

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
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ASHTON, Steve, Hon.	Thompson	N.D.P.
BJORNSON, Peter, Hon.	Gimli	N.D.P.
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GERRARD, Jon, Hon.	River Heights	Lib.
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HAWRANIK, Gerald	Lac du Bonnet	P.C.
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IRVIN-ROSS, Kerri, Hon.	Fort Garry	N.D.P.
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LEMIEUX, Ron, Hon.	La Verendrye	N.D.P.
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WOWCHUK, Rosann, Hon.	Swan River	N.D.P.
<i>Vacant</i>	Concordia	

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Tuesday, December 8, 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 which 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

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

**Bill 7—The Highway Traffic Amendment Act
(Suspending Drivers' Licences
of Drug Traffickers)**

Hon. Andrew Swan (Minister of Justice and Attorney General): Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the honourable Minister for Housing and Community Development (Ms. Irvin-Ross), that Bill No. 7, The Highway Traffic Amendment Act (Suspending Drivers' Licences of Drug Traffickers); Loi modifiant le Code de la route (suspension de permis de conduire en cas d'infractions se rapportant au trafic de drogues), be now read a first time.

Mr. Speaker: It's been moved by the honourable Attorney General, seconded by the honourable Minister for Housing and Community Development, that Bill No. 7, The Highway Traffic Amendment Act (Suspending Drivers' Licences of Drug Traffickers), be now read a first time.

Mr. Swan: The Highway Traffic Act currently provides for driver's licence suspensions of one year, five years, 10 years or life, if a person is convicted of an offence or a combination of offences listed in section 264 of the act, with the suspension length being determined by the number of previous convictions in the past 10 years.

This bill expands the list to include convictions for drug trafficking where a motor vehicle was driven by the offender in the course of committing the offence.

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

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Speaker: The honourable member for River Heights—order. Order.

**Bill 218—The Residential Tenancies Amendment
Act (Protecting Tenants Who Own Pets)**

Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights): Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the MLA for Inkster (Mr. Lamoureux), that Bill No. 218, The Residential Tenancies Amendment Act (Protecting Tenants Who Own Pets); la Loi modifiant la Loi sur la location à usage d'habitation (protection des locataires qui possèdent des animaux de compagnie), be now read a first time.

Mr. Speaker: It's been moved by the honourable member for River Heights, seconded by the honourable member for Inkster, that Bill No. 218, The Residential Tenancies Amendment Act (Protecting Tenants Who Own Pets), be now read a first time.

Mr. Gerrard: Mr. Speaker, every year in Manitoba, thousands of cats and dogs ended up in the Humane Society because their pet owners can't take them to apartment buildings or condominiums.

This bill prohibits no-pet clauses in tenancy agreement and house rules, but it does allow for landlords to put in reasonable rules about the conduct and behaviour of pets. It is a win for pet owners and a win for landlords for a variety of reasons, and it recognizes that having a pet improves the health of people.

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

PETITIONS

Long-Term Care Facilities—Morden and Winkler

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

These are the reasons for this petition.

Many seniors from the Morden and Winkler area are currently patients in Boundary Trails Health

Centre while they wait for placement in local personal care homes.

There are presently no beds available for these patients in Salem Home and Tabor Home. To make more beds in the hospital available, the regional health authority is planning to move these patients to personal care homes in outlying regions.

These patients have lived, worked and raised their families in this area for most of their lives. They receive care and support from their family and friends who live in the community, and they will lose this support if they are forced to move to distant communities.

These seniors and their families should not have to bear the consequences of the provincial government's failure to ensure there are adequate personal care home beds in the region.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To urge the Minister of Health (Ms. Oswald) to ensure that patients who are awaiting placement in a personal care home are not moved to distant communities.

To urge the Minister of Health to consider working with the RHA and the community to speed construction and expansion of long-term care facilities in the region.

This is signed by Nettie Giesbrecht and Nettie Schmitt, Val Siemens and many, many others.

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

PTH 15

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 2004, the Province of Manitoba made a public commitment to the people of Springfield to twin PTH 15 and the floodway bridge on PTH 15, but then in 2006, the twinning was cancelled.

Injuries resulting from collisions on PTH 15 continue to rise and have doubled from 2007 to 2008.

In August 2008, the Minister of Transportation stated that preliminary analysis of current and future

traffic demands indicate that local twinning will be required.

The current plan to replace the floodway bridge on PTH 15 does not include twinning and, therefore, does not fulfil the current nor future traffic demands cited by the Minister of Transportation.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To request that the Minister of Transportation (Mr. Ashton) consider the immediate twinning of the PTH 15 floodway bridge for the safety of the citizens of Manitoba.

Signed by Allan Hlady, Jim Wright, Beryl Davidson and many, many other Manitobans.

Ophthalmology Services—Swan River

Mrs. Myrna Driedger (Charleswood): 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.

This is signed by Bill Robb, Shelby Robb, Effie Robb and many, many others, Mr. Speaker.

* (13:40)

Whiteshell Provincial Park–Lagoons

Mrs. Heather Stefanson (Tuxedo): I wish to present the following petition to the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba.

And these are the reasons for this petition:

Manitoba's provincial parks were established to protect our natural resources and the environment for future generations.

In July 2009, the lagoons in the vicinity of Dorothy Lake and Otter Falls in the Whiteshell Provincial Park overflowed, creating concerns that untreated sewage made its way into the Winnipeg River system and ultimately into Lake Winnipeg.

In addition, emergency discharges had to be undertaken at lagoons in the Whiteshell Provincial Park four times in 2005, once in 2007 and once in April 2009.

Concerned stakeholders in the Whiteshell Provincial Park have repeatedly asked the provincial government to develop plans to address the shortcomings with the park's lagoons and to ensure the environment is protected, but the plans have not materialized.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To request the Minister of Conservation (Mr. Blaikie) to consider acknowledging that more timely action should have been taken to address the shortcomings with the lagoons in the Whiteshell Provincial Park in order to protect the environment.

To request the Minister of Conservation to consider immediately developing a short- and long-term strategy to address the shortcomings with lagoons in the Whiteshell Provincial Park and to consider implementing them as soon as possible.

Mr. Speaker, this petition is signed by Ruth Kamenev, J. Burnside, D. Hopkins and many, many others.

Provincial Nominee Program–90-Day Guarantee

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

The background to this petition is as follows:

Reuniting families through the Manitoba Provincial Nominee Program should be the first priority in processing nominee certificates.

Lengthy processing times for PNP applications causes additional stress and anxiety for would-be immigrants and their families here in Manitoba.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To urge the provincial government to consider establishing a 90-day guarantee for processing an application for a minimum of 90 percent of applicants that have family living in Manitoba.

Mr. Speaker, this is signed by W. Chan, M. Tolentino and C. Cananza and many, many other fine Manitobans. Thank you.

Rapid City Reservoir and Catwalk

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

And these are the reasons for this petition.

The background in this petition is as follows:

The Province of Manitoba has a role in providing maintenance to artificial water reservoirs.

The purpose of the Rapid City reservoir are: water conservation, recreation, stock watering, as well as maintaining water levels in wells.

Due to the low water level and the amount of vegetation in the reservoir, it is no longer usable for recreation activities such as canoeing or swimming.

Due to the amount of silt buildup and vegetation in the reservoir, the use of the Rapid City Fish Ladder, needed for the natural upstream migration of fish, is inhibited during—reducing the fish count from 2,300 in 1999 to 15 in 2008.

The catwalk structure spanning the Rapid City spillway, used by the children to get to and from school, was damaged when planks were incorrectly pulled from the spillway by the Department of Infrastructure and Transportation and has yet to be replaced.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To request the Minister of Conservation (Mr. Blaikie) to consider dredging the Rapid City reservoir as soon as possible.

To request the Minister of Infrastructure and Transportation (Mr. Ashton) to consider replacing the Rapid City catwalk structure as soon as possible.

This petition's signed by Terry Christie, Laurie Ringland, Orest Woloski and many, many others, Mr. Speaker.

Pet Ownership–Tenancy Agreement

Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights): Mr. Speaker, I wish to present the following to the Legislative Assembly.

The background and the reasons for this petition are as follows:

Tenants and landlords can benefit from a province-wide policy that treats all Manitobans the same regardless if they own pets.

Research shows that tenants, including seniors who have pets are more socially connected, have better health, less depression and higher levels of fitness.

Allowing tenants to keep their pets leads to less strain on organizations like the Winnipeg Humane Society.

The Province of Ontario has legislation which ended discrimination against pet owners, and this has been in place successfully since June of 1998.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

That the provincial government ensures that landlords cannot discriminate against pet owners purely based on the fact that they have pets.

That the provincial government ensures that any provision in a tenancy agreement prohibiting the presence of animals in or about a residential complex should be void.

Signed by Bill Moroz, Shannon Dodd, Michel Tremblay and many others.

Introduction of Guests

Mr. Speaker: Prior to oral questions I'd like to draw the attention of honourable members to the public gallery where we have with us from Victor Mager

School, we have 20 grade 4 students under the direction of Ms. Kelly McDonald. This school is located in the constituency of the honourable Minister of Education (Ms. Allan).

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

ORAL QUESTIONS

Tembec Closure Government Response

Mr. Hugh McFadyen (Leader of the Official Opposition): It's now been 99 days since workers were locked out of the Tembec mill in Pine Falls and Powerview. Mr. Speaker, over that period of time those workers and their families are being forced to rely on food banks and clothing depots.

This morning Tembec made an announcement that they intend to attempt to sell the plant and then went on to threaten permanent closure of that facility, possibly inside of 60 days from today. If that facility were to close permanently, Mr. Speaker, this would put 270 Manitobans out of work and have a devastating impact on their families, as well as the entire community.

I want to ask the Premier whether he's taken the opportunity yet to travel to Pine Falls to speak to the workers and get personally involved in dealing with this very serious situation.

Hon. Greg Selinger (Premier): Mr. Speaker, I met with the delegation of the workers last week at this building here in the Legislature. I met with management yesterday and was informed of their unfortunate decision to put the plant up for sale, and I can announce today this government will make available a million-dollar fund to allow the community to look at feasibility studies, including feasibility studies on whether they wish to purchase the plant and additional economic opportunities in that area.

We will respond to that community's concern. We will help them in any way possible to look at the future for that area, including the future of that plant.

Mr. McFadyen: We saw the last-minute announcement—almost an admission of defeat—coming out from the government today with the news release, almost as though the fate of the plant is a forgone conclusion.

Mr. Speaker, in the past, past premiers of this province, including Gary Doer, Gary Filmon and

others, have taken the initiative to personally visit communities, meet with union leaders, meet with workers and their families, meet with company leadership in a way to try to find a way to keep plants viable and to keep jobs in Manitoba.

Why has this Premier not taken the step of travelling to the community to learn first-hand what's happening and get a better understanding of what he can do to keep these jobs in Manitoba?

Mr. Selinger: Mr. Speaker, as I've indicated, we're making available today a million-dollar fund to assist the community at looking at alternatives, including the feasibility of owning and operating the plant.

I have met with the union workers and members of the union last week. I have met with management last night. This afternoon I will be travelling out to the community. I have talked to the deputy mayor of Pine Falls at noon today and I've talked to the reeve of Alexander prior to that, earlier this morning, to inform them of the company's announcement, and I will be meeting with them later on this afternoon, along with the Minister of Labour (Ms. Howard), to look at how the million dollars can be deployed to look at the best alternatives now that the company has put the plant up for sale.

Mr. McFadyen: Well, Mr. Speaker, the news release, which came out at 1:40 today, after question period started, says, and I quote from the minister: The closure of the mill is a traumatic event for workers, their families in the community of Pine Falls.

Mr. Speaker, the mill isn't yet closed. Have they—why are they already throwing in the towel when it comes to this important employer in Manitoba?

*(13:50)

Mr. Selinger: Mr. Speaker, the mill is not currently operating. The mill is being put up for sale. The workers have been locked out for going on 90 days. The company has now said that they are willing to put—the company has now said they're willing to put the plant up for sale, which is why we have responded with a million-dollar fund, which will assist the community to look at the feasibility of ownership of the plant. This could include the workers. This could include other partners, including First Nation partners in that region, which have expressed some interest in this.

This resource will allow the proper due diligence to be done to see the feasibility of continuing to operate that plant or to look at other economic opportunities in that area, which will allow that area to bounce back from this traumatic decision by the company.

Tembec Closure Out-of-Province Shipping of Wood

Mr. Gerald Hawranik (Lac du Bonnet): Giving up is not an option. It's not an option.

Mr. Speaker, they, Tembec, announced that it will put its Powerview-Pine Falls paper mill up for sale and is threatening to shut that mill down permanently. It's been 99 days since this lockout began, and during all of that time, Tembec employees have been trying to support their families using food banks and used-clothing depots, trying to make a living on less than minimum wage.

In the meantime, why is this Minister of Conservation, Mr. Speaker, why has he permitted Tembec to continue cutting down our forests and allowing Tembec to ship our wood out of province?

Hon. Bill Blaikie (Minister of Conservation): Mr. Speaker, this is an issue that was of concern to the union. It was raised with us. We had it looked into. Tembec has not been shipping wood out of the province that it's not entitled to ship. We've looked at that very, very carefully, and that is simply not the case.

They are entitled to ship some wood out that's not related to the operation of the mill, and that continues to be their prerogative, Mr. Speaker. That's a legal requirement that the company has, but in terms of wood related to the mill, that has not been happening.

Mr. Hawranik: Mr. Speaker, 5,000 cubic metres of wood that was cut down was shipped out of province by Tembec while all those employees were on the line using food banks and used-clothing depots. The company has been making huge profits sending Manitoba wood out of the province using a Manitoba timber-cutting licence.

So I ask the Minister of Conservation: Why has the Minister of Conservation allowed Tembec to make huge profits from our forests while there are 270 families out of work, using food banks and used-clothing depots? Why has he allowed that to happen?

Mr. Blaikie: Mr. Speaker, as I already explained to the House, the fact is that Tembec has not been

moving wood that it was not allowed to move, and we've checked into that over and over again as a result of requests—

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Speaker: Order. Order.

Mr. Blaikie: —I must say, as a result of requests by the union, not by the honourable member. As far as I know, this is the first time he's mentioned this.

So the union has raised it with us. We've looked into it. We were satisfied that Tembec was not in violation of the rules with respect to wood related to the ownership and the operation of the mill.

Mr. Hawranik: Mr. Speaker, the actions of Tembec are causing a great deal of suffering and anguish for families in Powerview-Pine Falls. At the same time, Tembec is still continuing to cut down our forests, and I say they're shipping the wood out of the province. I hear directly from Tembec employees. The union has also advised me that the Province is not charging the company stumpage fees, which are normally paid for for our forests.

Mr. Speaker, I ask the Minister of Conservation: Why did he cut a special deal for Tembec at the same time that 270 employees are—of Tembec—are walking the picket line and using our food banks and using used-clothing depots? Why has he allowed that to happen?

Hon. Greg Selinger (Premier): Mr. Speaker, there have been—there have been several measures that this government has taken to assist Tembec to continue operating, which is why when you look across the country, there have been 300 mills closed in Canada affecting 33,000 direct mill jobs.

In Manitoba, we made available a green tax credit to allow them to modernize the plant, worth \$3 million. We compensated them \$2.7 million for not further doing any cutting in provincial park areas. And, at the time, an official from Tembec said, Manitoba continues to show that they are open to business. Another dimension—

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Selinger: —Another dimension—

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Selinger: Another dimension—

Mr. Speaker: Order. Order. Order.

Mr. Selinger: —of being open to business—

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Mr. Selinger: —was to change—was to change the stumpage fee regime to link it to the market value of the product. If the market value went down, the stumpage fees went down, so the company could continue to operate, which is why it's one of the last mills in Canada to consider either selling itself or closing.

We will have a million-dollar fund to help the community decide the future of that plant.

Tembec Closure Government Response

Mr. Hugh McFadyen (Leader of the Official Opposition): Mr. Speaker, for him to quote a Tembec official, who says Manitoba's open for business at the same time as they're throwing 270 workers out of work, 270 families which are suffering, after taking the money from this government and running, taking it into corporate head office and laying off 270 families is an unbelievable statement for this Premier to make.

Now, Mr. Speaker, we support initiatives taken by this Premier to attend the Copenhagen meetings next week, but before he makes the 10-hour flight to Copenhagen, will he show that he cares about what's happening in Manitoba and make the one-hour drive to Pine Falls to find out what's really going on in that community?

