

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

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The Honourable George Hickes
Speaker*

Vol. LV No. 2 – 10 a.m., Friday, November 21, 2003

MANITOBA LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
Thirty-Eighth Legislature

Member	Constituency	Political Affiliation
AGLUGUB, Cris	The Maples	N.D.P.
ALLAN, Nancy, Hon.	St. Vital	N.D.P.
ALTEMEYER, Rob	Wolseley	N.D.P.
ASHTON, Steve, Hon.	Thompson	N.D.P.
BJORNSON, Peter, Hon.	Gimli	N.D.P.
BRICK, Marilyn	St. Norbert	N.D.P.
CALDWELL, Drew	Brandon East	N.D.P.
CHOMIAK, Dave, Hon.	Kildonan	N.D.P.
CUMMINGS, Glen	Ste. Rose	P.C.
DERKACH, Leonard	Russell	P.C.
DEWAR, Gregory	Selkirk	N.D.P.
DOER, Gary, Hon.	Concordia	N.D.P.
DRIEDGER, Myrna	Charleswood	P.C.
DYCK, Peter	Pembina	P.C.
EICHLER, Ralph	Lakeside	P.C.
FAURSCHOU, David	Portage la Prairie	P.C.
GERRARD, Jon, Hon.	River Heights	Lib.
GOERTZEN, Kelvin	Steinbach	P.C.
HAWRANIK, Gerald	Lac du Bonnet	P.C.
HICKES, George, Hon.	Point Douglas	N.D.P.
IRVIN-ROSS, Kerri	Fort Garry	N.D.P.
JENNISSEN, Gerard	Flin Flon	N.D.P.
JHA, Bidhu	Radisson	N.D.P.
KORZENIOWSKI, Bonnie	St. James	N.D.P.
LAMOUREUX, Kevin	Inkster	Lib.
LATHLIN, Oscar, Hon.	The Pas	N.D.P.
LEMIEUX, Ron, Hon.	La Verendrye	N.D.P.
LOEWEN, John	Fort Whyte	P.C.
MACKINTOSH, Gord, Hon.	St. Johns	N.D.P.
MAGUIRE, Larry	Arthur-Virden	P.C.
MALOWAY, Jim	Elmwood	N.D.P.
MARTINDALE, Doug	Burrows	N.D.P.
McGIFFORD, Diane, Hon.	Lord Roberts	N.D.P.
MELNICK, Christine, Hon.	Riel	N.D.P.
MIHYCHUK, MaryAnn, Hon.	Minto	N.D.P.
MITCHELSON, Bonnie	River East	P.C.
MURRAY, Stuart	Kirkfield Park	P.C.
NEVAKSHONOFF, Tom	Interlake	N.D.P.
OSWALD, Theresa	Seine River	N.D.P.
PENNER, Jack	Emerson	P.C.
REID, Daryl	Transcona	N.D.P.
REIMER, Jack	Southdale	P.C.
ROBINSON, Eric, Hon.	Rupertsland	N.D.P.
ROCAN, Denis	Carman	P.C.
RONDEAU, Jim, Hon.	Assiniboia	N.D.P.
ROWAT, Leanne	Minnedosa	P.C.
SALE, Tim, Hon.	Fort Rouge	N.D.P.
SANTOS, Conrad	Wellington	N.D.P.
SCHELLENBERG, Harry	Rossmere	N.D.P.
SCHULER, Ron	Springfield	P.C.
SELINGER, Greg, Hon.	St. Boniface	N.D.P.
SMITH, Scott, Hon.	Brandon West	N.D.P.
STEFANSON, Heather	Tuxedo	P.C.
STRUTHERS, Stan, Hon.	Dauphin-Roblin	N.D.P.
TAILLIEU, Mavis	Morris	P.C.
TWEED, Mervin	Turtle Mountain	P.C.
WOWCHUK, Rosann, Hon.	Swan River	N.D.P.

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Friday, November 21, 2003

The House met at 10 a.m.

PRAYERS

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

PETITIONS

Provincial Road 313

Mr. Gerald Hawranik (Lac du Bonnet): I wish to present the following petition. The background of this petition is as follows:

Provincial Road 313 to the east of Provincial Road 315 is the only road connecting Pointe du Bois with Lac du Bonnet to the west.

