can recite a couple of things. Number 1, he killed the hog industry. He destroyed the hog industry in our province as Minister of Conservation. He said, he said this was good for farmers. He said what he was doing was good for farmers. It was putting a nail in the coffin of the hog producers of this province and he had the—and he had the audacity to say that this was good for farmers.

What else did he do? Well, let's take a look at the BSE issue. Together with the former minister of Agriculture they were going to build this elaborate killing plant in Dauphin. They went to the United States, bought a bunch of equipment, they were gonna set up a killing plant in Dauphin. Well, Madam Deputy Speaker, right in the minister's own backyard, that was fine; I didn't—we didn't care where it was as long as there was one there. But what happened, they left this equipment on a pile in Dauphin and today it sits rusting somewhere because it's not used. We don't have a cattle processing facility in Dauphin, and that's six years after BSE. What an embarrassment. What a let down to the producers of this province. Today we are seeing the cattle—the mother cow herd—in this province declining at a faster rate than it is anywhere else in Canada.

And why? Because this government has chosen to kill that industry as well. So the minister, now of Agriculture can put up on the wall that he helped to kill the hog industry in this province and, secondly, he's working towards that in the cattle industry as well. What other industry is he going to attack under his leadership as Minister of Agriculture?

I'm sure farmers in this province are going to be very confident in having him sit down at a negotiating table with the federal minister and other provincial ministers because he knows absolutely squat about what's happening in the field of agriculture.

Madam Deputy Speaker, I hate to be so unkind to him, but, really, one has to learn from the mistakes that he's made in the past, and I don't think he has.

What did he do with rural farm families with regard to effluent disposal in Manitoba? Twenty years ago or 22 years ago, I went to the Department of Agriculture and said we were putting in a new effluent system in our—in our—on our farm, and we wanted to know what the best system was so that it would be environmentally sustainable. We were told at the time, do not go to a field because a field will

create a lock for all pathogens that cannot escape, and then you will contaminate whatever vegetation you have or whatever ground water you may have in that area. So they recommended that we put in one of two systems. One is a mound system. The other one was an ejector system for effluent, not for sewage, as this minister said. Madam Deputy Speaker, the sewage is hauled away with a—with a sewage truck to a lagoon. So the minister needs to, again, educate himself on what he is talking about.

Well, Madam Deputy Speaker, what did this minister do? He went and banned sewage ejectors. The very kinds of facilities that were promoted by the Department of Agriculture now were banned under his watch. Did he do any science? Did he do—did he apply any scientific facts to this? He did not.

Madam Deputy Speaker, so the minister doesn't have a very good track record when it comes to dealing with rural Manitobans and the issues that they face.

And I can go one step further. What did he do with the fishery in the Dauphin area? Finally, after the pressure from this side of the House, and the fact that we were going up there and visiting with the fishermen in the Dauphin area, he was dragged kicking and screaming to the table and offered some pathetic solutions to them, Madam Deputy Speaker. But the people of Dauphin know it—the people of Dauphin know it and they'll reward him accordingly down the road.

Madam Deputy Speaker, the Throne Speech in general sets a very low level or a low standard for this province. While other provinces are looking towards coming out of the recession, building their provinces, lowering their tax rates, improving the quality of life for their—for their inhabitants and their residents, this province is looking at our province slipping back from the growth that we should be projecting.

Our unemployment rates are starting to soar. Madam Deputy Speaker, when we take a look at what's happening with Tembec, when we look at what's happened with the call centre here in this province, those jobs are leaving. And why? Because this government doesn't have any creative insight in what it should do to assist Manitobans in not only long-term jobs, but keeping the jobs that are already here, and somebody has to stand up for 'em. A hundred days after the strike at Tembec, the Premier (Mr. Selinger) nor the minister who's responsible for it had ventured out there to talk to the workers and to

see what solutions could be found. Instead, at the 11th hour, this government puts forward a million dollars and says, go play. Here's a million dollars, go play. In other words, shut down the industry. Find a new job. The town with a million dollars can find out what its destiny is going to be. Well, nobody is a fool, and a million dollars is never going to find a solution for a community that is losing its major industry like they did at Tembec. This Minister of Finance (Ms. Wowchuk) should be ashamed of what her government has done in this regard, and the lack of attention that they have paid to this very important industry in this province.

* (16:10)

But, Madam Deputy Speaker, they talk with forked tongue. They talk about jobs and the importance of preserving them but at the same time they're losing them. They offer a million dollars for the community to go find a new destiny. It's the same thing that they're doing with the hydro line. They're talking about not cutting any of the boreal forest for the—for the hydro line, yet they're the same government that's gonna punch a road through the east side of the—of the lakes. They're the same government that's going to put in a road that they're slashing and burning boreal forest right now to a cottage development site. They're—and yet they—they're saying that they can't put a hydro line down that same corridor. It doesn't make any sense.