Hon. Greg Selinger (Premier): I think the member—I think the member missed my response to previous questions, and in case he has, I will point out to him again: I have talked to the deputy mayor of the town of Pine Falls and I've talked to the reeve of Alexander, and I indicated I would be driving out to meet with them this afternoon to further elaborate how the million dollars can be used, to look at feasibility studies, including the feasibility of new ownership for the plant, including the feasibility of other economic development opportunities in the area.

This is a commitment we made as soon as we found out the company was considering putting the plant up for sale.

Mr. McFadyen: Well, Mr. Speaker, they're at day 99 now of this lockout, and the fact that the Premier has—it's taken questions in question period and the workers coming to the Legislature to get his attention, is shameful.

It didn't happen under Mr. Doer. It didn't happen under prior premiers when communities were in crisis. Why has it taken him close to 100 days to show interest in the file, and what steps will he take to show hope for that community, that they're working to keep the plant open rather than throwing in the towel as they've done with today's news release?

Mr. Selinger: Again, Mr. Speaker, in the face of 300 mills having closed across this country and 33,000 job losses, the initiatives Manitoba, this government, has taken to keep the plant open have sustained it up until this point. Those initiatives have included a green tax credit. Those initiatives have included compensation for cutting rights. Those initiatives have included—have included a market-based stumpage fee. Those initiatives have included support for the rail line. All of those things have helped this plant keep operating.

Today, we have announced a million dollars to allow the community to look at alternatives, including the feasibility of buying the plant now that the company has put the plant up for sale. And I will be out there to talk to the community about that, as I talked to the union last week and as I talked to management last night.

This government is proactively working with the community. We have done it in the past. We will do it in the future.

Mr. McFadyen: Well, Mr. Speaker, it's been 100 days, 100 days since this lockout began and only today is he showing enough interest to actually make an announcement at the last minute before question period and then visit the community. It's like being in the ninth end with two outs, two strikes against and down three runs.

Why is the—why has the Premier shown such a disregard for this community? What has been—what has he been doing for the past hundred days that's more important than the survival of these 270 jobs and these communities?

Mr. Selinger: Mr. Speaker, our track record is clear in this regard. We started long before this lockout occurred. We started by providing green energy—a green tax credit to this company to modernize, so that they could have a modern process for processing the product there. We started a long time before this lockout occurred by offering them compensation for cutting rights. We started a long time before this occurred by offering them a subsidy for the rail line.

And we have also lowered their corporate taxes by—from 17 to 12 percent. We have also phased out—in 2010, there'll be no more capital tax.

All of these measures have allowed this plant to survive when 300 other ones have shut down. Manitoba has done a better job supporting this industry than virtually every other jurisdiction in Canada, and today—

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Mr. Selinger: —we announced a million-dollar fund that will help the community adjust and/or consider the feasibility of buying this plant.

* (14:00)

Anti-Gang Strategy Advertising Campaign Costs

Mr. Kelvin Goertzen (Steinbach): Mr. Speaker, in the summer of this year the former Minister of Justice announced the NDP government's seventh gang strategy in a decade.

Late last month, the new Minister of Justice announced the eighth strategy in a decade, and at the heart of that announcement was a plan to spend a quarter of a million dollars trying to advertise gangs off of the street. Today we learn that the suspected 16-year-old killer of two teens this weekend had gang ties and was under a number of different court orders that he clearly wasn't following and that weren't being enforced.

In light of these killings, does this new minister believe that spending a quarter-million dollars on advertising was a better investment than trying to track these violent gang members and protect the community?

Hon. Andrew Swan (Minister of Justice and Attorney General): There are different approaches to dealing with crime. One is to lurch from day to day and to ask your question based on what may be in the paper. The other way is what this government has been—has been doing and that is to have a comprehensive strategy across a number of fronts.

I look at measures on things like prevention. They don't believe in programs like Lighthouses. They don't believe in things like friendship centres. The ministers there cut them back in the '90s.

We believe in intervention. They don't believe in programs like Turnabout, working with under 12s.

They don't believe in programs like Spotlight with more intensive supervision of young offenders and apparently don't believe in suppression.

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

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

Mr. Swan: Mr. Speaker, we do believe in suppression. We've done that by supporting police, with more investments in municipal police services. We believe in suppression by more money for provincial Crown attorneys and for Prosecutions. We also believe in more supports for Corrections.

It's an entire continuum, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Goertzen: If it's the member for Minto's intention to be the weakest Minister of Justice this government has ever seen, he's well on his way. He's off to a good start.

This minister and this government believe that you should distribute pamphlets. They believe, like the former minister, that you should beg the criminals to turn in their illegal guns voluntarily, and now he's put out his policy, the eighth gang strategy in 10 years—we're gonna try to advertise these gang members off of the street.

This 16-year-old gang associate was on probation with orders that were breached and that were not being followed. That's the story we see day after day and it shouldn't be happening in Winnipeg or in Manitoba, Mr. Speaker.

You are either going to get serious on these gang members and enforce these court orders or you're gonna continue to see victims. Which is it, Mr. Minister?

Mr. Swan: Well, thank you, and again, Mr. Speaker, our strategy to deal with gangs and to deal with organized crime is continuous, and the announcement last week was one further piece.

And, as a matter of fact, we received an e-mail right after the ad started running from a major agency here in Winnipeg, very pleased, saying this was the exact kind of message that is going to be meaningful for young people. The advertisements will be running not only on television and the Internet but also will be on bus ads and also print media. So it is one other step in our fight against gangs and organized crime.

And I didn't hear any question from the member opposite last week when the Manitoba Integrated

Organized Crime Task Force succeeded with operation Divide and took down more than 30 members of organized crime here in the province of Manitoba.

The member opposite opposed that task force. The member opposite opposed more resources. He is quite simply dead wrong, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Goertzen: I think that the minister should respond to the Police Association president that said they can't run their gang unit full time and have more arrests 'cause there's not enough police officers.

We will continually be opposed to underfunding our police like this government has done. We've seen their continuous program—

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Mr. Goertzen: —a continuous flow—

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Mr. Goertzen: —of pamphlets, a continuous flow of advertising, a continuous flow of having some ads on some bus shelters, and meanwhile weekend after weekend these violent gang members violate their probation orders where they've been given, and this government does nothing to try to enforce those orders.

Will this minister, instead of, you know—instead of advertising on *Desperate Housewives*, why don't you help out the desperate residents of Manitoba and Winnipeg who want a safe community, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Swan: Mr. Speaker, it's very interesting the member opposite wants to talk about resources for policing in the city of Winnipeg and the province of Manitoba because over the past 10 years the Province of Manitoba has funded an additional 80 police officer positions to the city of Winnipeg. We've made continuous, continuous investments every year—

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Speaker: Order. Order. Order. Let's have some decorum, please. The honourable minister has the floor.

Mr. Swan: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and with respect to every single one of those additional police officers for the city of Winnipeg and every additional officer for the RCMP and every additional officer for

other municipal police forces across Manitoba, the member for Steinbach and every other member of the Progressive Conservative caucus has voted against those additional resources.

Since 1999 we've more than doubled the resources available for prosecutors in Manitoba and, again, every single one of those investments has been opposed by the member for Steinbach and every other member of that caucus. Shame on them.

Pharmacare Program Generic Drug Policy

Mrs. Myrna Driedger (Charleswood): Mr. Speaker, this Minister of Health likes to say one thing and then do another. She says she wants to list cost-effective drugs on a more timely basis; then she doesn't follow through. No wonder the Auditor General has accused her of mismanaging the Pharmacare program in Manitoba.

I'd like to ask her if she could explain why Manitoba is the slowest province in Canada to list the cheaper generic drugs.

Hon. Theresa Oswald (Minister of Health): Mr. Speaker, and what I can say to the House, of course, is that the Auditor General, in 2006, recommended that we implement some new policies to reduce costs and improve utilization of pharmaceutical products. It's for that reason that we introduced our new generic drug policy to ensure that the best possible prices are available to Manitobans.

Since then, we know that there have been well over \$4 million in savings that have been achieved, and with that money we have been able to add additional drugs for HIV/AIDS, for diabetes, allowing us to continue to provide Manitobans with a very expansive Pharmacare formulary.

We listened to the advice of the Auditor General, implemented these new programs, and they're working in Manitoba.

Mrs. Driedger: Mr. Speaker, other provinces seem to be able to make deals with drug companies and list generics in a more timely way. All we get from this Minister of Health is excuses and rhetoric. The longer she dawdles, the more the Health budget in Manitoba increases and the more she's going to be forced to raise deductibles.

So I'd like to ask this Minister of Health: How much more money is she going to waste before she can get her act together?

Ms. Oswald: Well, Mr. Speaker, in actual fact, a little over two years ago the opposition stood with fire and brimstone and demanded that we add a drug—a drug called Altace, by the way—to the formulary immediately rather than negotiating the best possible price that we could get for Manitobans. As a result, if we had listened to the members opposite—heaven forbid—we would have been paying a million dollars per year for that drug.

You know what? It reminds me a little bit of the opposition standing and crowing, saying, you've got to pay for MRIs at the Maples clinic immediately; \$700 a scan it was. We took our time, negotiated for \$245 a scan.

You know, the Tories always purport themselves to be great managers of money. Seems not.

Mrs. Driedger: Mr. Speaker, this Minister of Health is never going to recoup any of the savings by her dawdling. This minister doesn't seem to understand—

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Mrs. Driedger: —that foot dragging is costing her government and Manitobans more money, and I'd like to give the minister an example. There is a drug called Norvasc which lowers blood pressure and treats angina. Health Canada approved it in July, five months ago, and most other provinces have already listed it. Manitoba has not listed it, and her foot dragging has cost Manitoba almost \$3 million since the drug was approved. That's almost \$18,000 a day that she could be saving.

I'd like to ask the minister: How could she bungle this so badly?

Ms. Oswald: You know, I can see that there are some times I don't give this member much credit, but I've always given her enough credit to remember one answer to the next question. I just stated that we've already, as a result of our utilization management agreement process, saved over \$4 million in the short time that that process has been in place.

I can let the member opposite know that the Competition Bureau has recently commended Manitoba for our policy and cites it as one of the country's most important developments in public and private drug plan for generic policies.

I can also let the member know that contrary to their advice of take the price, whatever they offer to you, we're negotiating with this company. We

anticipate it being listed in the coming weeks, and we also anticipate that there will be significant savings for Manitobans. Actually, it would seem that we're the good managers, Mr. Speaker.

*(14:10)

Westman Regional Laboratory Staffing Shortages

Mrs. Leanne Rowat (Minnedosa): Mr. Speaker, this Minister of Health speaks of taking her time but, if you take your time and continue to rely on press releases and no action, people will die.

Mr. Speaker, the Westman Lab is chronically understaffed with 12 positions currently vacant. Under the NDP's watch, the lab has been a revolving door for pathologists leaving for other provinces.

This fall, a letter was sent out by Diagnostic Services of Manitoba to all Westman Lab pathology clients admitting that they couldn't recruit and retain pathologists and that turnaround time for lab tests would be affected. This means that patients are waiting longer to hear about their lab results for everything from vitamin deficiencies to cancer.

Why has the Minister of Health failed to address the critical shortage of pathologists and lab technologists in the Westman region?

Hon. Theresa Oswald (Minister of Health): Mr. Speaker, I can assure the House that Diagnostic Services Manitoba is working very aggressively to recruit pathologists for those vacancies in Brandon. I can let the member opposite know that of the 46.7 total positions at Diagnostic Services Manitoba, we are currently experiencing 8.4 vacancies.

We know that the very creation of Diagnostic Services Manitoba in 2002 was to create a co-ordinated system to really focus on that issue of turnaround time, and because we are able to share pathology across the regions and across facilities, we are able to keep those wait times down. We know, at present, the overall median wait time for pathology results is six days, with a 99 percent rate of results reported within the benchmark. And, of course, emergency cases are done right away.

DSM is working to recruit for those pathologists, Mr. Speaker.

Mrs. Rowat: Mr. Speaker, back in 2006, I raised the critical issue of long-standing vacancies at the Westman Regional Lab and nothing has been done to address this.

Westman Lab is short 2.75 pathologists, 12 positions in the lab: 3.7 technologists, 7.3 assistant technicians and one x-ray technologist. This is from the department's FIPPA request response, Mr. Speaker.

Even before that, in 2001, the Medical Advisory Committee of the Brandon Regional Health Centre warned that a concrete plan was needed to attract pathologists in the city. The NDP have had more than 10 years to address this critical problem and, instead, it keeps getting worse.

Why is the minister ignoring this critical issue?

Ms. Oswald: Well, Mr. Speaker, indeed, we're not ignoring the issue. The recruitment of specialists across the nation is highly competitive. We know that we have seen a net increase of doctors every single year since we've been in office—10 years, they keep reminding us. I'd remind the member opposite that there was a net decrease, virtually every year of the '90s, when they were in power. We're going to continue to work on that recruitment.

Incidentally, Mr. Speaker, one of the most important things that you can do to recruit specialists is to have very high tech and modern working facilities. We're investing \$12 million right now in the Westman Lab that's under construction, as we speak. That's going to assist us with recruitment, not send doctors away like happened in the '90s.

Mrs. Rowat: Mr. Speaker, in the last five years, Brandon Westman Regional Lab has lost three pathologists to Saskatchewan alone. It's a critical issue.

Mr. Speaker, we are aware that DSM has been sending out work to other provinces and even out of country in the past, because current staff levels are not sufficient to deal with the number of specimens received.

Can the Minister of Health tell the House how many lab samples have been sent out of province by Westman Labs because of her failure to adequately staff the facility? Why doesn't she fix the problem instead of giving this work to other provinces, Mr. Speaker?

Ms. Oswald: Well, Mr. Speaker, I'll say again that the recruitment activity for DSM for pathologists is ongoing. They're working to build up this—build up this complement of pathologists.

Secondly, I always find it rather interesting when members opposite stand in this House and

complain about shortages of doctors, when they had their hands on the wheel during very challenging times, admittedly. It was their choice, Mr. Speaker, to cut the spaces in the medical school, the effects of which we feel even today.

It might also be worth noting, Mr. Speaker, that when times were tough, the Tories cut nearly a million dollars from the Westman Lab, 12 percent of their budget during the '90s. It's a little bit ironic, don't you think?

Waste-Water Treatment Facilities Nitrogen Removal

Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights): Mr. Speaker, yesterday the Premier indicated his reason for mandating spending of half a million dollars of taxpayers' money to remove nitrogen from the city of Winnipeg's sewage is to protect the beluga whales in the Hudson Bay.

Now, I've checked with Dr. Greg McCullough, the scientist who's actually done the on-the-ground research on the Nelson River and on the Hudson Bay and the area near that, and he tells me that the nitrogen concentration in this area of Nelson River and the Hudson Bay is actually very, very low, and this is in part because of the series of lakes like Cross Lake between Lake Winnipeg and Hudson Bay which essentially will remove a lot of the nitrogen. Dr. McCullough says there is no danger whatsoever to belugas from the nitrogen in Winnipeg sewage.

Now, the Premier said during his leadership campaign that he was going to review the decision to remove nitrogen. I ask the Premier: Has he completed his review?

Hon. Greg Selinger (Premier): I have referred back to the Clean Environment Commission again for a third review by them and an opinion of what—whether or not they believe nitrogen removal is a good idea with respect to waste-water treatment in the city of Winnipeg, and, as I said, the Clean Environment Commission was very clear that they think one of the factors you have to consider in the methodology that you use to treat waste-water is biodiversity, including marine life, including beluga whales, including other forms of biodiversity through the entire Lake Winnipeg, Nelson River watershed.

In addition, the Clean Environment Commission has said that the methodology needed to treat ammonia in the city of Winnipeg requires biological nutrient removal because the existing system is not

sufficiently reliable to handle the ammonia removal which is a form of toxic nitrogen. So, if you have to use biological nutrient removal to address the issue of ammonia, the additional cost for nitrogen is in the order of 6 to 7 percent of the total capital cost.

Mr. Gerrard: Mr. Speaker, you know, the City of Winnipeg has looked at this issue very carefully. Removing nitrogen in addition to the removal of ammonia and phosphorous costs in the order of \$350-million capital cost, \$9 million a year for many years, operating costs plus interest rates and so on which adds up clearly to half a million dollars and more.

The Premier at least has referred this back, which is a good step. But I suggest that the Premier also ask the Clean Environment Commission to consult with scientists like Dr. Schindler and Dr. McCullough to make sure that the evidence that they provided, including the levels of nitrogen which are very low in the Nelson River and the Hudson Bay, to make sure that they include assessment of all the science and provide a strong report.