The 19 kilometres of Provincial Road 313 to the east of Provincial Road 315 is in very poor condition, has narrow shoulders and winds among granite outcroppings and through swamp, creating very dangerous and very treacherous conditions for residents who live in Pointe du Bois, for Hydro employees and others who work in Pointe du Bois, and for visitors and tourists who frequent the area.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To request that the Minister of Transportation and Government Services consider rebuilding and reconstructing the 19 kilometres of Provincial Road 313 east of Provincial Road 315 to Pointe du Bois at the earliest opportunity.

Signed by Debra Freedy, Geri Watkins, Peggy Diclemente and others.

Mr. Speaker: In accordance with our Rule 132(6), when a petition is read, it is deemed to be received by the House.

Highway 32

Mr. Peter Dyck (Pembina): I wish to present the following petition. These are the reasons for this petition:

Rural highways are part of the mandate of the Province of Manitoba.

Under the previous commitment, the Province of Manitoba would be covering the costs of four-laning that portion of Highway 32 that runs through Winkler, Manitoba.

The Department of Transportation and Government Services has altered its position and will now undertake the project only if the City of Winkler will pay half of the total cost of construction. The provincial government's offloading of its previous commitment will cost the City of Winkler several million dollars.

The City of Winkler has now been informed that it will have to wait several years before this project could be undertaken.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To request the Minister of Transportation and Government Services to consider honouring the previous commitment and complete the four-laning of Highway 32 through the city of Winkler, absorbing all costs related to the construction as previously agreed.

To request the Minister of Transportation and Government Services to consider the responsibility of the Department of Transportation and Government Services for the construction of rural highways.

To request the Minister of Transportation and Government Services to consider the significant and strategic importance of the completion of four-laning Highway 32 through the city of Winkler, especially as it relates to the economic growth and the development of the city of Winkler and its trading area.

To request the Minister of Transportation and Government Services to consider the valuable contribution of the city of Winkler and its

trading area to the provincial economy and reprioritize the four-laning of Highway 32 for the 2004 construction season.

These are submitted by Caroline Wiebe, Don Kroeker, Helene Thiessen, Ellie Reimer and others.

Mr. Speaker: In accordance with our Rule 132(6), when a petition is read, it is deemed to be received by the House.

Co-op Program for Nursing Students

Mrs. Myrna Driedger (Charleswood): I wish to present the following petition to the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba. The background to the petition is as follows:

A co-op program for nursing students at the University of Manitoba was approved by the Senate and the Board of Governors.

This program will provide the opportunity for students to apply their theoretical knowledge in the workplace through supervised work terms for which they are paid.

Students are hired by participating agencies under supervision of a workplace employee who serves as a mentor.

Students assume responsibilities suitable for their level of knowledge and expertise and will provide patients with much-needed nursing.

The co-op program will enable nursing students to acquire valuable experience by working with a seasoned mentor, become more proficient and better able to handle heavier workloads and increase their knowledge, skills and confidence.

This program will enable students to earn income to help reduce their debt load.

The Department of Health will benefit through reduced orientation costs for new graduates and an increased likelihood that new graduates will remain in the province.

Although the Honourable Dave Chomiak was unable to attend the round table held on

November 7, 2003, he graciously sent a representative who restated Mr. Chomiak's position to work with the students to reach a creative solution.

Several Canadian universities have successfully implemented nursing co-op programs. Several faculties within the University of Manitoba have such a program available to their students. Therefore, students within the Faculty of Nursing should have equal opportunity and access to a co-op program.

This program will offer students valuable experience and provide the confidence and strength they will need in the future.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To request the Legislative Assembly to consider supporting the proposed co-op program.

Signed by Don Perry, Rebecca Yanke, Ryan Castilin and others.

Mr. Speaker: In accordance with Rule 132(6), when a petition is read, it is deemed to be received by the House.

* (10:05)

PRESENTING REPORTS BY STANDING AND SPECIAL COMMITTEES

Standing Committee on Public Accounts First Report

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

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

An Honourable Member: Dispense.

Mr. Speaker: Dispense

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

Meetings:

Your committee met on the following occasions:

Monday, July 29, 2002, at 10 a.m.

Monday, October 27, 2003, at 1:30 p.m.

All meetings were held in Room 255 of the Legislative Building.