Yet on the west side of the province, where nobody wants the line, they're deciding that they're gonna spend another \$650 million more for that project. Well, Madam Deputy Speaker, that, once again, is an example of what this government's lack of focus on priorities is. They have lost their focus in terms of where they should be but down the road Manitobans will reward them accordingly.

So, Madam Deputy Speaker, I know my time is up and I know the Minister of Finance wants to respond to some of the things I've said and I welcome that, but let me say that the amendment that was put forward by our leader was one that I was looking forward to perhaps the government even supporting, partially at least, but no, that wasn't to be. And it's unfortunate that we will not be able to support this Throne Speech because it lacks direction and it lacks any positive initiative for the good of this province. Thank you, Madam Deputy Speaker.

Hon. Rosann Wowchuk (Minister of Finance): Madam Deputy Speaker, I'm very, very pleased to

have the opportunity to speak today on the Throne Speech, and I want to definitely comment on some of the comments made by the member for Russell.

But, Madam Deputy Speaker, when we—when we put this budget together under our new leader we looked at some very important issues. We looked at this budget, Throne Speech, I should say, to—with a couple of themes. One of them is investing in the health and well-being of Manitobans and then building a stronger Manitoba. Both of those themes are covered off very well and describe what it is we intend to do.

Madam Deputy Speaker, we know that we are facing challenging economical times. We're having a downturn in the economy but this government has made a commitment. This government has made a commitment that we will keep the economy going. We will invest in stimulus. We will invest, ensure that the services that are important to people of Manitoba, services like health care, education, safety, all of those issues and services to protect the most vulnerable people in our society. We will be there for those—for those people and we outlined our plan—we've outlined the plan that we have in our Throne Speech.

It's unfortunate that the members opposite want to take advantage and, in fact, make announcements about some of the infrastructure that we're proposing, and they lobby every day to have additional infrastructure in their constituency, but when the time comes to vote to support these they're nowhere to be seen. In fact, Madam Deputy Speaker, they vote against them. They vote against a commitment of \$745 million in roads, investment in bridges, projects that will stimulate about 1,500 jobs, creating more than 1,500 stimulus projects that we have been in partnership with the national government, the national government. Their brothers and sisters recognize the importance of stimulus and they're prepared to put money in and the members opposite vote against it. And we New Democrats are working with the national government to stimulate our economy so that people will work, so that we have an infrastructure that will be there for many years to come. And through these 1,500 stimulus projects we are creating more than 12,000 direct jobs and 10,000 indirect jobs, but the members opposite don't seem to recognize that.

I heard the members opposite—the member opposite just talking about how bad things are in Manitoba and how the employment—unemployment

is up and how the deficit is up and the economy is just not doing anything.

Well, let me quote a few. What did the Royal Bank say about the—Manitoba. The Royal Bank is forecasting that Manitoba's economy will lead Canada this year at 0.2 percent. In 2010, and it's forecasted that Manitoba's growth will be at 3 percent—third highest in Canada.

And so, despite what the members opposite are saying, although we are facing challenges, Mr. Speaker, our economy is growing and the vice-president and chief economic officer of the Royal Bank said, and I quote: Most of the indicators suggest Manitoba has endured the worst part of the economic storm while achieving a positive growth rate of 0.2 percent in 2009. Increased capital spending, agriculture activity and demands for provincial reproduced products and natural resources will result in a more significant economic growth going forward.

It's too bad the members opposite can't say something positive about the economy in this province. He also said, overall, the positive forces in the economy are expected to dominate the recent weakness in manufacturing and produce a positive growth in Manitoba—the only province to achieve this feat in 2009.

The member opposite also talked about our jobs. What does the Royal Bank say about Manitoba? It says, the province of Manitoba is one of only three projected to show an overall job gain in 2009. Manitoba's positive growth is 0.2 percent; New Brunswick, 0.1 percent; Saskatchewan, 1.5 percent.

So, Mr. Speaker, I wish, again, that the members opposite would just think a little bit more positively about what's happening in this province, because, indeed, we should be proud of our province. We are having a Homecoming next year. We should be encouraging people to come back home, and I can tell you that many people—many people that left this province, when the Tories were in power, are now recognizing the growth and the positive things in this province and they are coming back.

Madam Deputy Speaker, the members opposite, I want to—I just have to stray a little bit here. The member from Ste. Rose talked about Ranchers Choice. The member from Ste. Rose said the Province bought equipment, and I want to remind the member that it was not the Province that bought the equipment, it was producers who went out and

bought the equipment. Real farmers went out and bought that equipment because they believed—*[interjection]*—that the real farmers bought the equipment. They came to—

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Madam Deputy Speaker: Order. Order. Order. Order. Order. Order. Order.