Mr. Selinger: The existing Clean Environment Commission, the second report they did, did review the science and they said there was a contested body of knowledge here. There are some who think that the entire emphasis should be on simply phosphates. There are others that now believe that it's important to have the right relationship between phosphates and nitrogen, a 1 to 15 ratio on a mass basis.

The reality is that the key issue that has to be addressed with the technology for waste-water removal is ammonia, proper levels of ammonia and a reliable methodology for ammonia. And, if that is addressed through biological nutrient removal, the additional costs to remove nitrogen is 6 to 7 percent, and the Clean Environment Commission suggests that the City should go all the way in this regard because the science continues to evolve and there is a significant threat to the biodiversity of the watersheds in Manitoba.

Weston-Brooklands Area Need for Medical Facility

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Inkster): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Premier (Mr. Selinger) and it won't be as difficult to handle, I trust, as the last one.

You know, Mr. Speaker, as the Premier is about to waste a half-billion dollars, there is a very serious issue facing Weston and Brooklands. There's a need for a medical clinic.

Mr. Speaker, my question to the Premier is: Will he recognize the need for a medical clinic that would serve Weston and Brooklands, that will be located in the Weston-Brooklands area?

* (14:20)

This is an area that serves over 6,000 residents. This is an area, Mr. Speaker, in which we tried to bring this matter in the form of an urgent debate yesterday, and his government voted against having the emergency debate on the critically important issue to the people of Weston and Brooklands.

Is he prepared to stand up today and give the guarantee that Weston and Brooklands will have a medical clinic established, Mr. Speaker, before the end of the year or very early into the spring?

Hon. Theresa Oswald (Minister of Health): Mr. Speaker, I thank the member for the question.

We know that when people find themselves unexpectedly without a family doctor it can be very concerning. I want to assure the member that we are working with the doctors that have been displaced in the fee-for-service clinic to find a new location.

We also want to let the member know and let all of the patients know that the family doctor connection line is available to them: 786-7111. There are two or three doctors in the area that are accepting new patients as we speak, and so those people are encouraged to use the family doctor connection line to find those new doctors and to work together to ensure that those people get the care that they need.

Gordon Bell High School Land Purchase

Mr. Speaker: The honourable member for Wolseley.

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Speaker: Order. Order. Order.

Mr. Rob Altemeyer (Wolseley): Somebody's reputation precedes me, but I don't think it's mine.

Mr. Speaker, I have had the incredible honour of working with an amazing group of community groups and students and citizens in my constituency of Wolseley in a multi-month battle to see if we could get some green space established at Gordon Bell High School.

I'm wondering if our—[interjection] I'm wondering if our hardworking Minister of Education, on behalf of our government, might be willing to

share some news with this House. Thank you very much.

Mr. Speaker: The honourable Minister for Education.

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

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

Hon. Nancy Allan (Minister of Education): I would like to thank the member for the question and all the hard work that he has done on behalf of his community.

It is official—it is official, Mr. Speaker: We have an agreement with Canada Post. We have purchased the land that is adjacent to Gordon Bell High School. I had the opportunity of being there this morning with the students and the staff and the parents and all of the stakeholders that have worked so hard on this deal, and we're very, very pleased to be able to announce this with Canada Post. They worked incredibly hard with officials in my department to make sure that they could make this happen for the Gordon Bell students.

Wind Energy Government Support

Mr. Cliff Cullen (Turtle Mountain): Mr. Speaker, in last week's Speech from the Throne, the 50-minute speech, there was absolutely no reference to Manitoba Hydro, and there was also no mention of a wind energy development here in the province of Manitoba, despite numerous references and lots of noise by this government over the last few years.

In fact, I'll reference a news release, November 24th, 2008, from the provincial government. They talk about the St. Joseph project. It's going to be \$300 million in expenditures, \$70 million in local landholder payments, \$198 million provincial-municipal revenues. It will reduce 800,000 tonnes of greenhouse gas.

I ask the minister responsible: What's the status of the project and is the provincial government going to be funding that particular project?

Hon. Rosann Wowchuk (Minister charged with the administration of The Manitoba Hydro Act): Well, I hope that this means that the members opposite support wind energy a little more than they support Hydro, Mr. Speaker, because every opportunity that they get they try to knock that wonderful Crown corporation down.

But, Mr. Speaker, this government has made a commitment to develop wind energy in this province. There was a contractor that was—that was awarded the—for the St. Joseph's windmill farm. Since the time of the contract being awarded, they—Pattern Energy has reduced the size of the wind farm that they are proposing from 300 to 138 megawatts, and they are still working out details and maybe continue to—and Manitoba Hydro continues to meet with them.

Mr. Cullen: Well, Mr. Speaker, it's been over four years since the government first released the expression of interest and at that time there was over 80 proposals came forward, and here we are four years later, not one extra kilowatt of wind energy is being produced in Manitoba, and, just for—just for the new minister's information, go to the Canadian Wind Energy Association Web site and it says, 2009 will be a record year for wind energy development in Canada, with new installed capacity for wind energy projects totalling 790 megawatts.

We have a lack of leadership on behalf of this government in moving this file forward. When is this government going to show some leadership, get something done here in the province of Manitoba?

Ms. Wowchuk: Well, Mr. Speaker, I would like to tell him also that the Canadian Wind Energy Association has said tight capital markets and global recession have put a slight damper on what is expected for wind in the upcoming year.

The same group that he quotes also says now, other people recognize that there is a downturn in the economy, Mr. Speaker. It is hard to raise capital. This company is no different than any other wind energy company across Canada, because since the recession has set in not one wind farm has been built in Canada.

Mr. Speaker: Time for oral questions has expired.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

Bothwell Cheese

Mr. Hugh McFadyen (Leader of the Official Opposition): Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and I'm very pleased, along with my colleagues in the Progressive Conservative caucus, and, in particular, the member for Steinbach (Mr. Goertzen), to extend our congratulations to Bothwell Cheese for winning the very prestigious awards at the British Empire Cheese Show.

I was pleased two weeks ago to tour the facility in New Bothwell with the member for Steinbach, at which time we had an opportunity to meet with workers and managers in that wonderful Manitoba success story, and we're very pleased that their great work and their innovation and their outstanding marketing have been recognized at the British Empire Cheese Show; that show on November 30th awarded two first-place trophies, and these trophies were granted for the marble cheddar and Monterey Jack classes of cheese that are produced so very well by the Bothwell Cheese company right here in Manitoba.

We're pleased that the company is now at 55 employees and that it's embarking on a—on an expansion as well today in order to improve its efficiency and provide outstanding ranges of great Manitoba products for markets throughout Canada.

We are interested as well, Mr. Speaker, in the fact that Bothwell is expanding its markets through the country and in particular into southern Ontario and Toronto, negotiating with some large grocery chains there. So this is one more success after a long line of other successes.

We know that Bothwell Cheese has a great future, and we extend our congratulations to Ivan Balenovic and the rest of the team at Bothwell Cheese in New Bothwell, Manitoba.

Royal Canadian Army Cadet Corps 2328

Mr. Gerard Jennissen (Flin Flon): Mr. Speaker, stories of our northern youth often reflect tragedy, so it gives me great pleasure to rise today to share a story of triumph.

The evening of December the 2nd, 2009, was a proud moment and milestone for Flin Flon's local army cadets as 2328 Royal Canadian Army Cadet Corps was awarded the Commander's Certificate of Achievement denoting the highest standard of efficiency for a corps under 40 cadets in Manitoba and northwest Ontario for the 2008-2009 year. This prestigious annual award is based on the efficiency rating involving personnel, unit administration and supply and encompasses a heavy emphasis on training programs.

Family and friends gathered to witness a special-event ceremony at Creighton Bingo Palace in Flin Flon where Mayor Bruce—or, pardon me, Major Bruce Kiecker presented the award to the cadets. Local cadet Erin Harper was also promoted to the highest rank possible—Chief Warrant Officer. The

corps bestowed a unique 2328 gift upon Major Kiecker at the ceremony to thank him for his leadership.

Flin Flon's 2328 Royal Cadet Army Cadet Corps has been in operation since 1948 and presently attracts youth from Flin Flon, Creighton, Denare Beach and Pelican Narrows. The corps seeks to instill in youth the characteristics of good citizenship and to promote physical fitness through lessons in kayaking, trekking and other outdoor activities. The program also introduces cadets to the sea, land and air activities of the Canadian Forces. The corps provides youth with a positive alternative to some of the negative activities influencing many teenagers' lives.

* (14:30)

Mr. Speaker, I wish to thank the cadets for their hard work and determination, and to congratulate them on winning this prominent award. Thanks also to Commander Daryl Wilkinson, who is strongly supported by members of the Cadet Instructor Cadre, civilian instructors, the local sponsor group and parents.

Finally, I want to thank my colleague, the MLA for St. James (Ms. Korzeniowski), who is Manitoba's Special Envoy for Military Affairs and who is very supportive of Flin Flon's Royal Canadian Army Cadet Corps No. 2328. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Gray Academy Environmental Awards

Mrs. Heather Stefanson (Tuxedo): Mr. Speaker, the environment is an important issue for students in Manitoba schools. Schools all over the province are teaching their students how to be environmentally responsible.

I had the opportunity to present an award to two students and a teacher at Gray Academy for creating and maintaining an ecosystem in the school. This ecosystem is used to educate students in all grades, from junior kindergarten to grade 12, on the importance of maintaining and preserving the environment to ensure that we do not unnecessarily lose any more species of animals or their habitats.

I would like to thank the principal of Gray Academy, Hart Sera, who helped organize my visit to the school. As well, I would like to congratulate Sergei Didenko, Benji Liebl and their teacher, Judith Hoogstraten, for maintaining the ecosystem and for explaining it to the students as they come by to see it. It is truly fascinating to watch it in action.

While I was visiting the school, I was also able to speak to the grade 10 student social studies class about issues concerning the environment. They were very interested in what the government is doing to do to improve environmental standards in Manitoba beyond basic recycling programs. We had a very insightful question and answer session, which showed me that it is never too early for—too early to have concerns over the environmental health of your province. I would like to thank Heidi Crowley, the grade 10 social studies teacher, for allowing me the opportunity to speak to her class, and I would like to thank her students for participating in a very interesting discussion.

I'd like to stress the importance of educating our students on environmental matters. Students at a very young age are interested and are able to understand the importance of preserving our natural habitat and, as well, they are interested in learning different ways that they are able to help maintain a clean environment. I was honoured to be able to present certificates to people who clearly care about their environment and are anxious to share their knowledge with others. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

St. Clements 125th Anniversary

Mr. Gregory Dewar (Selkirk): Mr. Speaker, I rise today to congratulate the Municipality of St. Andrews—excuse me, St. Clements—on its 125th anniversary celebrated this year.

St. Clements is rich with history, unique wildlife and unique architecture. It was settled by First Nation people, French explorers, and many eastern European settlers, all of whom have left their mark on the municipality.

St. Clements is a natural tourist destination, especially known for its wonderful beaches and many recreational opportunities. It includes Grand Beach and Patricia Beach Provincial Parks.

St. Clements is a wonderful home for close to 10,000 people. The municipality includes the communities of Pine Ridge, Gonor, Narol, East Selkirk, Libau, Thalberg, Gull Lake and Grand Marais. St. Clements brings people together from various backgrounds and locations, creating unique—a unique historical tapestry.

To celebrate its 125th anniversary, St. Clements held a three-day celebration in July. It featured performers, a car and tractor show and a heritage centre detailing the area's history. The event serves as a fundraiser for the new Legacy Park to be built in

East Selkirk. Over 9,000 people attended the event, and over \$125,000 was raised towards the park.

I congratulate the people, businesses, council members past and present of St. Clements on reaching this important anniversary, and wish them many more. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Weston-Brooklands Area Medical Facility

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Inkster): Yes, Mr. Speaker, I would like to, once again, raise the issue of the Westbrook medical clinic.

This government has a responsibility, and it's not living up to that responsibility by providing what I believe is an essential service to the residents that live in both Weston and Brooklands primarily, Mr. Speaker.

We've attempted to raise this issue through an emergency debate, and whether it's the Minister of Health (Ms. Oswald), the Premier (Mr. Selinger), the member from Wellington and others have chosen not to allow—or not to allow for that debate to, in fact, occur. They have failed to be able to address the immediate needs of those—of those residents. They might not believe that it is a priority issue or that it is not of an urgent nature, but I would like to assure the government in very clear terms that it is a critically important issue, and they should not—those two communities should not have to settle for this particular Minister of Health saying, well, they can use a doctor that's in Tyndall Park, or The Maples, or in St. James, or go into downtown Winnipeg. Many of these residents are on fixed incomes. Many of these residents are relatively new immigrants to the communities. There is a cost factor, Mr. Speaker. We are supposed to be bringing health-care services into our communities, that's a part of the mandate of this government and it's failing on that mandate.

Mr. Speaker, I will make sure that this continues to be an issue until I get assurances from this government that Weston and Brooklands will, indeed, have a medical clinic. And I will put—continue to put the pressure in the forms of petitions and public meetings, question periods and future debates into this Chamber, because I believe that the residents of those two communities deserve nothing less than ensuring that they have that medical clinic.

Health care is, indeed, a very important issue that all Manitobans have, and when it comes to services, people want to know that those community services are going to be there and that they're going to be in their communities, and I, for one, will ensure

that the government feels the heat coming from the residents. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

ORDERS OF THE DAY GOVERNMENT BUSINESS THRONE SPEECH (Fourth 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 proposed motion of the honourable Leader of the Official Opposition (Mr. McFadyen) in amendment thereto, and the proposed motion of the honourable member for River Heights (Mr. Gerrard) in amendment thereto, standing in the name of the honourable member for Turtle Mountain (Mr. Cullen), who has 12 minutes remaining.

Does the honourable member wish to continue his speech?

Mr. Cliff Cullen (Turtle Mountain): No.

Mr. Speaker: No. Okay, we will have the next speaker, the honourable Minister for Health.

Hon. Theresa Oswald (Minister of Health): Mr. Speaker, it's my privilege to stand in the House today to speak in support of this Speech from the Throne. It's an honour for all of us to be here, in fact, to serve in this Legislature, and I want to thank the residents of Seine River for giving me this privilege. I want to say hello and welcome to you as we continue on with this new session.

I want to offer my heartfelt thank you to the Clerks who serve so ably in this esteemed House, who help us all the time, who endure and are always a source of great information for us as we serve as legislators.

I also want to, before making my comments on the Speech from the Throne, make note of the fact that we are all grateful to our constituency staff, those people that work so closely and directly, day by day, with the members of our constituencies, and I want to say heartfelt thanks to Sandra and to Colleen who work so well to assist the people in the constituency of Seine River.

I also, Mr. Speaker, want to take this opportunity to extend my gratitude to the staff that I work with here at the Manitoba Legislature. It is, indeed, a very big job to work in the office of the Minister of Health. It's hard work. It's rewarding work. And these individuals that dedicate themselves every day to ensuring that people are as well as they can be deserve all of our thanks and, indeed, today I want to ensure that they get mine.

I want to also thank people who work in the Department of Health in Manitoba, who have some of the most important jobs that one can have, in working on policy and working on governance, on issues that are so important to Manitobans. And so to the Deputy Minister of Health, Arlene Wilgosh, and all of those who serve so ably under her, I extend my thanks.

It's my privilege, then, to speak to the Speech from the Throne, Mr. Speaker, and to choose, of course, to support this speech and, really, in so many respects, it is about choice. It is about the choices that governments make in times that are robust financially and in times that are challenging. And I know that the choices that our government is choosing to make during these times are very, very important choices, and choices that are going to assist Manitobans in the days ahead.

* (14:40)

Naturally, it would be my inclination to speak at length on health care, and I would like to spend some time doing that, Mr. Speaker. I know that making a commitment in the Throne Speech to proceed on very important health capital projects will be a very significant contribution in the lives of Manitobans, continuing with our commitment to build a new women's hospital at Health Sciences Centre. And building a new birthing centre for south end Winnipeg will continue to improve the kind of care for maternal newborn issues, for which we have a very intense commitment.

We know that these commitments are part of our larger strategy for enhancing maternal care and women's issues. We know that part of the strategy has been making midwives present across the province. We've recently made a commitment, Mr. Speaker, to training midwives in southern Manitoba which will mean more midwives for women and their families.