Matters under Consideration:

Public Accounts Volume 4 for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2000

Provincial Auditor's Report on Business Planning and Performance Measurement: An Assessment Of Timeliness of Implementation and Effectiveness of the Process in Departments for the period ending July 2000

Provincial Auditor's Report—An Examination of School Board Governance in Manitoba, dated October 2000

Provincial Auditor's Report on Compliance and Special Audits for the fiscal year ended March 31, 2001

Public Accounts Volumes 1, 2, 3 and 4 for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2001

Committee Membership**Third Session, 37th Legislature**

At the July 29, 2002 meeting, your committee elected Mr. Pitura as the Chairperson and Mr. Maloway as the Vice-Chairperson.

Substitutions received prior to the July 29, 2002, meeting:

Mr. Maloway for Mr. Dewar

Mr. Pitura for Mr. Derkach

Mr. Gilleshammer for Mr. Helwer

Mr. Laurendeau for Mr. Penner (Steinbach)

First Session, 38th Legislature

At the October 27, 2003, meeting, your committee elected Mr. Reimer as the Chairperson and Mr. Maloway as the Vice-Chairperson.

Substitutions received prior to the October 27, 2003, meeting:

Mrs. Taillieu for Mrs. Driedger

Substitutions made during the October 27, 2003, meeting:

Ms. Brick for Mr. Reid

Mr. Faurshou for Mr. Maguire

Officials Speaking on Record:

Mr. Jon Singleton, Auditor General of Manitoba

Reports Considered and Adopted:

Your committee considered:

Public Accounts Volume 4 for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2000

Provincial Auditor's Report on Business Planning and Performance Measurement: An Assessment Of Timeliness of Implementation and Effectiveness of the Process in Departments for the period ending July 2000

Public Accounts Volumes 1, 2, 3 and 4 for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2001, and has adopted the same as presented.

Reports Considered but not Adopted:

Your committee considered the following reports but did not adopt them:

Provincial Auditor's Report—An Examination of School Board Governance in Manitoba dated October 2000

Provincial Auditor's Report on Compliance and Special Audits for the fiscal year ended March 31, 2001

Mr. Reimer: I move, seconded by the Member for Turtle Mountain (Mr. Tweed), that the report of the committee be received.

Motion agreed to.

**Standing Committee on Public Accounts
Second Report**

Mr. Jack Reimer (Chairperson): I wish to present the Second Report of the Committee on Public Accounts.

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

An Honourable Member: Dispense.

Mr. Speaker: Dispense.

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

Meetings:

Your committee met on the following occasions:

Monday, July 29, 2002, at 10 a.m.

Monday, October 27, 2003, at 1:30 p.m.

Tuesday, October 28, 2003, at 1:30 p.m.

All meetings were held in Room 255 of the Legislative Building.

Matters under Consideration:

Provincial Auditor's Report—An Examination of School Board Governance in Manitoba dated October 2000

Provincial Auditor's Report on Compliance and Special Audits for the fiscal year ended March 31, 2001

Annual Report of the Operations of the Office of the Provincial Auditor for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2001

Provincial Auditor's Report—Investigation of an Adult Learning Centre ("The Program") in Morris-Macdonald School Division #19, dated September 2001

Provincial Auditor's Report—A Review of the Policy Development Capacity within Government Departments dated November 2001

Provincial Auditor's Report—Value-for-Money-Audits dated February 2002

Annual Report of the Provincial Auditor—Audit of the Public Accounts for the year ending March 31, 2001

Public Accounts Volumes 1, 2 and 3 for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2002

Committee Membership:

Substitutions made during the October 28, 2003, meeting:

Mr. Dewar for Ms. Brick

Mr. Schellenberg for Mr. Rondeau

Mr. Maguire for Mr. Faurschou

Officials Speaking on Record:

Mr. Jon Singleton, Auditor General of Manitoba

Reports Considered and Adopted:

Your committee considered:

Annual Report of the Operations of the Office of the Provincial Auditor for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2001

Provincial Auditor's Report—A Review of the Policy Development Capacity within Government Departments dated November 2001

Provincial Auditor's Report—Value-for-Money-Audits dated February, 2002

Annual Report of the Provincial Auditor—Audit of the Public Accounts for the year ending March 31, 2001, and has adopted the same as presented.

Reports Considered but not Adopted:

Your committee considered the following reports but did not adopt them:

Provincial Auditor's Report—An Examination of School Board Governance in Manitoba, dated October 2000

Provincial Auditor's Report on Compliance and Special Audits for the fiscal year ended March 31, 2001

Provincial Auditor's Report—Investigation of an Adult Learning Centre ("The Program") in Morris-Macdonald School Division #19, dated September 2001

Public Accounts Volumes 1, 2 and 3 for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2002

Mr. Reimer: I move, seconded by the Member for Elmwood (Mr. Maloway), that the report of the committee be received.