I'd like to remind all members that there are loges if they wish to have private conversations.

Ms. Wowchuk: Thank you, Madam Deputy Speaker.

You know, the members opposite said that the Province bought equipment. Well, Madam Deputy Speaker, that's wrong. I want them to know that it was producers that went and bought the equipment because they believed that they could add value and build a facility in Dauphin.

Unfortunately, we had members opposite—and I want to talk about the former member from Emerson who is on the record saying we didn't need slaughter capacity in this province, that we had enough slaughter capacity. I have to give credit to the present member from Emerson, because the present member from Emerson was one of the people who talked in a positive way about Ranchers Choice, one of the few Tories who thought that this could work.

But, you know, there—had there been a little bit more support, had they not been out there talking about how negative this would be, and had they not been trying to kill it, maybe it would have succeeded, maybe it would have. Maybe it wouldn't have, but the members opposite can—I just want to correct the record—it was we stood by the producers on that facility, and we will continue to stand by the producers who want to increase slaughter capacity and processing in this province, Mr. Speaker.

* (16:20)

Mr. Speaker in the Chair

Because, Mr. Speaker, if we can add value to an agriculture product and create jobs, we should be very proud, and I would ask the member to look at the records of where, since this government has taken office, where value-added process was under their administration and where it is today. It has more than quadrupled, more than quadrupled in the food-processing area as to where they were and where we have taken the industry. Again, I've

touched a sensitive nerve here, but the members opposite are wrong when they talk, as usual.

I should take a few minutes, Mr. Speaker, to talk about Hydro. You know, the members opposite just hate Hydro. And I honestly believe, if they had a chance, they would sell it, because if they aren't gonna sell it, they're gonna mothball it, just as they mothballed it in the past, and they just don't like the idea of having economic development in the north and having Aboriginal people part of the economic development, and they don't like the idea of clean energy. I really think they would much rather develop the tar sands and have Alberta make money on the tar sands despite the fact that it's the dirtiest energy that's there. They will not speak in a positive way about electricity and they will not talk about, in a positive way, about the sales, you know, and why we need another bipole.

The members opposite don't recognize that we need Bipole III for reliability. We need Bipole III to complete the sales that we—that we have. And the members opposite are bound and determined, despite the fact that on the east side of the province we have one of the jewels of the world, Mr. Speaker. We have, as I tabled in the House today, and many have seen on a world map, there's only one spot in the world where there is a pristine boreal forest, no place else in the world. We are taking steps to protect it, to try to get a UNESCO heritage designation for it, because the boreal forest is known for its ability to capture carbon and it's very important.

And as we are at—our Premier (Mr. Selinger) is in Kyoto—Copenhagen, pardon me, wrong, wrong agreement, continuation of Kyoto. But, of course, the members opposite hated Kyoto, Mr. Speaker, and they really don't want Canada to be in Copenhagen either to ensure that Canada can clean up their reputation. Right now, Manitoba—Canada does not have a very good reputation as it comes to addressing climate change. Our record here in Manitoba is something that we should be very proud of, and I'm very proud that our Premier and our Minister of Conservation (Mr. Blaikie) were invited to be part of the Canadian delegation to help influence—to help influence Canada's position and maybe help clean up Canada's reputation a little bit.

But, Mr. Speaker, the west-side line is very important to our sales and for our economic development and I wish that the members opposite would recognize that this will help us to—they talk about wanting to improve the economy of Manitoba,

to have growth in this province, but they are very opposed to electrical clean energy which will help our economy, but, most importantly, is done in a new way, it's done in partnership with First Nations. The members opposite were critical of spending money to bring the Aboriginal community into the discussions, but we will see—we will see that project through.

And I, very much, am looking forward to seeing those dams built and our sales to the U.S. become a reality. And I'm very much hoping that we will, indeed, get a UNESCO designation for eastern Manitoba, and the members opposite should know that Ontario very much wants this designation as well because it is in their jurisdiction.

But I just had to talk about Hydro and how important it is—it is to our economy, Mr. Speaker, but I also want to talk about, as I said, what we have done, and the members opposite, in their, in their condemnation of Manitoba, talking about how negative it is, talk about how we haven't managed well, how we haven't saved. Well, I would remind the members opposite how much was in the rainy day fund when they were in power, and where is it now? They say we haven't managed, but, there is over \$800 million in the rainy day fund.

Mr. Speaker, we have taken steps during some good years to put away funds to help us to ensure that we can provide services that are important to people, and, for me, that's one of the most important things we can think about as we go through this challenging time of a recession that is affecting the whole world. Challenging times, a recession that's affecting other provinces much more than Manitoba is being affected.