We're very proud of the midwifery profession in Manitoba. We know how passionate midwives are

about the work that they do and how dedicated they are to improving access, and we know that they will be a big part of the care provided at the new birthing centre in south Winnipeg. While there were no funded positions a decade ago, Mr. Speaker, the Province currently funds 45 midwife positions, with more than half of those located in rural and northern areas.

We know also that, according to the Canadian Institute for Health Information, Manitoba, along with Ontario and B.C., has the highest number of midwives per capita in the country.

We know that providing access to primary care, access to family doctors is a very important issue and I would assure all members of the House that we are committed to providing enhanced access to primary care. By building access centres we know that that particular model of care is working very well in Manitoba. Feedback at the Winnipeg access centres has shown that 95 percent of the clients rated the service that they received as good or excellent.

We also know that creating these access centres will enable us to accommodate patients and help reduce the pressure on ERs. The innovative IV therapy clinic at Access Transcona addressed a key recommendation, Mr. Speaker, of the Emergency Care Task Force, built on a pilot project that reduced scheduled visits from the Concordia ER for IV therapy by more than 50 percent.

We know also that committing to provide access centres for St. James and northwest Winnipeg will be an additional point of access for patients, to enable their families to get the kind of care that they need.

Continuing with our commitment to build a new cancer centre for Brandon and continuing the work on Westman Lab in Brandon is of great importance to the people that live in that region. In September, we started the construction on the \$24-million cancer treatment centre which will include the first linear accelerator outside of Winnipeg.

We know the *Brandon Sun* wrote that they were glad that the Province decided to take the time to do it right, and that the full cancer centre is far superior to the—to the original vision of just a linear accelerator. We're going to continue with building a new emergency medical service station in West St. Paul and expand dialysis capability in Gimli, Russell, Berens River and Peguis First Nations.

A commitment to major capital investments in health care are nothing new to our government. I

hear the member from Russell asking the question about when, and I want to let him know that we made our announcement in Gimli today, and that he should get his Sunday best ready so that we can be making that announcement in Russell. We expect to go to tender very shortly, as quickly as January, I would say, and the ball will be rolling. So take your suit to the dry cleaners, member for Russell (Mr. Derkach), and we will move forward on that commitment.

An Honourable Member: Do I get invited to the announcement?

Ms. Oswald: The member from Russell asked me if he's going to be invited to the announcement, and I can't really, Mr. Speaker, think of anything I'd rather do.

A commitment to major capital—who would not want to spend more quality time with the member for Russell? Who in this House would not wish to do that? Thank you very much.

Mr. Speaker, I also wanted to signal that the Throne Speech also expresses our intent to continue on our journey to make tobacco companies accountable for the full costs of their actions, the actions that they've taken in the past. We're going to do this, of course, by proceeding with suing tobacco companies in co-operation with other provinces.

I was also very pleased, Mr. Speaker, under the health-care banner, to note that our government recognizes that women and their families, but women in particular, seeking fertility treatment, should not have to bear the full cost of these treatments.

I've had the privilege of speaking with a number of women who find themselves in these situations, and I can tell you, without exception, these are heart-wrenching stories indeed. I could attempt to explain more about this, I could never do better than the member for Southdale (Ms. Selby), who explained this very point. It's plagiarism I'm doing now, but it's worth repeating. When the member signalled that sometimes things can seem so perfect. A perfectly trimmed lawn, perfect Christmas lights on your house, a beautiful home, everything looks perfect. But what's happening inside that home? Or more to the point, what's not happening, and that's the arrival of a little one. There can sometimes be no greater devastating blow to a family. So being able to be a part of assisting families in not having to bear the entire cost of pursuing fertility treatment was a part

of this Throne Speech about which I feel extremely proud.

The people of Seine River care deeply about their health-care system but it's not the only thing that they care about. And I know that pursuing healthy lifestyles so, perhaps, that they never need to use the health-care system is something that's critically important to the residents of Seine River, and I know that the inclusion of adults in the fitness tax credit concept will really go a long way to assist families as they pursue their healthy living activities.

I also know that citizens of Seine River will benefit from our government's commitment to offer more cottage lots and to introduce legislation to assist cottage owners facing assessment increases.

Our commitment to protect families' financial well-being is another issue that I hear when I speak to constituents of Seine River, and putting together a consumer protection action plan is an important part of that. I know the people of my constituency will be very encouraged to know that making changes to protect their retirements and their homes by making changes to improved protection of their pensions with changes to The Pensions Benefit Act and improving protection of their homes by modernizing The Condominium Act will go a long way, and also the work to develop a new homebuyers' protection act will be of great assistance to the citizens in my community.

One of the issues that my constituents speak about on a regular basis is how important it is to them to keep their young ones safe, and, in particular, parents of adolescents are very concerned about ensuring that their young ones have activities to be involved in that are positive. In those cases, though, Mr. Speaker, where things go wrong in families and young people find themselves in situations that are less than a desirable, knowing that the justice system is there and knowing that there are investments being made to try to keep people, young people, from making poor choices, is a very important—a very important investment as well.

Making amendments to The Family Maintenance Act and to The Domestic Violence and Stalking Act will protect arguably the most vulnerable members of our society and people who find themselves in very dangerous situations when family units break down.

Constituents of mine work very hard and are very committed to social justice, and they'll be very

pleased to hear that, by expanding Tracia's Trust to stop sexual exploitation of children, that we will be able to continue Manitoba's good leadership in this area.

As someone who's spent a significant portion of my career as an educator, I know the difference that education can make, and I also know that ensuring the highest quality of education is an essential part of our government's commitment to young people and to their families. We saw in our Throne Speech references to funding to our primary and secondary education system. We know that that investment is up 37 percent since 1999. My constituents will be delighted to know that Manitoba has the highest expenditures per pupil in Canada, and our class-size ratio is the third lowest. Continuing to invest significant monies in capital infrastructure for our schools is very important.

*(14:50)

We know, as I said at the beginning, that it's all about choice. One can make a choice about what to do during challenging economic times. We know that you can choose, for example, to entirely freeze health capital. We know that you can choose to cut spaces in medical school. We know that you can choose to do away with nurses in the health-care system or you can make choices like investing \$310 million in the school capital program for new schools and for new renovations.

We're also very committed to keeping the doors of post-secondary education wide open by making sure that accessibility is the watch word in the education system. Keeping an eye on tuition fees, providing portions of the tuition rebate up front and investing in capital projects at the University of Manitoba, the University of Winnipeg, Brandon University, Collège universitaire de Saint-Boniface, University College of the North, Assiniboine Community College and Red River College, continuing to make these kinds of investment, arguably the most important investment, that in education, is something that I am very, very proud of and something that I know our government will continue to do as time goes forward.

We know that Manitobans recognize that we are in very challenging economic times, and while Manitoba has fared better than most, it is still a challenging time. Manitobans are looking for the choices that are going to be right for them and right for their family whether their choice is about continuing to grow our health-care work force,

choices about continuing forward on commitments in health-care infrastructure, choices about protecting the most disadvantaged and the most vulnerable and choices about education.

We know that Manitobans need to trust their government on these issues. We know that this is the Throne Speech that demonstrates that that can be done, and I'm very, very proud and I recommend that all members, Mr. Speaker, put their strong support behind this Speech from the Throne. Thank you.

Mr. David Faurichou (Portage la Prairie): I appreciate the opportunity to participate in debate of the proposed amendments to the Throne Speech this afternoon. The Throne Speech is one this government has presented to the—to the Assembly on the opening of the Fourth Session of the Thirty-Ninth Legislature.

I want to make note at the outset as to the Throne Speech and one that I have had opportunity to listen to on a number of occasions through my 11-year tenure in the—in the Assembly, which I'm—I feel most privileged to represent the constituency of Portage la Prairie. This particular Throne Speech, though, is the longest in verbiage and the shortest in actual content of any Throne Speech I have ever had the privilege of listening to first-hand.

Mr. Mohinder Saran, Acting Speaker, in the Chair

Mr. Speaker, years and years of regurgitated promises by this government is getting—wearing rather thin on Manitobans, and I want to—I want to make mention of a number of announcements that this government continues to herald as one of their—as their cornerstone of the New Democratic Party.

You know, I asked not so long ago for an update as to the status of acts of the Legislative Assembly that have been—have been passed and as to their status towards proclamation. You know, again, the Throne Speech made mention—and I hope the Minister of Agriculture (Mr. Struthers) is listening, because in the Throne Speech it spoke about the government's support for organic farming here in Manitoba. Well, truly, what is the difference between fact and fiction? The facts of the matter are is that this government gave a great deal of fanfare to their support for organic farming when they passed, as supported by this side of the House, The Organic Agricultural Products Act. It was passed in 2007, 2007. That entire act, Mr. associate Deputy Speaker, is still in the minister's office on a shelf someplace gathering dust. The entire Organic Agricultural

Products Act has not been proclaimed. That's this government's action. They make all kinds of press releases and all kinds of announcements, but when the rubber really hits the road, I'm afraid the brakes are on. This government is stationary.

So I feel very sorry for individuals like Mary and Susan Black from Deloraine who run an extraordinarily excellent operation, exemplary of organic farming, who feel very slighted, in fact, betrayed by this government because they put their trust in this government to actually do what they said they were gonna do. You know, the average Manitoban is learning that this government is all talk and very, very little action. In fact, they—this province is going backwards because this government is not acting on what it says.

Back in 2006 this government also passed The Pharmaceutical Act. That's still sitting on the shelf, and one—I hope the member for Steinbach (Mr. Goertzen) is listening at this point in time, because it was this side of the House that proposed, that proposed private member's legislation dealing with the testing of bodily fluids here in the province of Manitoba for those front-line emergency workers.

It was proposed by this side of the House in 2007. It was lost on the Order Paper because this government didn't think it was a priority piece of legislation. However, the very next session of the Legislature, the government proposed the identical legislation. Now it was a priority. We all supported the legislation in the House and it had a speedy passage, but what has this government done to that piece of legislation that we all felt in this Chamber was a very important piece of legislation to protect the men and women that serve on the front lines protecting all of us in the province of Manitoba?

This government has taken that entire act and thrown it somewhere, ditched it someplace, because the entire act remains unproclaimed, unproclaimed. That is absolutely abysmal. And I'd look to any member sitting on the government side of the House to stand up and go out to their constituents and say that their police officers, their EMS workers are not protected by legislation because you've thrown it somewhere that you can't find. Anyone on the side of the government wants to come out and debate that in Portage la Prairie, I welcome you to it because this government inaction is jeopardizing the lives of firefighters, EMS workers and police officers here in the province of Manitoba.

Let's go on and let's just see the entire acts, The Witness Security Act. Once again the Minister of Justice brought this forward and said it was a vitally important piece of legislation, and it had to go through this House in a speedy and short time frame. Two years, still sitting on the shelf somewhere unproclaimed.

Many sections of The Victims' Rights Amendment Act are not yet proclaimed. You know, it would go on and on and on. I know the government makes a lot of verbiage on The Gas Tax Accountability Act. Yet that's not fully proclaimed yet. Why not?

* (15:00)

Back to 2004, the Minister of Labour brought forward The Provincial Railways Amendment Act dealing with rail line abandonment and carryover of union rights. Well, that whole act hasn't been proclaimed either. You know, we've—again, it was proclaimed by the now-First Minister that The Life Leases Amendment Act was a very important piece of legislation, and one that all of us should support, yet there are sections within that act of the Legislative Assembly have yet to be proclaimed.

I can just go on and on and on. You know, and—but I want to make one particular mention of just one more act that it's—that went through the process of being passed by the Manitoba Legislative Assembly, then forgotten by this government: The Personal Investigations Amendment Act, an act to protect identity, preserve one's identity, something that we've all spoken about, is very important to each and every one of us in the Chamber and throughout the province. That entire act is still sitting somewhere in the minister's office, collecting dust. It's shameful. It truly is shameful, and yet this government wants to stand up with a Throne Speech and make mention, time after time after time, of how much progress has been made in this province. *[interjection]*

Yes, yes, the honourable member for Burrows (Mr. Martindale) recognizes and understands, and still, yet, he sits on the side of the government and wants to—wants to—wants to say that it's an excellent track record that he supports.

Well, let's just examine what actually progress has been made. I remember 10 years ago, the predecessor to the honourable member that now represents the constituency of Riel stood in this House and blamed the past administration that

Winnipeg is known as the poverty capital of Canada—10, 11 years later, what's changed? Winnipeg is still the poverty—child poverty capital of Canada. According to statistics that I have just recently announced, the government—[interjection]

I say, I'm receiving a little bit of heckling from the other side. It's a—it's a sore spot. It's a—it's an embarrassment; more children in care today than at any other time in the history of the province. A real proud statistic.

Now this government wants to say that they truly are supporting Manitobans, and we heard through question period here today that 270 families in Pine Falls and the type of support that this government actually provided. Very disappointing.

And that's support for those most vulnerable in our society, those that are identified with addictions. What is this government doing? They found all kinds of money, and we just announced another—a million dollars that they found for consultative process now—and out in Pine Falls—miraculously found over \$5 million for a piece of property next to Gordon Bell High School here in the city of Winnipeg. Yet, just down the street, about four or five blocks, you'll find the Addictions Foundation of Manitoba with a notice on their door saying that they are closing for the holiday season because of lack of resources.

I don't know what this government really, truly is thinking. The Addictions Foundation of Manitoba and anyone that you speak with, this is a—this is a type—time of year when people do feel the pressures of the season, being one about family, and when family break-ups and relationships are a problem. This is the time when people need supports, and it is enhanced and exaggerated through addiction, and this government is taking that support away. Truly, I am amazed.

The member for Minto (Mr. Swan) that just spoke earlier as Justice portfolio, he stated that so proud this government's—is funds 80 police officers—the City of Winnipeg. However, if you go to the City of Winnipeg and ask about the status of that support for those 80 police officers, what this government has done is made the announcement and say they support 80 police officers, yet there's no provision for the increase in wages, inflation that does take place and the enhanced benefits that are most deserving of those that put themselves in harm's way to protect our rights.

So the City of Winnipeg is left to pick up the difference as years progress and wages increase along with benefits. It puts an additional strain on the City of Winnipeg to maintain those 80 police officers, and yet, this government continues to say that they fund 80 police officers. That is so far from the truth. If we examine exactly what this government is funding, it's far less than—and if you put them in perspective of full cost per police officer, it's far, far less than 80 police officers. So this Minister of Justice (Mr. Swan) is attempting to mislead the government, mislead members of this Legislative Assembly, mislead Manitobans. I hope that he is not that poorly read that he is not understanding of how the process works. So I hope that before he makes another statement to that effect, that he indeed wants to correct the record.

This government also goes on to say about how proactive they are in protecting the environment. Protecting the environment. My constituency of Portage la Prairie, the University of Manitoba has, since 1966, operated a year-round facility dedicated to the environment. A short two weeks ago—oh, I guess it would be three weeks ago, now, that facility's—announced closure was made. Very, very disappointing. And I know this government says that it is the responsibility of the University of Manitoba to make a decision as to how their capital plans are expended, but when a decision is made that not only impacts the studies of the students of the University of Manitoba, and indeed, visiting students from around the world, it also has a responsibility to the residents of Manitoba through the research that is done so that we can better identify the problems facing the environment here in Manitoba and, most notably, our most vital resource, that being water.

I hope that the decision is reversed. I know that there have been modifications to the original decision. The field station will now keep the heat on. The field station will now be under the direct supervision, 24/7, of staff onsite. So that was two concerns. However, the winter bookings and winter programming have yet to be reinitiated and are currently—status is that of being not available.

* (15:10)

I also want to make mention of this government once again making statements that never come true. The former first minister made a lot of the announcement by the federal government of a sum of money—I believe \$30 million was the amount that was transferred to Manitoba for the initiation of

another national park here in Manitoba, the Manitoba Lowlands Park, national park. The Premier made great verbiage over the announcement by the federal government and the opening of an office by the federal government to enhance the workings of creating a new national park. The First Minister went even further to say that public consultations were gonna commence within a few short weeks. You know when that announcement was made? That announcement was made over six years ago. Can I ask the honourable member for the Interlake whether or not any public consultations have taken place in his constituency? I know the answer to the—to the question I just proposed.

An Honourable Member: Does that mean it's rhetorical?

Mr. Faurshou: Yes—the answer is, no, there have never been a public consultation meeting held in regards to the lowlands park in the Interlake of Manitoba.

I also—I also want to make mention of a very—well, what I believe—important policy here in the province of Manitoba, being that we are the only province in all of Canada that does not have a deposit return program for beverage containers, other than that of beer bottles. I put forward a resolution asking the government to consider putting forward a comprehensive program. I was—the policy was referred to as being a bonehead idea. I believe honourable member for Wellington and his debate of the resolution and the statement was made that this government was coming forward with a much more comprehensive recycling program in very short time. You know, that's been three years now. Three years now.