Motion agreed to.

House Business

Hon. Gord Mackintosh (Government House Leader): Mr. Speaker, would you canvass the House to see if there is leave for first reading of Bills 2, 3 and 4 that are currently on today's Notice Paper?

Mr. Speaker: Is there leave of the House to introduce Bills 2, 3 and 4? [Agreed]

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS**Bill 2—The Biofuels and Gasoline Tax Amendment Act**

Hon. Tim Sale (Minister of Energy, Science and Technology): Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Initiatives (Ms. Wowchuk), that Bill 2, The Biofuels and Gasoline Tax Amendment Act; Loi sur les biocarburants et modifiant la Loi de la taxe sur l'essence, be now read a first time.

Motion presented.

Mr. Sale: Mr. Speaker, this bill provides the framework for the introduction of ethanol in 85 percent of Manitoba's gasoline at a 10% blend by the year 2005. May I express my thanks to members opposite for granting leave to move this legislation along so the communities in Manitoba can benefit from the federal program which was announced just in September provision of the framework by the November 19 date.

Motion agreed to.

* (10:10)

**Bill 3—The Helen Betty Osborne Memorial
Foundation Amendment Act**

Hon. Gord Mackintosh (Minister of Justice and Attorney General): I move, seconded by the Minister of Culture, Heritage and Tourism (Mr. Robinson), that Bill 3, The Helen Betty Osborne Memorial Foundation Amendment Act; Loi modifiant la Loi sur la Fondation commémorative Helen Betty Osborne, be now read a first time.

Motion presented.

Mr. Mackintosh: Mr. Speaker, this is a minor amendment to allow some scholarships to be paid out of contributions as well as from interest in the account.

Motion agreed to.

**Bill 4—The Employment Standards Code
Amendment Act**

Hon. Nancy Allan (Minister of Labour and Immigration): Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the Minister of Health (Mr. Chomiak), that Bill 4, The Employment Standards Code Amendment Act; Loi modifiant le Code des normes d'emploi, be now read a first time.

Motion presented.

Ms. Allan: Mr. Speaker, Bill 4, The Employment Standards Code Amendment Act, would provide unpaid compassionate care leave and

improved job protection for Manitobans returning from compassionate care, maternity or parental leave to the workplace.

Motion agreed to.

Introduction of Guests

Mr. Speaker: Prior to Oral Questions, I would like to draw the attention of all honourable members to the Speaker's Gallery where we have with us today Mrs. B. Caldwell and Mr. Vern Rands. These guests are the mother and uncle of the honourable Member for Brandon East (Mr. Caldwell).

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

ORAL QUESTION PERIOD

**Economic Development
Government Strategy**

Mr. Stuart Murray (Leader of the Official Opposition): Mr. Speaker, the last four years we have seen that this Premier has failed to provide leadership, show courage or make the difficult decisions that need to be made in the province.

Instead, what he has done is he has chosen to spend widely in an effort to please everyone. Unfortunately, it is doing nothing to grow the economy, nothing to create jobs or improve services or make our communities safer.

Earlier this month the Premier heard from the business community that the Doer government, their economic development efforts were not working and that this Premier was doing nothing to make Manitoba competitive, Mr. Speaker.

Can the Premier explain why he ignored their warnings, from the business community, and failed in this Throne Speech to provide a sound economic plan for the province of Manitoba?

Hon. Gary Doer (Premier): Mr. Speaker, we had the economic plans, if you could call it that, of the member opposite before the Manitoba people on June 3. We had the economic plan, the

seven-point plan of our Government before the people.

The member opposite may want to dispel the democratic will that took place with the democratic plans a few months ago, Mr. Speaker, but this Speech from the Throne is built upon the promises we made, the seven-point economic plan that we provided to the people of Manitoba. That is why they feel we are on the right track and that is where we are going to stay.

Mr. Murray: Mr. Speaker, perhaps those around his own caucus table will applaud the seven-point plan, but the business community does not. They do not know where it is.

Perhaps this Premier ignored the hearings of the business community because, as usual, he thinks that he knows best. After all, he is the one, Mr. Speaker, that calls the chambers of commerce one-trick ponies who do not know how to run anything about business. The fact is the only thing this Premier knows about running businesses is running businesses out of the province.