Manitoba is one of those provinces that is able to—may not have as many peaks, but they—we don't dip as low either, Mr. Speaker—and we've been able to ride this out well, and I want to give credit to where credit is due. I want to give credit to our Premier—previous premier and Cabinet. I want to give credit to the present Premier (Mr. Selinger) and Cabinet for—and I want to give credit to all of the staff in the departments who work with us on these important issues. And I want to give credit to the farmers because the farmers in this economy in this province do play a very important in the economy.

But, Mr. Speaker, I want to say that as challenging as these times are, we've committed in this budget that in 2009, business tax cuts will be in place and we will—in this business tax, we are going

to save Manitoba companies \$41 million a year. This is including the corporate tax rates of reducing from 13 to 12 percent and the reduction of small business tax from 12 percent to 1 percent. This the lowest—this is the lowest small business tax in Canada. We have to—we have to look at ways that we can address business issues, and I'm very proud of the steps that we have taken in reducing tax. I have to say that I'm very proud of the steps that we've taken to reduce education tax on farmland.

I'm very proud of the steps that we have been able to take to improve opportunities for our young people, whether it be in creating jobs or in training. It is my view that training is one of the key tools to help people get out of a recession, to get out of a downturn in the economy, and there's no doubt that steps we are taking to invest in education and training, whether it, whether it be in the north, whether it be here in the city, or whether it's working with immigrants, new immigrants who have come to this country, this province, Mr. Speaker, we are working with all of them.

And, Mr. Speaker, we will continue to work with the national government. We will continue to make investment in stimulus because it keeps people working and it provides the kind of, I guess, the legacy that you could have for working in the province during a time of downturn.

But, Mr. Speaker, we aren't through these challenges. They're—I'm hoping that we can come out of this very quickly, but the whole world is coming out of the recession much slower than they anticipated they would, so there's more to do, and that's why we, in 2010, in the Throne Speech, we announced that we will do an economic summit and it will be led by the business community, by the Premier, by labour, by Aboriginal people, and by local government leaders. These are real people that we will bring together and people who are working in the trades and look at ways that we can further stimulate the economy based on what we have started.

But, ultimately, Mr. Speaker, our goal to invest in education is important. Our goal to ensure that we maintain the health-care services that are very important are all what we are going to do. We will continue to build. We will continue to build a stronger, a healthier Manitoba, a strong—and one where people can work, one where we can provide services, whether it is in facilities in Russell like a

dialysis unit or whether we can provide services in the Women's Health Centre or in Swan River or in Dauphin. This government has a record of investing across the province and bringing services closer to people.

This government—the opposition will not recognize the investments that we have made—

* (16:30)

Mr. Speaker: Order. The hour being 4:30 p.m., pursuant to rule 45(5), I am interrupting proceedings in order to put the question on the motion of the honourable member for The Pas (Mr. Whitehead), that is, the motion for an address in reply to the Speech from the Throne.

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

Some Honourable Members: Agreed.

Some Honourable Members: No.

Voice Vote

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

Some Honourable Members: Aye.

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

Some Honourable Members: Nay.

Mr. Speaker: In my opinion the Ayes have it.

Formal Vote

Mr. Gerald Hawranik (Official Opposition House Leader): A recorded vote, Mr. Speaker.

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

Order. The question before the House is the motion of the honourable member for The Pas (Mr. Whitehead), that is, the motion for an address in reply to the Speech from the Throne.

Division

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

Yeas

Allan, Altemeyer, Ashton, Bjornson, Blady, Braun, Brick, Caldwell, Chomiak, Dewar, Howard, Irvin-Ross, Jennissen, Jha, Korzeniowski, Lemieux, Mackintosh, Marcelino, Martindale, McGifford,

Nevakshonoff, Oswald, Reid, Rondeau, Saran, Selby, Struthers, Swan, Whitehead, Wowchuk.

Nays

Borotsik, Briese, Cullen, Derkach, Driedger, Eichler, Faurshou, Gerrard, Goertzen, Graydon, Hawranik, Lamoureux, Maguire, McFadyen, Mitchelson, Pedersen, Schuler, Stefanson.

Madam Clerk (Patricia Chaychuk): Yeas 30, Nays 18.

Mr. Speaker: I declare the motion carried.

* * *

Hon. Dave Chomiak (Deputy Government House Leader): I often wonder if all of us, because of our sometimes getting a little bit boaster should be—

should be forced to do that roll call ourselves, and good job. I want to commend the good job done every time, and all of the people who make this place work, despite all of us and our best efforts. I mean, people work really hard. I want to congratulate them, and, on that note, wish everyone a very festive holiday season, sincerely to everyone, and perhaps might notice that the clock is 5 o'clock?

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

Okay. The hour now being 5 p.m., this House is adjourned and stands adjourned until March 23, 2010, or at the call of the Speaker.

And I wish everyone a very merry Christmas and all the best in the New Years.

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Tuesday, December 15, 2009

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