An Honourable Member: I think you got his name wrong.

Mr. Faurshou: Oh, I'm sorry. I'm sorry.

An Honourable Member: The constituency wrong.

Mr. Faurshou: Mr. Altemeyer, I'm afraid I—

Some Honourable Members: Order.

Some Honourable Members: Wolseley.

Mr. Faurshou: Wolseley. Thank you.

I withdraw, Mr. Assistant Deputy Speaker, the reference to the honourable member for Wolseley. It was—and apologize to the honourable member for Wellington, but it was the honourable member for

Wolseley that thought my resolution was a bonehead idea.

Now what this government has gone on to do essentially is nothing. The glass containers continue to litter our roadsides, along with the aluminum drink cans. We see all kinds of other beverage containers hitting our landfills that could very well be recycled, but this government's inaction is indicative of their I-don't-care attitude, but when it comes to press releases, it's totally different. This is do as I say, not as I do. And this government is so woefully, woefully irresponsible, as far as showing leadership here in the province of Manitoba, and once again, we have had another example in regards to recycling, and I know the honourable member, Wolseley, thinks it's a poor idea to recycle here in the province of Manitoba, even though the nine other provinces of Canada all have a comprehensive deposit recycle program and have reduced millions and millions of kilograms of recyclable products from hitting the landfills. But this government says they care about the environment, but, once again, their action speaks louder than their words, and I hope Manitoba voters once again will have—will realize how this government operates.

They talk about it and they talk about that all of their improvements to fundamental programs here in the province of Manitoba, and I think to the announcement that there would be no more hallway medicine. And then—and then to speak with a charge nurse in an emergency room that says that there is a count done each day to figure out how many patients are actually in the hallways of emergency rooms of our provincial hospitals, and that she quit when she was forced by administration to effectively push a patient into a closet, a storage room for crutches, a storage room for the crutches, so that when the administrator walked the hallway of the emergency ward, they wouldn't see anybody on gurneys in the, in the hallways. And less than five minutes after that walk-through and the count was done, the hallway was full of patients again, and yet the First Minister came into the House and said, we have beaten hallway medicine. What a farce. What a joke.

You know, it's beyond my own understanding of the games that the NDP play with the minds of Manitobans when they stuff somebody in the crutch room just so they don't have to put a tick mark on a count of having persons in the hallway. And so now we see that our emergency medical services personnel waiting hours and hours because of the triage and the rating of individuals before they get to

see a doctor in our emergency rooms around the province. And so the ambulance personnel are stuck waiting with the transport victim or patient, and are out of service, unavailable for other emergency services. And I will say there are times here in the city of Winnipeg, having spoken with ambulance emergency and medical services personnel, there are times where there are no standby ambulances. Every single ambulance is deployed. There is no—*[interjection]* There is no—and rural ambulances are exactly the same way when they come through. So it's very, very disappointing to see.

But, upon closing, I would like to end on a very high note. Being from the, from rural background and a very proud farmer here in the province of Manitoba I want to state, and to all members present in the Legislative Assembly, the province of Manitoba is home to Canada's most outstanding young farm couple. They were recognized in Ottawa this past weekend, Colleen and Grant Dyck of Niverville, Manitoba, are this year's Canada's outstanding young farm couple. They proudly represented Manitoba, and they are one of the leading farms in the province of Manitoba, operating Artel Farms, a 13,000 acre grain and oil seed operation in Niverville—in Niverville, Manitoba.

So I want to state on behalf of all members of the Manitoba Legislative Assembly, a hearty well-done and congratulations on that note of it.

Mr. Drew Caldwell (Brandon East): It's a privilege indeed to rise this afternoon to put a few words on the record concerning the Speech from the Throne. Before beginning my remarks, I would like to thank my constituency and the people who live in it, in Brandon East, for returning me to the Legislature these last few years. Brandon East is a very proud and dynamic constituency, Mr. Speaker. The folks who live in Brandon East are active citizens, and it's a true privilege to be of their number.

The Speech from the Throne that was introduced this year continues a record of balanced governance in this province, Mr. Speaker. It represents a continuance in being sure-footed as a government, responsible as a government and, above all else, placing the strong management of the provincial economy and the province as a whole at the, at the top of our priority—as a top priority.

* (15:20)

The local media in Brandon, Mr. Speaker, particularly my friends at the *Brandon Sun* have been

somewhat critical of this particular Throne Speech in terms of what was raised in the speech with regard to Brandon. I, myself, characterize the speech as a, as a prudent speech, and, indeed, it was a prudent speech which is—which is appropriate, given the global financial circumstances that we find ourselves in in December of 2009.

Mr. Speaker, at a time when the federal Conservative government is running into the red, a deficit of over \$50 billion—

An Honourable Member: Fifty-six billion.

Mr. Caldwell: —\$56 billion, precisely, my colleague advises me a \$56-billion deficit from the federal Conservative government, when other governments throughout the world are running massive deficits. We've got provinces running several billion dollars in the red. We've got state jurisdictions and provincial jurisdictions running in the red. *[interjection]* My colleague from La Verendrye advises me there are 12 state governments who are flirting with bankruptcy as we speak, Mr. Speaker.

In that environment when the federal Conservative government is running a \$56-billion deficit, when other Conservative administrations and Liberal administrations and democratic and republican administrations around the hemisphere are running massive deficits, Mr. Speaker, I am proud and our government is proud and, indeed, Manitobans are pleased that this government is balancing its books, is not running deficits, is not running into the red. In fact, we are again in the black. We've had 10 successive balanced budgets. We've had numerous credit increases and bond rating increases and favourable comments from international financial experts, banks, and bond and lending agencies around North America have been praising Manitoba for its strongly managed, prudent, fiscal approach to governing.

So, Mr. Speaker, I'm very proud to be a representative of a party that believes in strong fiscal management, believes in not only in talking the talk, but walking the walk. It's very easy to say that you're a strong fiscal manager, it's another thing entirely to actually—to actually be a strong fiscal manager. So, when I see those of other parties who are quite sanctimonious and self-righteous in proclaiming their expertise at being strong fiscal managers running multibillion-dollar deficits, I think the truth will out always, and, in fact, the truth is, in Manitoba, that this government is a leader in the world in terms of

fiscal management and providing strong fiscal management and I'm very, very proud of that fact.

And Manitobans, Mr. Speaker, are reaping the benefits of that fact, given that our economy is performing quite well and that our books are balanced and our debt payments are continuing on the deficits run up by previous administrations and, you know, our government is faring quite well and our province is faring quite well because of the strong fiscal management that our government has made a hallmark of its administration since 1999.

So, Mr. Speaker, it—this was a very prudent Throne Speech and, as I say, it was one that continues a series of prudent Throne Speeches over the last decade.

Now, my friends—my friends in the print media in Brandon, and I won't name them in person just to save myself from being beat up, I suppose, a little bit, but also to not identify individuals. There was criticism about this Throne Speech in terms of Brandon and western Manitoba in not being mentioned enough and not getting enough from the Province of Manitoba in terms of this Throne Speech.

I would say to them to be patient and wait for the budget speech which is coming up this coming spring, and I would also say to them that we have never, as a government, managed on an election cycle or a year-by-year sort of program. I know that governments, historically, have run on the election cycle, the four-year election cycle, and made their big promises to buy the vote, as it were, from the electorate. But, Mr. Speaker, our business plan has always been one that reflected the realities of the particular business plan that we were pursuing.

So, in the case, for example, in Brandon, of Assiniboine Community College, the business plan for the development of that college on Brandon's North Hill—a college, incidentally, which will make Brandon home to the most architecturally outstanding college probably in Canada, certainly in western Canada if not of all of Canada—that business plan, Mr. Speaker, is an eight- to 12- to 15-year business plan. It's not a four-year business plan.

And in fact, Mr. Speaker, as I speak—as I speak here right now to the Throne Speech, we have under way about little over half done the \$50-million Len Evans Centre of Trades and Technology which is being built right now, as we—as we debate the Throne Speech—in Brandon on Brandon's North Hill.

That's the second phase of the Assiniboine Community College development at the former BMHC campus on the North Hill. The first phase, of course, was the Manitoba Institute of Culinary Arts which has been up and running for a couple of years now, the finest institute of culinary arts in the country with the—with world-class infrastructure providing young students in Manitoba and from elsewhere in the province and the country, indeed, with the best opportunities for education available in this country.

That's a real feather in the cap of Brandon and, you know, as we're discussing this Throne Speech and I'm making reference to my friends in the local media, it's worth noting that \$50 million right this second is being invested at Assiniboine Community College on the North Hill of Brandon.

As well, Mr. Speaker, it's worth noting that, in addition to that \$50 million on a global—in a global perspective right now as we speak—and this is for the benefit of my friends who are critical of this particular Throne Speech. There's approximately \$200 million right this minute being invested in Brandon. That is the highest level of investment at any one time in the history of that community. That community was founded in 1882, so you can do your math—the math yourself. It's the largest investment, currently, ever, to take place in the history of the city of Brandon.

And I'll review some of that investment right now just for the benefit of my friends who were critical of the Throne Speech which, as I said, was a very prudent, as it should've been, Throne Speech, but it's worth—it's worth noting the investment dollars that are currently being expended in Brandon.

I mentioned the Len Evans Centre for Trades and Technology. I'll move from the post-secondary institution of Brandon's North Hill to the post-secondary institution on 18th Street in Brandon, and that's Brandon University, where we have several million dollars being invested in the relocation and redevelopment of the physical power plant which is required, Mr. Speaker, so that Brandon University can grow in the future.

The power plant had reached its capacity for the current infrastructure of Brandon University and some of that infrastructure was built in—under the, under the guidance of this government. I speak to the Health Studies Complex in the school for Aboriginal counselling, Mr. Speaker, that we built earlier in our term. But Brandon University, in terms of its growth,

had reached its capacity—its capacity for the power plant that previously existed in the university. So, earlier this year, we committed to and invested in, and are now seeing the construction of the new physical plant at Brandon University, which is, as I said, worth several million dollars.

As well, we've upgraded, along with our federal partners, the Internet capacity and the high-tech capacity of Brandon University which is a program that is taking place right now, as we speak, to the tune of several million dollars.

So, on the post-secondary front, Mr. Speaker, it's a little over 500—or \$50 million. It's a little over \$50 million right now that's being invested in Brandon. And I would suggest that my colleague, the Minister for Advanced Education (Ms. McGifford) is indeed a very good minister, and she's one of two that we have had since coming to office in 1999. And I'm pleased that I was able to be, to be the first, the first of that duo back at the beginning of this decade. So we've had a very strong continuity in terms of ministers of post-secondary education since coming to office.

* (15:30)

Leaving the post-secondary area in Brandon, Mr. Speaker, we should go to health care right now where we've got a \$12-million expansion of the Westman Lab under way right this second in Brandon as well as \$30 million—\$28 million, I believe, precisely, but a \$28-million CancerCare Manitoba treatment centre in Brandon, taking place right this minute as we debate the Throne Speech.

Both of these initiatives build upon the over \$100 million that have been invested in the Brandon Regional Health Centre since we came to office in 1999, commencing, of course, with the \$50-million development of the Brandon Regional Health Centre itself and then moving through, gaining western Manitoba's first MRI suite, the expansion of CT scan ability in the community, the replacement of the entire ambulance fleet, not only in Brandon, but in the entire province, which benefits every single community in western Manitoba. We've got the linear accelerator which is going to be a centre component of the CancerCare Manitoba treatment centre at the Brandon Regional Health Centre, which will provide, for the first time in Manitoba history, the opportunity for people to access chemotherapy and advanced cancer treatment outside of the city of Winnipeg which benefits every single family and every single person in western Manitoba. These are

initiatives that are taking place right this moment as we debate the Throne Speech.

Mr. Speaker, moving from health care to—let's go to infrastructure next because I'm joined by my two colleagues, the member from Thompson and the member from La Verendrye, who are both ministers responsible for providing resources for the critical investment in infrastructure that we need in Brandon.

Right now we've got a little over \$5.5 million being invested in construction and redevelopment of First Street along side the Assiniboine Community College campus on Brandon's North Hill. We're twinning the roadway, twinning First Street, providing new intersections on First Street, providing median corridors for traffic safety for that very important and increasingly busy street with the huge investment in our post-secondary infrastructure at Assiniboine Community College, the increased traffic that is taking place as a result of that investment.

Moving over a mile to the west, we've got a \$30-million investment in the twinned Assiniboine River Valley—River bridges—a \$28 million precisely, on the bridges and a couple million dollars of ancillary investment in the twinning of 18th Street up the North Hill and further south on 18th Street. Those twin bridges are very, very important, Mr. Speaker, primarily due to a decision made by a previous City administration to place a box-store complex on the—at the corner of Kirkcaldy and 18th Street. So we needed to be able to provide the investment to twin those bridges to help with the growth of Brandon and, specifically, the decision by City Council to place those box stores at that particular location in the community.

Mr. Speaker, we've got a further \$30-million—\$28-million investment, currently, right now as we speak, under way in the Eastern Access Route into Brandon which is very, very important with the industrial traffic into the eastern segment of the city of Brandon. We want that industrial traffic off of city streets, away from residential neighbourhoods and as a consequence of that, as we speak right now, there is \$28-million worth of work taking place on developing the Eastern Access Route from the Trans-Canada Highway through to the Assiniboine River.

There's a major underpass that's taking place at the mainline of the Canadian Pacific Railway tracks as part of that investment in infrastructure.

So let's—if we add up those figures, Mr. Speaker, it's a little over \$60 million in roadway infrastructure right this moment that's being invested in the city of Brandon to contribute to the further development of my home community.

Mr. Speaker, we'll move from there. Let's move from there to neighbourhood renewal and development just a little, and to talk about some of these major investments in our residential communities in Brandon, which make a real difference in the quality of people's lives as they live day in and day out in the city of Brandon. And I'll just, off the top of my head, make reference to the Massey Harris Building, a major affordable housing initiative, a partnership between Habitat for Humanity, the Brandon Friendship Centre and the Canadian Mental Health Association, which will provide over 50 affordable housing units of all levels, ranging from condominium apartments supported by Habitat for Humanity, through moderate-income to low-income housing, being made available through the Canadian Mental Health Association and the Brandon Friendship Centre. That's a major retrofit of a historic warehouse building in downtown Brandon. The Massey building has been part of Brandon since the turn of the century, and seeing this new investment in that building, providing affordable housing for people in Brandon, contributing to the redevelopment and revitalization of downtown Brandon, it's just—it's a very, very positive investment of some \$500 million to support the extraordinarily—extraordinary good work of Habitat for Humanity, the Canadian Mental Health Association and the Brandon Friendship Centre.

Mr. Speaker, we've also got, on the—on the housing front, a multifamily housing development that is taking place in the north end of Brandon. It is a complex that is much needed. We very much need more family housing in Brandon, affordable housing, family housing in Brandon. The—that project is being managed through the Manitoba housing corporation, the first such investment in probably a decade that MHRC has been involved with, and that's a very positive development for housing in the north end of Brandon.

Mr. Speaker, in terms of neighbourhood renewal, we continue to fund the Brandon Neighbourhood Renewal Corporation through Neighbourhoods Alive!, and those investments are seeing huge benefits for individual businesses, individual home-owners and, broadly speaking, for

core-area renewal in the city of Brandon. I know that we are retrofitting hundreds of homes, low-income homes and apartments, through the BEEP program in Brandon, a program supported by Manitoba Hydro and the Brandon Neighbourhood Renewal Corporation, whereby energy efficiency is brought to homes where their owners could not typically afford to provide for such things as efficient furnaces, efficient water tanks, water efficiency through toilets and insulation programs, thus saving those who need the money the most, saving several thousands of dollars in heating costs and water costs and so forth for low-income Brandonites who are getting a benefit from having their homes retrofitted through this program.

So, Mr. Speaker, this was a very prudent Throne Speech, as is—as is appropriate for this time of economic uncertainty in the—in the world but most importantly for my friends in Brandon who were critical of this speech, it's worth noting that over \$200 million is presently being invested in the city of Brandon, and that investment is the largest investment that that city has ever seen in its history, and it very proud to stand with a government that believes in being prudent and believes in investing in communities for the future.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Cliff Graydon (Emerson): Mr. Speaker, and I certainly have to commend the former speaker, the member for Brandon East. We've wondered where all that money has gone, and now we know; it's all in one riding. It would have been nice to share, but it's obvious that he's not interested in sharing. He certainly didn't indicate that at all, but on to the more important business of speaking to the amendment today.