Can the Premier outline a sound economic strategy to make Manitoba competitive, Mr. Speaker, or did his Throne Speech avoid mentioning it because he does not have one?

Mr. Doer: Mr. Speaker, one element of the economic strategy that is allowing growth in Manitoba to be above the national average again this year in 2003 is the connection between education and training and the new economy; bio-science, nutraceuticals, biotechnology, the new technologies that are now provided at the Red River College.

We are actually following the advice of former Premier Duff Roblin in doubling the number of college spaces in Manitoba for the future. Members opposite rejected that, Mr. Speaker. We are actually taking a leaky-roofed engineering building that the Tories bequeathed us and rebuilding it with new computer science.

That is why you will find that yesterday—

* (10:15)

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Mr. Doer: That is why yesterday, Mr. Speaker, when we had Boeing choose five sites for the new cruiser, that is why Winnipeg, Manitoba, Canada was on the list for the Boeing expansion.

City of Winnipeg Revenue/Tax Proposal

Mrs. Bonnie Mitchelson (River East): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs. This minister has all but slammed the door on new deal measures that would cost the province money, but what about the taxpayers? What about the working men and women, the seniors and the disabled? Will she stand up today and slam the door on any new deal measures that will cost the taxpayers money and take money out of their pockets?

Hon. MaryAnn Mihychuk (Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs and Trade): Mr. Speaker, thank you for the question. It provides me an opportunity to inform members opposite that we are in a process of deliberation and listening. In fact, as the Leader of the Opposition (Mr. Murray) pointed out, it is appropriate to first listen to Manitobans. That is the process that we are in right now.

Mrs. Mitchelson: Mr. Speaker, I would like to give the Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs an opportunity to tell taxpayers in the city of Winnipeg where she stands.

Can we or will we see something that does not detract, as she said, from both parties when she was talking about having something that does not detract from the city of Winnipeg or the provincial government?

Mr. Speaker, what about the most important partners in this whole new deal, the taxpayers, the working men and women, the seniors, the disabled? Will she stand up today for the taxpayers and say no to any increases in sales tax for Winnipeggers?

Ms. Mihychuk: Mr. Speaker, what I can say as we have said continually that with our election

promises, we made commitments to reduce taxes as we have over the last five years. We will continue to do so.

Mrs. Mitchelson: Mr. Speaker, I just gave the minister an opportunity right now to say no to increases in sales taxes and she did not commit to that. Well, since she will not say no to increases in sales taxes, will she stand up today and support working men and women, seniors and the disabled and commit to a referendum before those sales taxes are increased as it states under the balanced-budget legislation? Will she commit to that today?

Ms. Mihychuk: Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to say that we did have a referendum June 3, and I think the people spoke with a strong message of confidence, and, secondly, I can assure members opposite that we were not elected to raise taxes.

Hells Angels Associates Trial Legal Aid

Mr. Stuart Murray (Leader of the Official Opposition): Mr. Speaker, this Premier has failed to make our communities safer; he has failed to reduce court backlogs; and he still has not established the joint police unit to combat the Hells Angels that was promised almost a year and a half ago.

If breaking promises were a crime, this Premier would be doing time. The Hells Angels are preying on our kids and they are getting rich off criminal activity. Yet here in Manitoba—

* (10:20)

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

Mr. Murray: Mr. Speaker, the Hells Angels are preying on our kids and they are getting rich off criminal activity. Yet here in Manitoba we have five Hells Angels associates who are being granted a publicly funded defence of criminal charges.

Does the Premier agree that these Hells Angels should use taxpayers' money to pay for their defence?

Hon. Gary Doer (Premier): Mr. Speaker, the members opposite, without any legal reference to the courts, paid close to \$9 million for a gang trial in 1998 and 1999.

This Minister of Justice (Mr. Mackintosh), through his officials and through his lawyers, went to court for the right of the public to have integrity in the legal aid system, the first Minister of Justice to do that. I would point out, I have heard the member opposite continually talking about the Hells Angels. I would ask him whether he can read or he chooses not to read *The Globe and Mail* in 1996 and the *Free Press* in 1998 that clearly document when the Hells Angels came to town, under the Tories. Ever since then we have been trying to get them out of town.

Mr. Murray: Mr. Speaker, it is a well-known and documented fact that the Hells Angels set up a chapter under this Premier's watch. If he is sensitive about it, he should be, because frankly no Premier should be proud of the fact that the Hells Angels set up under their watch. That speaks to this Premier.

The fact remains that the Hells Angels are a wealthy criminal organization that make money off the drug trade and the sex trade as well as other criminal activity. In Québec alone the Hells Angels have made more than \$100 million last year. Yet this Premier remains unconvinced that these five Hells Angels associates have access to money to pay for their own defence.

To prove they are ineligible for legal aid, will the Premier commit to conducting a forensic audit to determine the true financial status of these five Hells Angels associates and the organization they belong to? Will he do the right thing on behalf of taxpayers of Manitoba?

Mr. Doer: On behalf of the taxpayers of Manitoba, Mr. Speaker, we took the issue of legal aid to the court. You did nothing with a \$9-million bill with a gang trial in 1998 and 1999.

I would refer the member opposite to a book called *The Road to Hell* written by Julian Sher, where he clearly documents the Angels were blessed by politicians who had done little to put up roadblocks against the incursions the bikers

were making in the province of Manitoba throughout the 1990s. Events have moved quickly since October '97, when in months only their serious rivals, the Spartans, were in tatters.

Mr. Speaker, the member opposite has misinformed the people of Manitoba day after day after day. He should apologize for his lack of conviction on the Hells Angels.

Organized Crime Reduction Strategy

Mr. Gerald Hawranik (Lac du Bonnet): My question is to the Minister of Justice. The Hells Angels moved into Manitoba in 2000. It is well documented. They established gang houses. They established a retail store and they took over and expanded the drug and prostitution trade in Winnipeg. Since then the Justice Minister has had this deer-in-the-headlights look about him and for the last three years Winnipeg has been the murder and violent crime capital of Canada. Given that the Hells Angels have wrestled this Justice Minister to the ground, why does this minister not fight back and take control over the Hells Angels?

* (10:25)

Hon. Gord Mackintosh (Minister of Justice and Attorney General): Well, Mr. Speaker, members opposite should really get some information and it is not far away. There is a bookstore just a couple of blocks over with a new book that documents the track record of the Conservatives in Manitoba. It was indeed in the fall of '97 when the future of the Hells Angels in Manitoba was put down and that was because members opposite turned a blind eye to that challenge, did nothing, did nothing about biker violence in the years before that.

In that particular book by Julian Sher, the Opposition is ridiculed and when we came into office we moved quickly. To quote from that book, Mr. Speaker, to our credit we moved quickly and we are doing more.

Mr. Hawranik: The Hells Angels have a headlock on this Justice Minister because of his lack of action. This minister has promised many times in press conferences over the last year that

he was going to establish a joint RCMP-Winnipeg Police unit to combat the Hells Angels in this province. This unit is still not operating. Will the minister yet hold another worthless press conference or will he just hope that the Hells Angels go away?

Mr. Mackintosh: Well, first of all, again I think members opposite have a serious lack of information when they are getting up and asking questions. The Manitoba Integrated Organized Crime Task Force, I am advised by police officials, is operational. That is a police operation. We were very pleased to support it and, in fact, encourage its establishment. So the member is just wrong. Mr. Speaker, Manitoba is recognized by those who are experts and watch the developments of organized crime in Canada for having the strongest provincial anti-gang laws in Canada. We will continue that.

Mr. Hawranik: Any legislation that this minister has introduced, especially The Civil Remedies Against Organized Crime Act which was touted by the minister last fall as being able to shut down the Hells Angels store, has not worked. The Hells Angels store still operates down the street from the Justice Minister's constituency office. Why has this minister not introduced legislation with teeth? Is it because the Hells Angels are both his supporters and his constituents?

Mr. Mackintosh: It is estimated there are approximately 560 Hells Angels operating in Canada. There are, I understand, about a dozen or so in Manitoba, many of those incarcerated or facing justice, but that is too many for this Government. I want to say that the new legislation this Government has introduced has shut down a fortified biker bunker here in Winnipeg. I understand that the legislation introduced by this Government has shut down 41 drug dens and prostitution houses. My understanding is that there are 12 charges now that have been laid against wearing gang colours in licensed premises.

Health Care System Waiting Lists

Mrs. Myrna Driedger (Charleswood): In yesterday's Throne Speech, the Premier and the

Minister of Health said there is no crisis in health care. They have fixed it. How can the Minister of Health say there is no crisis when Manitoba is short over 1000 nurses, when 1200 nurses are working two to four jobs just to get full-time work and when patients are waiting forever to see a specialist because Manitoba is short 65 specialists in Winnipeg alone? How is this not a crisis?