As the—as the Premier (Mr. Selinger) of the province, as the new Premier, one could expect a somewhat lacklustre Throne Speech, and I might say I wasn't disappointed. However, Manitobans expected and deserved a lot more, considering that this Premier has brought in 10 budgets as the former Finance Minister. He truly is not a rookie; however, he presented a rookie Throne Speech.

* (15:40)

The Premier is well aware that he and the NDP government have depended heavily on a transfer funds from the federal government to balance a budget in Manitoba, until 2008-2009, when they spent \$900 million more than they earned. The

Premier insists that it was a balanced budget, but Manitobans are not that easily fooled, and they know full well the Premier is not being forthright and/or transparent with them. They also know that he can't be trusted to do the right thing when push comes to shove and his self-interest is on the line, and, yes, I'm referring to the election rebate scam that he and many of his colleagues were involved in to defraud the Manitoba taxpayers of \$75,000, Mr. Speaker.

The Premier should have shown leadership, and people of Manitoba expected more. They expected a vision for Manitoba, a road map, Mr. Speaker. A road map that would have—would have allowed them—the Province—to attain the economic well-being that is possible in this great province, and will only be attainable with the Conservative government under the leadership of Hugh McFadyen. *[interjection]*

Mr. Speaker, this great province—this great province is not called the Keystone Province for nothing. We are the gateway to the east and to the west, and have the busiest port of entry from the south, through my constituency at Emerson, west of Port Erie.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Saran): Honourable member—he called the honourable member by name, but he should have called by the constituency.

An Honourable Member: He said—he should have said Fort Whyte—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Saran): Fort Whyte.

Mr. Graydon: Oh, I'll withdraw that, and I'll refer to that as Fort Whyte, Mr. Speaker. I apologize.

But, Mr. Speaker, west of Fort Erie, the busiest port coming into the Keystone Province is the Emerson port in the constituency of Emerson, which I represent. I say to you today that we could do so much more, and for that, Manitobans could and should prosper. But the Premier took the low road. He chose to re-announce many things that had been announced several times. Be it for—before he chose to blame the federal government for some of his woes, as the former Finance Minister he chose not to recognize the mistakes he has made over the last number of years.

He ignored the crisis in Manitoba Hydro, a portfolio he held for a number of years that was created by him under his watch. What a tragedy—what a tragedy that turns out to be. He—when he

omitted Manitoba Hydro in his first Throne Speech, when he clearly had a full insight to what was happening, as he had at least 26 previous meetings with the chairman of the board, who was appointed by him, he would have or should have known that there was—that the 203,000 dividend that he and the NDP government took from Manitoba Hydro was borrowed money. It wasn't money that they had in their purses, it was borrowed money, Mr. Speaker. The Hydro building, while a grand structure, went from being \$75 million to build to \$230 million and counting.

And that \$160 million consulting fees for Wuskwatim was outrageous; and the Bipole III line, down the west side at the cost of in excess of a half a billion dollars, and probably runs into a billion and a billion and half by the time it's built, Mr. Speaker. It's simply mismanagement and a waste of money that can only be paid by Manitobans over many, many, many, many years. It will be our great grandchildren that pay for that boondoggle.

Still, Mr. Speaker, he stood in this House, and said to Manitobans, a flat economic line is good, at the same time telling the people of our great province that they needed to tighten their belts. This is hypocrisy at the highest level: a man elected by a handful of people who knowingly excluded—who knowingly excluded and barred many from participating in the leadership process, who has played fast and loose with the finances of the province of Manitoba Hydro and—of the Province and Manitoba Hydro—and who claims to be the champion of the average person, of the little guy, telling the working people, you must pay more and expect less. That's hypocrisy.

Mr. Speaker, I've tried hard to be positive up to this point, but I believe I have an obligation to all Manitobans, and especially to those that are—elected me to point out the deficits and the short-sightedness of this truly shameful document that has been brought before this House as the Throne Speech.

What hasn't been talked about, Mr. Speaker, is the sad state of agriculture. The devastating effects of BSE, the meltdown in the pork industry due to the country-of-origin labelling, the non-tariff barriers being thrown up by different countries on our grain industry. He never addressed the issue of how poorly the former minister handled any of the issues or how the new minister—how the new minister may do something different and useful.

The new Minister of Agriculture—of Agriculture—has already informed the House he doesn't need advice from the hobby farmers opposite, as he put it or from holding an agricultural committee. What the new minister really said was that he has no regard for rural Manitobans, for farmers and for the fact that he doesn't recognize that they're all businessmen is despicable. It only shows that his ineptness of the minister and a poor choice by the Premier (Mr. Selinger). He could well have picked a member from the Interlake, the member from the Interlake, as Minister of Ag. After all, his riding was seriously affected first by BSE, then by drought, then by severe flooding for two consecutive years. Through all of this the member who was made a fool of by first the Minister of Agriculture by dragging her feet to roll out programs to help the people to help the livestock producers, until one-third had left the industry.

He was also made a fool of by the Minister for Conservation. The Minister of Conservation who added more hurt with his first moratorium on hog production and then his ill-conceived plan to deal with domestic water solutions, Mr. Speaker, and to add to that, the Minister for Water Stewardship also tried to make a fool of him by not addressing the drainage issues that were necessary in the Interlake for many, many years, didn't address them, didn't bother going up there to find out what was going on. These three top ministers, the top ministers continued to show that they did not have a grasp of the situation and made a fool of the member of the Interlake who provided little doubt, I might add, as he went from community praising the very same people, shamefully displaying an indifference to the plight of all rural Manitobans in his riding. It is not that we're not ready, willing, and able to give advice to the Minister of Agriculture (Mr. Struthers). We were there from the beginning to help him with facts. They simply didn't care and continued to mismanage.

What else didn't we hear? We didn't hear—we didn't hear how MPI was running a deficit in excess of \$30 million providing a service for the government of Manitoba issuing drivers' licence and vehicle registrations, in excess of \$30 million and I can say that that's well documented. We didn't hear that MPI had wasted \$14 million on an enhanced ID card, an enhanced ID card that nobody in the province wanted, Mr. Minister, or Mr. Speaker, and that no one wanted. We also didn't hear what more money will be wasted on enhanced driver's licence

that no one wants either. We didn't hear that in the speech. We didn't hear that there would be a fiscal management practices introduced to deal with losses, that both programs would be scrapped.

What we did hear was that the PUB would not get to see all of the books of the Crown corporations. This is an alarming trend, Mr. Speaker, as the same holds true for Manitoba Hydro, who also refuses the order of the PUB. If the PUB is not able to do their job, then perhaps the Premier (Mr. Selinger) will rethink the need for their existence and do away with that, and that would be a cost-cutting measure, and of course he could promise that he would do a good job without it.

What we didn't hear was that more attention would be paid to people with gambling addictions or alcohol addictions. In fact, what we have seen is an aggressive approach to marketing. In casinos we see Atlantic-type promotions, ATM machines moved right into the casinos, Mr. Speaker. This here was only two years ago or three years ago that a member opposite said that will never happen. We would never sanction that, but, no, today we're doing that because we're addicted—we're addicted to the funds that come from the casino, aren't we, members opposite? Right next to slot machines you will find the ATM machines, reward point programs, and the more you gamble the more points you get.

* (15:50)

At MLCC outlets, we see aggressive advertising. We see much—and sales pitches with AIR MILES. What we also see is the government's addiction to the proceeds of gaming and alcohol; what we don't see is any measurable amount of support for those that are addicted.

We also don't see any support for the harness racing association of Manitoba. What we do see is lip service being paid to the industry.

What we didn't see or hear in the Throne Speech is the solution to the—to the 17 rural ERs closed, and more pending. We didn't hear or see timeliness of all capital commitments. We didn't see a vision to create a health-care system that Manitobans could be confident in. We didn't see or hear how the long, extended wait times would be addressed or how the hallways would be emptied. Ten years ago it was simple to end the hallway medicine, but there seems to be a credibility gap. Dreams of the past premier and the reality of the current Premier (Mr. Selinger) are a long way apart. All we hear was that the current

Premier's (Mr. Selinger) patting himself on the back, while not even maintaining the status quo.

Manitobans expect a lot more, and they deserve a lot more from these members opposite. No acknowledgement of long wait periods for diagnostic tests, appointments with specialists or surgeries and more importantly, no strategy to bring the wait lists down. Nothing, nothing to improve access to addiction treatment, where Manitobans often face long wait periods to get into a much-needed residential programs, Mr. Speaker, and where those same Manitobans will face a holiday shutdown of the AFM for the first time ever because of the mismanagement of this government. Of this government, mismanagement means that people cannot get help during a very critical time in their life.

The Addictions Foundation has even forced—been forced to pull many of its resources out of schools, and this should be a concern for those members opposite here in the city of Winnipeg, where they have large schools and where this is a lot of drug abuse, known drug abuse and addiction problems. And this is the place that it should be addressed, Mr. Speaker. They've been—the AFM has been forced to pull the resources out of there by the lack of money made available, and the former Minister of Education, sitting there shaking his noggin, he should have been the guy standing up, saying we need that money in our schools, but he didn't. He never took that opportunity to say that privately or publicly.

Mr. Speaker, despite the Premier's—despite the Premier's pledge to focus on preventative health care during his leadership campaign, that topic was currently absent from the Throne Speech, curiously absent. This gives Manitobans more reason to doubt NDP's willingness or ability to keep its promises.

And, Mr. Speaker, we'll go on to the infrastructure. And I should be quite thankful that Vic Toews, our member from Provencher, our federal member, the Treasury Board president, came to the rescue of the Emerson constituency. And he made the former Minister of Transportation look like a hero, and he did. He was—he looked like a hero, too, when he came up with his 17 and a half million dollars, and we're thankful. We are eternally grateful, and if you can sell that bridge to Brandon West for \$20 million as he has said today in the House, he's getting a bridge for 20 million, more good on you,

and you should be the premier of the province. That goes without saying.

But on the other hand, the NDP government is forcing the City of Winnipeg to waste tens of millions of dollars on treating waste water for nitrogen. Now, it was raised here in the House by one of the members today in a question, and the Premier did a very poor job of answering the question, Mr. Speaker. It's clear that science has indicated that the—that the nitrogen is not an issue, and that a half a billion dollars to remove it would be a waste of money. But that half a billion dollars could be put to good use. It could be put to opening up our ERs. It could be put to good use of putting back the AFM's resources back into the schools to deal with—deal with issues such as addictions and drug abuse. It could be used for fixing our streets. It could be used for our crumbling highways. It could be used in the Interlake for drainage—it could be, but it isn't going to be. They're going to waste the money on nitrogen removal.

The requirement—the requirement, even though dozens of respected scientists have warned that, quote, removing nitrogen will, at best, do nothing, and, at worst, increase the dominance of the filamentous nitrogen-fixing cyanobacteria, and that the public face, eutrophication—whatever that word might be, eutrophication in Lake Winnipeg and in many other lakes.

These same scientists—these same scientists suggest, and I quote, resources intended for nitrogen reduction would be better spent on comprehensive management strategy for phosphorus in Lake Winnipeg, Lake Winnipeg watershed, especially in the Red River basin, end quote.

Now, Mr. Speaker, when we talk about the phosphorus, let's talk about that, let's talk about the money that the NDP say, we're really interested in cleaning up the lake. We want to do things scientifically. They have taken away every bit of R&D money to remove phosphorus from the fields south of Winnipeg. What they did is, they put on a moratorium that killed an industry, but they would not address the problem. They would not address it, used science to find out, to do the R&D, to find out how to move that phosphorus to where it could be used somewhere else.

Phosphorus is an expensive additive to any crop that we grow, Mr. Speaker. That phosphorus could be mined and could be moved, but the R&D money has been removed from rural Manitoba, from the

universities. Their concern outside the Perimeter is that much. Nothing. Zero.

Mr. Speaker, if they would—would've stepped up to the plate, I think that we could've had an industry here that would've been very viable and would have, and did in the past, generate more money than Manitoba Hydro. This past September, *Winnipeg Free Press* pointed out that, when it comes to nitrogen removal debate, this NDP government has, and I quote, has shown its resilience to reason and science. We, on this side of the House, know that. We have seen it daily here.

Some of the places that money could be spent upgrading, and money that they could have saved, Mr. Speaker, for example, would be upgrading the wastewater facilities in our provincial parks. And we see now the Minister of Agriculture (Mr. Struthers), who was the former Minister of Conservation, had every opportunity to do that, but, no, he didn't.

We received a video from the Whiteshell showing that in the vicinity of Dorothy Lake, the lagoon was over capacity in July. It was over capacity the year before in his—in his—under his watch, Mr. Speaker, and the year before that. But he never addressed it. They moved him because he had so many things piled up against him that he hadn't done.

Overflowing sewage from the—from the lagoon made its way to the public beach at Dorothy Lake where people were swimming and fishing. They didn't know that it was there, Mr. Speaker, that even though he knew that there was a problem, he didn't address it and nor did he monitor it. That is not right; it should have been done. Where was that minister? And where was he today when the question was asked? He just sat back and grinned 'cause he had a new portfolio with a bunch of people that have no faith in him.

The next—the next issue, Mr. Speaker, that was not—was not in the—in the budget is the wind, and today when the question was asked to the Premier—or to the Finance Minister today, she said, we're in a downturn. We're in a downturn in 20,009. They talked about wind for four years. They talked about it. They never produced—they never produced any. They have failed Manitobans.

* (16:00)

And then, today, they stood in the House here today and said, oh well, that company went broke, but now we're negotiating with a different company.

What happened to the other 18 companies that put forward proposals? Why aren't they talking to them as well? As the minister refused to answer the questions today in the House whether she would be financing it, but she did say, when we were in committee, that she was in negotiations with this company. Why couldn't she confirm that she had—she had actually got this company in place to build the 138 megawatts of power, the downsizing of the power from the 300 that was promised two years ago by the then-premier of this province, who now is in a lot of greener pastures, Mr. Speaker, and I don't think he's really concerned about the green power at all in Manitoba. I think he jumped ship at the right time.

And so, with those few words, Mr. Speaker—*[interjection]* I'll have a drink of water then, but with those few words I will let someone from the opposition, the members across the road, I'll let some of them stand up and refute what I've said today. It's difficult to refute, and if you do, we will be there to watch, and we will use it out of *Hansard*. Thank you.

Mr. Rob Altemeyer (Wolseley): Mr. Speaker, I can hardly refuse a generous offer like that to have a chance to stand up and correct the record, which has been so badly broken in the last 20 minutes or so, and re-establish a measure of factual information and a positive outlook on Manitoba, rather than the doom and gloom that just seems to permeate our poor members opposite. There's just absolutely nothing in the world that seems to get them excited about anything that is in any way positive.

I don't know how you can actually be a Conservative person and espouse that type of perspective and believe that people in Manitoba are gonna support that. I mean, basically, if your starting point is you don't believe in government and you don't want it to do a good job and you promise to do a lousy job of it if you get the job, the people of Manitoba are not going to give you that job.

I hope you continue to—I hope you continue to keep that doom and gloom outlook as we certainly see a lot of excellent work being done by the people of Manitoba in partnership with ourselves and in their communities, and with my comments on the Throne Speech, which I thought was excellent, a very challenging year to be sure. But you can see very clearly a consistent commitment to the environment, a consistent commitment to making our society more equal so that everyone has opportunities that they deserve to have, and a consistent focus on the economy, which, of course, is

one of the engines whereby all of us can achieve a better—a better life.

And I'll actually start with some comments on the economy. As our Premier (Mr. Selinger) has correctly noted, flat is the new up when it comes to traditional measurements of economic growth. Our GDP calculations for this year are predicted to be the best in the country, and they are predicted to be flat. And this is due in large part to the nature of Manitoba's economy, but I think our government initiatives have helped us achieve that No. 1 ranking as well.

We have a very diverse economy, as everyone knows. That means that as the ripple effects of a traumatic event like a worldwide recession, it takes a longer period of time for all of the different sectors which do so well in Manitoba to feel those impacts. So we're the last ones to enter into a recession, and we don't experience it as deeply as other very exposed jurisdictions would, like Ontario and Alberta. And that's why we see lots of people from Ontario and Alberta now moving to Manitoba 'cause they see a much more positive outlook for them and their families and their kids in the—in the years ahead.