Hon. Dave Chomiak (Minister of Health): Mr. Speaker, I think the Throne Speech indicated that we have moved from the crisis of the Tory years to stability and rebuilding the health care system.

If the member wants to talk about nurses' numbers, Mr. Speaker, in 1992 there were 11 200 RNs in Manitoba; by 1999, there was 10 792, down 500. In 1992, there were 3200 LPNs; by 1999, there was 2263, 1200 fewer nurses under the tenure of that government.

Mr. Speaker, they cut the doctors' classes. You wonder what happened over 10 years. We would have had close to another hundred doctors if members opposite had not cut the doctors' class.

*(10:30)

Mrs. Driedger: Mr. Speaker, how can this Minister of Health say there is no crisis when diagnostic waiting lists have soared significantly under his watch, when over 4000 patients right now are waiting for cataract surgery, when administrative costs for health care have skyrocketed under his watch and when we now have 20 000 people with serious gambling problems? How is this not a crisis?

Mr. Chomiak: Mr. Speaker, the two longest waiting lists in the province of Manitoba when we came to office in 1999 were cancer waiting lists that were beyond the level and we had to send patients to the United States to bring down the Tory waiting list. We have now cut the waiting list for lifesaving cancer surgery and treatment in half, 50 percent of what it was under the decade of Tory neglect.

The longest diagnostic waiting list was bone density, Mr. Speaker. It was over a year. We

have cut it down to weeks, the longest diagnostic waiting list.

Yes, Mr. Speaker, there are some lists that continue to be difficult. We have increased the MRIs and CT scans by over 50 percent. We are paying for more. We are doubling the number of MRIs in Manitoba when members opposite were refusing to do that.

Mrs. Driedger: Mr. Speaker, how can this Minister of Health say there is no crisis in health care when a thousand children are waiting for dental surgery, when 1400 patients with chronic pain are waiting up to a year and a half to be treated and when nine patients have died waiting for cardiac surgery in this province? What in heaven's name does he call a crisis?

Mr. Chomiak: Mr. Speaker, prior to 1999, no waiting lists were kept in this province by members opposite. So, all of a sudden, members understand that people have problems on waiting lists when they were not kept and were not provided.

Mr. Speaker, members opposite know that we had reached crisis situations. The nurses had struck, the doctors had struck three times, there was chaos in the health care system. We went through four Health ministers. We went through Health ministers and they cut the wages. They brought in Connie Curran. It was a disaster.

Mr. Speaker, Manitobans in the last poll, 86 percent thought that health care was improving or getting better under our watch.

Livestock Industry Government Initiatives

Mr. Jack Penner (Emerson): Mr. Speaker, yesterday was six months after the BSE crisis struck in Manitoba. The day before yesterday, the Premier (Mr. Doer) of the province indicated that they had spent \$19 million provincially on the BSE crisis. The whole livestock industry in Manitoba currently is under crisis; the cattle industry because of the BSE crisis, the hog industry because of lower prices.

Can this Minister of Agriculture tell us what she meant when on the 11th page of yesterday's

Throne Speech she said that the most immediate crisis is agriculture and dealing with matters in rural Manitoba? Can she tell us how she intends to deal with those crises in the future?

Hon. Rosann Wowchuk (Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Initiatives): Mr. Speaker, I thank the member for raising the issue because it gives me the opportunity to talk about all of the things that we have done to work with the people in the beef industry as they work through this crisis.

Mr. Speaker, the members opposite were critical of our loan program and said it would not work. I can tell the members opposite almost 900 producers in Manitoba have applied for the loan program and almost \$35 million has been distributed through that loan program, a program the Opposition said would not work.

As well, we have participated in the federal-provincial slaughter deficiency program and when that program ended we put in an additional slaughter deficiency program. As we said in the Throne Speech, money is flowing to producers.

Bovine Spongiform Encephalopathy Assistance Programs

Mr. Jack Penner (Emerson): I am glad the minister put this on the record. Until now the Province of Manitoba has spent hundreds of thousands of dollars advertising that they have paid to Manitoba producers \$180 million in BSE support. Yet yesterday in the Throne Speech they said it was only \$30 million: 11 federal, 19 provincial. That is what we have said continually. Now the minister is saying \$35 million of that is a debt that Manitoba cattle producers have incurred and will have to live with until the economy and their industry turns around or until the border opens.