The other piece to it, of course, Mr. Speaker, is that, as the global economy picks up, it will take a bit of time for all of those thriving sectors in Manitoba to start back up in the positive direction that we all want them to go. Alberta and Ontario, if, all of a sudden, we're paying \$1.50 again for gasoline at the pumps, everyone in Alberta is going to be ecstatic, and not very many other people in Canada will be happy about that, but it's the nature of our economy, and I think the incredibly strong public investments that we have made as a government have contributed enormously to our ability to provide for our citizens in a far better and more equal—equitable—way than has been the case in other parts of the country. If we didn't have the next generation of hydro dams being built, if we didn't have massive investments in new affordable housing units, there would be that many more people unemployed in our economy, their skills wasted, and all of the—all the difficulties and trauma and stress that unemployment and underemployment can cause on families and in communities. We recognize that.

It's quite clear that both opposition parties here in this House do not share that point of view. They would love to repeat the lost decade, when I graduated from university, in the middle of a

recession, where there were no jobs available and, even worse, there was no interest in creating jobs. There was no interest in asking an entire new generation of highly educated young people what it was that we wanted to contribute. There were no opportunities, whatsoever. The mentality of the day was to cut, cut, cut. The Tories of the day, who were in power here, enjoyed that immensely. They liked nothing better than to savage the social safety net, whether it was education, or health care, or child care, or foster parents, or environmental protection. Poverty went up dramatically. The economy took even longer to come out of recession because there was no stimulus and, right now, we can see that everyone around the world has rejected that philosophy.

Even their federal counterparts in Ottawa have brought in a very good stimulus package. I am a long way from being a Conservative, as everyone will know, but I am prepared to give credit where credit is due. Stepping up the way that they did was the appropriate thing to do, and we have been very proud to match that, and it has led to some very tangible results and will continue to lead to tangible results. Our investments in infrastructure in Manitoba had already been increased dramatically over previous years, and this year, alone, they have increased by an additional 50 percent. That's going to be money that goes into over 1,500 different projects in Manitoba in every region of our province, not just concentrated in a few political areas, as members opposite were fond of doing. And in the economy that injection of money is not only going to improve our infrastructure, it's going to create 10,000 direct jobs and an additional 10,000 jobs in related and supportive industries. This is the way that we look after citizens while also ensuring that the province of the whole comes out of the economy in a much better shape than it had previously.

I can also point out, for those who are concerned about the financial implications of this, the rainy day fund, under the NDP—which Conservative members and Conservative commentators, they love to portray our political party and our government as being unable to manage the books. Our financial track record is so much more sound than our Conservative opponents opposite, it is really quite remarkable. And just a couple of examples of that, Mr. Speaker, if I may. The rainy day fund, which was at a couple hundred million dollars when we came to office in 1999, well, it's quadrupled. We now have the capacity, through the rainy day fund, to access up to

\$864 million when it's raining and, believe me, right now, it's raining in our part of the world and it's raining in every other part of the world. That's what a global recession is, and our Premier (Mr. Selinger) and others have commented on the value of that foresight and that important fiscal planning.

You can also—comparing our record to that of our opponents, you could also look at the financing of the debt that Manitoba has. The cost of carrying that debt under the Conservatives has been cut in half by our government. They used to be paying 13 cents every year on every dollar that the public—that the public debt had in Manitoba, and that's been cut by more than 50 percent under our stewardship—I might point out, under the stewardship of our current Premier when he was Finance Minister for a decade in Manitoba. It is a stellar record, and all citizens of Manitoba have recognized that and I'm sure will continue to commend our Premier for his fantastic work.

* (16:10)

It has been an enormous amount of fun for me personally, Mr. Speaker, to watch our Conservative opponents opposite wrestle with this whole question of the harmonized sales tax. You know, they finally made a decision, but, boy, it was—it was so difficult for them. On the one hand, the proposal, if it was implemented as presented to us in Manitoba, would have cost the citizens of Manitoba \$400 million in extra costs. You know, no change in their lifestyle, no improvements at all, just \$400 million sucked out of their pockets and put into the hands of businesses, and the Conservatives could not figure out whose side they were on for the longest time. It's like, ah, do we pass this? Like, what position do we take? They avoided it. They ducked the issue.

It was—it was a fantastic insight into the quality of leadership that is supposedly waiting on the other side of the aisle. It left an awful lot to be desired, and, of course, our government has come out in no uncertain terms and told our federal counterparts, with respect, we don't think it's appropriate in a recession to be doing that to individual citizens in Manitoba.

Maybe there's some other provinces who will decide to go along with that package, but the proposal you've put in front of us, it's not something that we're interested in pursuing. We're going to keep the tax

regime here and we're going to make sure that that \$400 stays in the pockets of Manitobans.

It sounds to me that there's a pretty good chance that were our Conservative opponents in office, heaven forbid, Mr. Speaker, I strongly suspect that the harmonized sales tax would've been implemented or in the process of being implemented in Manitoba already to the detriment, not just of Manitobans, but also to the economy as a whole.

The Conservatives, of course, love to crow about taxes. They love to crow about how they are supposedly the party of business. Well, if you're going to cut taxes, and I freely admit it, neither I nor my constituents make that as our top priority, but when it comes to strategic tax cuts, certainly providing a financial boost for local companies owned by local Manitobans employing local Manitobans would be the place to start. Well, the Conservatives didn't change the small business tax the entire time they were in office in the 1990s.

When we came in, it was 8 percent, and what's it gonna be this year? Oh, that would be zero. We've reduced it all the way down to zero. We're the first jurisdiction in the country to manage to achieve that. So, again, Mr. Speaker, we've managed to make some very smart economically sound decisions which are paying great benefits all across the province.

Another huge factor which is helping Manitoba in ways that other parts of our country can only admire from a distance, is the remarkable work being done by the Provincial Nominee Program and Manitobans everywhere to increase immigration to Manitoba. And I want to commend our current Minister of Education (Ms. Allan), who was our previous Minister of Labour and Immigration, for her fantastic work on that front. We have set a goal of 20,000 persons per year by the year 2016. Just recently, earlier this week, new data came out showing that we are on a record pace. Our honourable Minister of Entrepreneurship (Mr. Bjornson) shared that—shared that information with the—with the public. We had the highest 12-month increase in our population since the early 1970s, I believe it was. A truly remarkable affirmation of the—of the incredible opportunity that people all around the world see in Manitoba.

The member from Inkster is chirping as usual and we all know he doesn't see any potential in Manitoba, but we stay focussed on the task at hand,

Mr. Speaker, and are determined to provide those opportunities for the people who deserve them.

Mr. Speaker in the Chair

And one of the best ways that we have done that and one of the first commitments that our new Premier (Mr. Selinger) has made is the prominence that education is going to play in Manitoba's economic development. In the past decade alone, enrolment in post-secondary education in Manitoba has increased by over a third. Contrast that, Mr. Speaker, if you will, with the situation when I was going to school. Here in Manitoba in the 1990s when tuition doubled and the number of people going to school plummeted, how on earth do you create a vibrant and clever and prosperous economy if you deny people access to the post-secondary programs that they need to obtain the skills to perform at that level in the world economy?

I have never understood what the Tories were thinking when they were in office, and I am so proud and so glad that a different philosophy is in place here in Manitoba right now, and you can see many, many different aspects of our support for education. I'll continue with the post-secondary piece here for a moment, and then—and then shift to some news from the K-12 level. There is, of course, enormous capital investment, new money being made available to all the colleges and to the universities to upgrade their facilities and to construct new and much-needed buildings.

In my own constituency of Wolseley, of course, which includes the University of Winnipeg, we have seen many fantastic initiatives already completed, and the most exciting current one right now under construction is the University of Winnipeg's new Richardson science building, alongside—just across the street, the construction of a new building at the corner where the old United Army Surplus site used to be.

When it comes to tuition itself, Mr. Speaker, we've also managed to provide great support to students. One of the first acts of this government, and I can't take credit for this 'cause I wasn't sitting in this Chamber, but in 1999, one of the first acts of the new government, then under Premier Doer, was to reduce tuition by 10 percent and freeze it there. And even with the modest increases, after many, many years of holding the line on tuition, even with the modest increase that has been allowed now, tuition in Manitoba is still cheaper than it was when we came to office because of that 10 percent reduction. I think

we lose track of that sometimes and it's certainly something that we're very proud of and it has undoubtedly played a role in increasing enrolment as much as it has.

And another very clever innovation on this program has been the graduation tax credit, and a new announcement, a new program that was put in the Throne Speech this year, just last week, is that students who live and work in Manitoba, will now qualify for a portion of that income—tuition fee income tax rebate. They will now be able to get some of that while they're still in school, and you can see the sense of this, Mr. Speaker. Everyone remembers when they were going to university and college, that, you know, that can be a very difficult time financially. We want to keep people here in Manitoba, our best and our brightest, and absolutely any extra support that we can send their way in the process is money very, very well spent.

Another piece to education still at the post-secondary level, Mr. Speaker, is supports we've given to universities. I've talked on the capital front, I've talked about tuition for students, also on the—just the base-line funding for universities. When we brought in the tuition freeze, not everyone recognizes that we made up all of the money for the universities that they would have received from students. So students who were paying 100 percent of their tuition before we came to office, well afterwards the university was still getting 100 percent dollars; they were getting 90 of it from the students and the remaining 10 percent was made up by our government. So the universities haven't lost any money. In fact, they've made more money on tuition as enrolment has increased because we made university and colleges more accessible to people in the first place, and that has been a truly remarkable accomplishment.

At that K-12 level, our government's policy has been, at a minimum, that we would increase funding for K-12 education at the same rate of economic growth, and that has not just been maintained, Mr. Speaker, it has been exceeded. We have beaten that track record over our lifetime in office.

And, I'll also say that just recently, our government announced its new capital plan: Over the next four years, we are going to be investing \$568 million to build and upgrade public schools this decade. That's an increase of over \$303 million over the previous decade. And, our track record has already been to build 17 new schools,

12 replacement schools and we've completed already 55 additional renovation projects. And, I might add, because of our new green building policy, all of these projects that will now be taking place must meet minimum environmental standards, so that the buildings are lean and efficient when it comes to the use of resources and provide the highest quality of indoor air and learning environment as is possible.

Shifting gears to the north, education is no less of an issue there and very pleased to see that an early focus for our government in this Throne Speech has been increasing the educational outcomes and the graduation rates of First Nations students and Aboriginal students. We are, of course, the government which built the University College of the North, and also, just recently, earlier this fall, we managed to successfully participate in negotiations with our federal counterparts and representatives of First Nations organizations, such as the Assembly of Manitoba Chiefs, the northern chiefs under the banner of MKO, and the Southern Chiefs Organization, all of these groups, all these governments have signed a letter of understanding that will serve as a blueprint, guiding all of our future action to stay focussed on the challenge of improving First Nations and Aboriginal graduation rates.

* (16:20)

Some of the—some of the plans already in the works are making sure students are better prepared for school, providing a greater diversity of courses that are available, and additional professional development for teachers working with First Nations students, all of this very positive news, and, clearly, reasons why this Throne Speech should be welcomed by the citizens of Manitoba.

Health care, of course, is never far from the minds of Manitobans. Our party, of course, is the creators of Medicare, and Tommy Douglas, just one province over from us, and I'm very pleased to again draw a stark contrast between our track record on health care and that of our political opponents. We have 345 more doctors practising in Manitoba right now than was the case a decade ago. We have 2,034 more nurses practising in Manitoba than we did a decade ago, and that previous decade, Mr. Speaker, I don't have to remind you, you remember it as do, well, most of the people in this Chamber. Sometimes I think our political opponents wish it had never happened, but we had dramatic declines of doctors and nurses throughout the 1990s. They—it spoke volumes, their commitment to health care

when they were so willing and eager to hack and slash at the professionals that Manitobans rely upon.

And, my goodness, if we hadn't made those investments, if we hadn't built up that level of trust and commitment with our doctors, with our nurses, with our—all of our public health professionals, I don't think our government would have been able to roll out the H1N1 prevention strategy as well as we did, and it's a—it's a testament to those people on the front lines and a testament to individual Manitobans and some truly impressive immunization rates in northern Manitoba, some communities well above 95 percent of the citizens there have received an H1N1 flu shot and contrast that with some of the very disparaging efforts early on in the H1N1 crisis, which I won't bother to repeat here, which would certainly send a very different message to some members of our province in terms of how important they were, other jurisdictions taking some rather questionable actions. Very glad that that has been sorted out, proud of the leadership role that our Health Minister and our government played in providing the health equipment and the sanitation—sanitizing kits that were so desperately needed regardless of governmental jurisdiction, and sad that we had to step in and do that but very pleased that the work got done.

Down here in the south, we can also celebrate—I don't know if it'll come as a surprise to many people who know Wolseley, but there are more than a couple of midwives who live in my constituency, and they will be very pleased to hear about the new southern Manitoba training opportunity that'll be available for people who would also like to follow that wonderful professional tradition. Our second child, Molly, was born with the help of midwives, and they did a spectacular job, an experience that none of us will forget, none the least, Molly, but it was—it was certainly a very welcome bit of news, on a personal level, to see that we're now gonna be able to provide training not just in northern Manitoba, but here in southern Manitoba as well for people wishing to pursue that.

A new maternity ward, similarly, is also planned for St. Boniface General Hospital and plans are also under way, of course, for a birthing centre in south Winnipeg and a new children's rehabilitation centre and the women's hospital at the Health Sciences Centre. No small amount of dedication and priority given to health care where it properly deserves.

And, on the proactive front, also very exciting to see that Manitoba's going to join with other provinces in seeking to recover money that we had to spend on health care because tobacco companies were serving and providing products that were causing so much harm to the people in—the people using those products. So I hope that court case is successful.

I see my time has expired and—[interjection]—it has, and I, as usual, I only got to just a few of the—the positive stories that I had to share. I'll have to look for other opportunities to raise awareness amongst my political counterparts across the other way there and see if I can't put a smile on their face when they think of Manitoba, rather than the doom and gloom that we usually get to see here at the Legislature.

Thank you so much, Mr. Speaker.

Mrs. Bonnie Mitchelson (River East): Mr. Speaker, I rise today put—to put a few comments on the record in this session as we start off with a new Premier that was chosen by the union elite of the NDP party. [interjection] And I know I hear members on the NDP side of the House laughing at that comment, but it didn't give the leadership for the NDP party—when Gary Doer left, didn't give the general rank-and-file membership of the NDP party an opportunity to have a vote and a say in who the new leader would be. And just some few short years ago, the NDP party in Manitoba took a very regressive stance when they went from a one-member, one-vote process to a process that disenfranchised many, many members of the New Democratic Party in choosing a leader.

And so we don't see a new New Democratic Party; we see an old New Democratic Party, a party that's gone back to the old way of doing things, a way of disenfranchising many of the members of their party and not giving them an opportunity to have a say in who the new leader would be. And, you know, I have to say that there were credible candidates running for the leadership of the New Democratic Party. I—you know, we are all honourable people, and I think that all of those that were running for the leadership had some good qualities. But I think, in the long run, democracy was not well served when it came to choosing the leader of the New Democratic Party, and history will tell us whether members of the party felt engaged or disengaged as a result of not having an opportunity to, by secret ballot, choose who the leader, and,

ultimately, the premier of the province of Manitoba would be.

Mr. Speaker, I wanted to, just at the outset, indicate, because not many of us had an opportunity to speak in the Legislature towards the end of the last session after we heard that Gary Doer, the former premier, was going to be appointed as the ambassador to the United States by our federal government. And, you know, regardless of our political differences and our philosophical differences, I had a respect, a great respect for Gary Doer and the job that he did as premier, but also as a neighbour who lived down the street, a resident of the fine constituency of River East who I represented. And we had opportunities, from time to time, to have casual exchanges as we crossed paths, either walking or getting into our cars in our community. And I know that he had the best interests of northeast Winnipeg at heart, just as I did, and we both worked, sometimes together, to try to get some positive things happening. So I just want to wish him well as he moves forward in his new endeavours representing and speaking for our country in negotiations with our partner to the south.

* (16:30)

But, Mr. Speaker, after I had the opportunity to make those comments about the former premier of the province, I am somewhat disillusioned and was disheartened as I sat in my seat in the Chamber and listened to the Throne Speech that was just presented. And it lacked an awful lot. I would have thought that there might have been some rejuvenation, some new energy with a new leader at the helm on the government benches, but what we heard was a lot of same old, same old, old, tired government with no vision, no looking towards the future—a lot of announcements that were made that looked to the past and patted the government on the back for the job that they had done in the past. But there was no forward thinking. There was no vision, and I would have thought, I would have thought that there would have been some energy, some enthusiasm and some excitement. But that wasn't—that wasn't what we saw in the Throne Speech, and there was much that was lacking and much that was missing.

First of all, Mr. Speaker, they didn't even mention the word Manitoba Hydro. And I'm sure that if we looked back to Throne Speeches over the last decade, we would see a government that bragged and

touted Manitoba Hydro and our clean energy as a— as a real advantage for the province of Manitoba. It was noted by its absence in the Throne Speech this year. And I think there was some embarrassment on behalf of the new Premier (Mr. Selinger) who had been the steward and in charge of Manitoba Hydro for many years before he became the Premier.

Unprecedented revenues that were raided from Manitoba Hydro under his watch, some \$203 million that were taken from the coffers of Manitoba Hydro because they were having a good year, and what happened subsequent to that? They had a drought, Mr. Speaker, and the revenues were drained from Manitoba Hydro and they were in very difficult financial circumstances. That was not what I would call leadership. We've got a government that has made an arbitrary decision and forced Manitoba Hydro, our most precious Crown corporation, to look at building bipole line down the west side of the province.

People out in the communities, as we're going through public consultations, are shaking their heads and saying, what are these guys thinking? They're looking for not an option A, B or C down the west side, but they're looking for an option D down the east side, the most direct, the most cost-effective route for the hydro—the bipole line, Mr. Speaker. Years and years of study and resource poured into looking at the east side thrown out the window with an arbitrary decision and a direction given to Manitoba Hydro to run the line down the west side of the province, and we're looking at hundreds of millions of dollars in waste that doesn't seem to have any impact on this government or on this—on this Premier.

We were hoping, Mr. Speaker, and I think we heard the member from Minto, the new Minister of Justice (Mr. Swan), during the leadership campaign saying that he might take a second look at the west-side hydro line should he be elected leader, and we applauded that. We thought, hey, here's someone who may have a bit of common sense, a bit of vision. But, no, we found that he dropped out of the race and the other, the man who would become Premier has refused to look at revisiting the decision. In my mind, the direction to Manitoba Hydro that was given by this government is nothing short of a dictatorship. This is a dictatorship government who takes pride in directing Crown corporations and interfering politically with Crown corporations. It isn't something that I think any government should be proud of.

We also look at the kind of waste and mismanagement that we've been seeing over the years as this government—over the last decade—as this government has made choices and made decisions, and one of the decisions that they really need to rethink is the decision to force the City of Winnipeg to remove nitrogen from their water, and, Mr. Speaker, we have great difficulty. We know there's again, hundreds of millions of dollars that will be wasted when scientists have said it isn't necessary, but we've got a government that's tossed the science out and has said it doesn't matter what the experts say, we know best, and we're going to force the City of Winnipeg to spend all of this additional money, millions and millions of dollars to remove nitrogen from their waste water. Well, we would do things differently. We wouldn't force the City of Winnipeg to do things that are not necessary, that have no scientific base, for some ideological reason which I'm not aware of.

Mr. Speaker, the other—one of the other boondoggles that this government has gotten involved in is the enhanced photo—or the enhanced ID card, and we know that there's been—I think it's about 14 million, am I right in my numbers? Fourteen million dollars wasted on a card and the technology that no Manitobans want. I—well, I don't believe that if the public was canvassed today, they would support the waste of \$14 million like we've seen the NDP government waste on the enhanced ID cards.

Mr. Speaker, we've had a decade of unprecedented revenue from Ottawa that's come to our province, and we have a government that has spent every last penny and more and borrowed, and they continue to go, cap in hand, to the federal government looking for more. Well, there was no mention in the Throne Speech about the changes that may happen as a result of the downturn in the economy across the country, where we see other provinces that were contributors to Manitoba needing support from the federal government and equalization transfer payments will be reduced. We didn't see any sort of visionary discussion in the Throne Speech about what could possibly have to happen, and the government will not be able to sustain the spending that they have incurred over the last number of years when revenues were pouring in, and we're going to see significant challenges that this government will have to face over the next number of years.

And because they haven't managed the taxpayers' dollars of the province very wisely, Mr. Speaker, there's going to be some, possibly, some difficult choices and decisions that are going to have to be made, and I'm not sure that we have a government that's up to making the right choices and the right decisions. And I guess time will tell as we see the budget come in for next year, but I know, just from what I am hearing from many within the bureaucracy, that they're—well, I won't say anything more. We'll wait and see what—well, we'll wait and see what the final results are, but there are those within who understand where this government has been and what this government has been doing, that are shaking their heads and are worrying about what the future will hold, and they're long-time career civil servants that have been around through different administrations and different governments, and there's significant concern about what the future holds as we see the kinds of decisions and the kinds of choices that are being made by this government.

*(16:40)

Mr. Speaker, this is not a Throne Speech that I can support. I would hope that the government and some members of the government would think very seriously about supporting the amendment, and there are several things within the amendment that I think are worthy of support. I've said many, many times before that no government does everything right, and no government does everything wrong. But one of the things in the Throne Speech that I would commend the government for, although I don't think they went far enough, was their refusal to implement the HST. I'm not supportive of the HST as a tax.

Our party has been clear in saying that we do not support the HST, and it is in the amendment. And I guess if members of government vote against the amendment, they're going to be voting against our strong stand on implementing the HST. Now and it works both ways. Government always says, oh, we voted against the budget or we voted against the Throne Speech. Opposition always votes against. Well, if we have a government that votes against our amendment, that means they're voting against our refusal to support the HST, and so I will be interested in watching to see what they do. And they haven't really been clear as a government on how long they're looking at not imposing an HST on Manitobans.

So we heard some of the candidates during the leadership say that, well, we're not going to

implement it now, but we're going to look at it after the next election. We haven't heard from the government today whether it's no HST today and no HST never, and it's not clear in the Throne Speech what their plan is around the HST, and we need to hear that, Mr. Speaker. We need to know where the government is coming from and where they're planning to go and what they're planning to do after the next election, should they form government, because we know from the past what NDP governments do. They promise one thing before an election and do something different after.

We saw that back to my days, probably days before many members of the government side of the House were here. We saw Manitoba Public Insurance rates kept artificially low before elections and then jacked up sky high after elections. And that was one of the things that brought the NDP government down in the late '80s, and that was because they really didn't tell the truth before elections. They said, trust me now, but did something different after they were elected, and Manitobans do catch on to that kind of, that kind of tactic, Mr. Speaker.

So I just want to say in closing, because I know my time is almost up, that I will not be supporting the Throne Speech. I was disappointed thinking that it should hold—or it should have had much more vision, much more thinking to the future, not as much dwelling on the past. And, certainly, Mr. Speaker, I would encourage members on the government side of the House to look at seriously at the amendment that we have put forward and maybe, just maybe, we might get a few of them to support our amendment.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Hon. Jim Rondeau (Minister of Healthy Living, Youth and Seniors): Mr. Speaker, I'm pleased to put a few words on the—in support of the Speech from the Throne, and, of course, it's always interesting to follow the member of River East or, in fact, many of the members over there because I do believe that by listening to them, you understand the difference between our governments. I do believe that there's a different vision. They do—we do believe that we'll do things differently. And, just as an example, I look at our vision. Our vision is to work with Hydro to grow the economy of the province. So an example would be I'm pleased that we went from the last place in the country, basically, for energy efficiency to first place because the average Manitoban gets to save hundreds

of dollars on energy, saves in greenhouse gases and puts money in their pocket, and then we can export the energy and make more money for Manitoba as a whole.

It's a different view. It's a very different view of what they do ideologically. If you look at their idea of how you work with Crown corporations, you sell them; you sell them. You put the money in and you spend the money. That is not a long-term economic strategy. I know it might be a Conservative strategy. It is not an NDP strategy. We believe that we need to work on long-term plans and investments. And I'm pleased to support this Speech from the Throne because when they say we don't—the Conservatives said they don't interfere with Crowns. They just sell them; they just sell them. And rates have gone well over double.

And, you know, what's interesting about it is they—in the last election, you noticed the one thing they want to do with education, besides keep the budget flat, is they want to get rid of history. Why do they want to get rid of history? Because it's often been said those who do not know history are doomed to repeat it. The truth is they wanted to get rid of history so people wouldn't know what happened in the past and they wouldn't know what would happen in the future should the Conservatives again form government many, many years from now. An example would be they consider investing in wind power. They consider investing in energy efficiency. They consider investing in building where the most energy inefficient houses, the poorest people were paying the highest energy bills.

I'm pleased to be part of a government that helps support those—taught some potential gang members some employment skills. And you know what? We made the most energy inefficient houses energy efficient. We saved money. We got children at risk to build their skills. And I'm pleased that we have been noted on doing that as the best in the country.

And I look at taxes, and the member opposite chirp from their benches. But, you know, when they were in government, we had the highest small-business tax rate in the country, the highest small-business tax rate in the country and they did nothing about it. So the champions, the champions of free enterprise, the champions of business would sit there and had the highest business tax rate in the country. I'm pleased that our government knows the importance of small business. They know the

importance of helping the thousands of small businesses because when the small businesses thrive, our economies thrive.

So what we've done is we've dropped it from the highest tax in the country to the lowest tax in the country. And, if you look at the vision, it is where we would sit there and say, we are the lowest. In fact, we're going to nothing. Small businesses are going to have no tax rate, a zero tax rate. Under the Conservatives, the champion of business, highest in the country; under us, zero. And I'm pleased to be part of that government that had that vision because small businesses do invest in our economy, and we are a champion of small businesses.

I look at other things. When we talk about health care, yes, we do have a different vision than the Conservatives. We believe in hiring more people. We believe in supporting the people on the front lines. We believe in investments in hospitals, equipment and prevention, and the Conservatives believe in slashing and cutting. And I was around in the '90s, and I can remember what they did was they just slashed and cut. To me, it makes much more sense to train more doctors and have more doctors on the front line, train more nurses.

*(16:50)

And, you know, I thought it was really passing strange in the question period here when the Conservatives asked about a lab, a technical lab, and why there wasn't staff. Maybe they don't know that, in 1995, they cancelled the entire training program in Red River. You can't cancel a training program and then wonder why you don't have staff. It's a simple correlation. So we believe in training more staff. We believe in having the supports for the people appropriately.

And I can remember when members opposite unilaterally rolled back negotiated wage increases. I can remember when they refused to invest in infrastructure. I can remember when they refused to invest in school buses, and we actually had school buses that were basically not able to drive that were driving kids around. I can remember when there was hazards in a school and they ignored. So I'm pleased that we are looking at a long-term vision.

And you know, I know that we have fiscal difficulties, but here's what we've done. We've invested in education. We've invested in a skilled, high-value, high-skilled economy, and because of that, we haven't been as affected by the economic

slowdown. And when you say you don't have a long-term vision, education, training, high-skill, high-value-added niche markets, that's it. And so, if you look at the Composites Innovation Centre, which is world class, which is helping us build new aircraft, which is helping us build buses and new, different transportation things, that's positive, and that's thinking for the future.

If you think of the Advanced Manufacturing Initiative, again, it's an investment made by our government planning for the future. Same with the Vehicle Technology Centre, and I can go on and on by looking at where we have business incubators, where we're training people to be entrepreneurs and where we're commercializing ideas. That is a long-term vision.

I look at this Speech from the Throne and—in the 1990s, people move. Why did they move? There was no jobs. There was no opportunities. I'm pleased that in today's *Free Press* they talked about Manitoba growing at about 17,000 people, and that is historic levels of growth. I am proud that people are moving back to Manitoba. Why are you moving back to Manitoba? Because of the vision and the economy growing. And I think that when you look at all of this, you look at the whole package. And, under the Tories, the idea was slash and burn, govern for the few.

Under the NDP, we believe that we govern for the entire province. We are the government of Manitoba and we believe in doing that. So we don't do what the Conservatives do, which says we're gonna ignore the north; we're just gonna govern for the south. We are not gonna ignore—we're gonna ignore all the average people; we're gonna govern for the rich. We want to govern for all. And that is our philosophy, and I'm proud to be part of that government.

When you're talking about our vision, talk about CentrePort. It's the first tax-free, economic zone in Canada. That is a vision. We were able to move it forward with legislation, with economic negotiations with the Conservatives.

You know, when the Conservatives had a chance to put the puck in the net, not only did they not put the puck in the net, they didn't even have a net. They missed. We were able to do that, and I'm pleased that part of Assiniboia now will have CentrePort. And that is a huge opportunity to have Manitoba become

part of the market for all of the States and the door for the States.

When you're looking at education and training, you're looking at all the investments in education and training, and there's a page and a half of them. And it's throughout the north, south; it's Red River, it's Brandon, it's college in Thompson, The Pas, et cetera and St. Boniface. That's huge.

And, you know, I look at the capital investment. I look at the capital investment where what we've done, and it says here, we have had—

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Mr. Rondeau: —a government that has invested \$568 million to upgrade and invest and build public schools this decade. I don't believe they put in half that in the last decade. And I'm pleased that we build schools not just in NDP ridings, but all across the province.

I look at health care. We had the ability to move forward on my new ministry, the ministry of Healthy Living, keeping people well, and that is a vision. You need a focus on young people. Healthy Child, I'm proud that we're spending about \$30 million a year investing to have strong families, young children invested in, and it's a model that hasn't been—that's the envy of most governments. We have a treasury board, a treasury board for children, and that's very, very important. I'm proud that we have people from our caucus and ministers sit on it because, you know what it is? It's a long-term future vision and investment where we need to invest in kids.

I was part of the education system when the Conservatives were in power, and guess what? They took money from kids. They didn't believe in day care. They didn't believe in education. They didn't believe in investing in the north. We do believe those things and we will continue to do that.

When you're looking at public safety, I'm pleased that we have a record of looking at the whole community. I know that we have a program in the seniors which is trying to keep seniors safe and secure and make sure that they go there, put grab bars, make sure that the house is secure. They can put in deadbolts, and that program continues to expand and keep people safe and secure.

We also have to continue to fight back against gangs, et cetera, and you know we talked about the gang strategy and I'm pleased that we're expanding it

through the Project Restore, the Gang Awareness for Parents and also a lot of supports, again, for the parents in the Positive Parenting Program, et cetera. We need to continue to fight back at criminal gangs, not just by creating more police and jails but by looking at investing in supports, investing in good gangs versus bad gangs, in other words, teams; as far as extracurricular activities, investing in schools, because you know the long term is, is that if we don't do any precautions, if we don't do any prevention, then we won't have enough jails. So we need to take the kids that—to get involved in school activities and positive activities, keep them busy, and that will create a positive thing. And that's what we're doing in this Speech from the Throne, and that's what our government's doing.

And, if you're looking at the new adult fitness tax credit, that's a very positive thing. I think that makes a big difference and investing in quality day care. I know that members opposite do not support the expansion of day-care spaces or day care. I'm sorry that they continue to vote against it every year, but we do believe in that and we will continue to do that because in spite of what they say, if we invest in police officers and you vote against it, if you invest in more Crown prosecutors and you vote against it, that means—that's on the record, Mr. Speaker, and I wish that the people opposite would accept what they believe.

Finally, I want to look at the whole idea about green. We will continue to focus on our water, our air, and our energy. We have those things and we will do it. I'm proud of the fact that we're the government that supported Kyoto. I know the members opposite do not believe that it's real, at least

some don't. I believe in it and I'm proud that we were a government that legislated it and we're moving towards doing it on a regular basis. I'm pleased that we built the first wind farm, and it was at the time the largest wind farm in Canada and that's very positive. I'm pleased that we are working to have the best geothermal industry and the most geothermal units installed in Canada.

I think that we have a good positive future, Mr. Speaker, and I look at the opposition. We are going to make sure that we have a bright future. I know what future they did when they were under economic stress. They cut. They slashed. They burned. They sold a Crown corporation. They did all those things. Instead, we're looking at how we can win in the long term. We're looking at how we can support the individuals in Manitoba, grow the economy, and have a high-value economy.

And, Mr. Speaker, I'm pleased to be a government that our first consideration on the HST was on how it would treat the average person, and we were looking at that and we made a commitment not to follow the HST. I am—I hope that the members opposite vote for the Speech from the Throne on the HST, and then we'll see how they actually do vote. We are not going to incorporate the HST. The members opposite, when you vote against our Throne Speech, we will know where you stand.

Mr. Speaker: Order. Order. When this matter is again before the House, the honourable member will have 15 minutes remaining.

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

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Tuesday, December 8, 2009

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