Can the Minister of Agriculture tell us which is the truth? Is it \$180 million, is it \$19 million, is it \$11 million, or is it \$35 million in capital debt that you have imposed on the beef producers of this province?

Hon. Rosann Wowchuk (Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Initiatives): Mr. Speaker, from the Opposition we get a lot of

questions, but we really do not get any suggestions. All they have gone out and said: Run up a deficit to address this issue—

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Ms. Wowchuk: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The members opposite would suggest that we run up huge deficits. The member opposite said use the money in the rainy day fund, run up a deficit.

Mr. Speaker, we have worked with the industry. The Manitoba Cattle Producers have worked with us developing programs and recommending programs, and the money is flowing. It is flowing through the loan program, it is flowing through the slaughter deficiency program, it is flowing through the feed assistance program and through the drought assistance program. Money has flown and I can tell you the Throne Speech stated that \$60 million had flowed to producers already.

Mr. Penner: Mr. Speaker, it is interesting, if all this money has flowed, then why is it that the Mennonite Disaster Service came before the Sommerfeld congregation on the 11th of November and asked for 100 000 bushels of grain to be donated to the Disaster Service that they could provide to cattle producers in the north Interlake because there were starving cattle there? There were farmers there with no money to buy feed. All they had to feed their cattle was straw and they needed grain to feed these cattle.

Why is it, if all this money has flowed to farmers, that there are farmers who are dead broke, do not have any money to buy feed and have no feed to feed their cattle and the cattle are starving?

Ms. Wowchuk: Mr. Speaker, I would like to take the opportunity to congratulate the Mennonite Central Committee for the work they do. They work in many areas, just like they worked in the flood of '97 to help people who were affected by the flood. We worked with them.

The Premier (Mr. Doer) will work alongside them. They are working with the people in the Interlake region. They were there donating straw

to those people. I certainly want to commend them for the work they do, but our Government has also put in place many programs that are working for producers.

Again, the loan program is working. People are accessing that money for a cash flow which they said they wanted. They said they wanted a cash flow, and the slaughter deficiency programs are also working to help people reduce the number of animals that they have on their farm, Mr. Speaker.

Economic Growth Provincial Comparisons

Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights): Mr. Speaker, my question to the Premier. I am bound to say that those of us who so eagerly awaited a declaration of what the Government's new mandate would offer to Manitobans in the years ahead or even in the months ahead feel a sense of astonishment, frustration, an overwhelming disappointment at the barren Speech from the Throne that we were tortured with yesterday.

Let me start with a simple question to the Premier. Is it the Government's goal for the next four years to have a province which will have economic and job growth equal to the rest of Canada, better than the rest of Canada or worse than the rest of Canada?

* (10:40)

Hon. Gary Doer (Premier): Mr. Speaker, the growth rate in Manitoba right now is, as we sit in this House, ahead of the national average. I just want to point out that the member opposite, when he is making statements about declarations, we still recall him walking around with little props outside of the Budget speech, fudge, I think it was. Then he was running around for a photo with his bowl of fudge. That was his one declaration and seven days later he voted for our Budget and our economic strategy. We need no advice from him about declarations.

Mr. Speaker: Order. I know it has been a little while, but I would like to remind all honourable members that when the Speaker stands all members should be seated and the Speaker

should be heard in silence. I ask the co-operation of all honourable members.

Mr. Gerrard: Mr. Speaker, the Premier has a way of fudging a story well. Let me put on the record that, over the last four years of his Government, Manitoba's economic growth not only did not keep pace with the rest of Canada, but if we had kept pace, our economic growth, our GDP would have been \$500 million more. That is more than \$1,000 per family. That is the shortfall because of his poor planning.

So I would say to the Premier, if he will have difficulty keeping goals that he cannot set, what is his goal? Is his goal to have a province which has an economic and job growth equal to the rest of Canada, better than the rest of Canada or worse than the rest of Canada?

Mr. Doer: Mr. Speaker, the growth rate in our first term has been greater than the rest of Canada, and secondly, the growth rate as we speak is higher than the rest of Canada. Is the member opposite now denying that he did not walk around with a bowl of fudge on Budget day?

Mr. Gerrard: Mr. Speaker, the StatsCan numbers are very clear. We have fallen behind \$500 million short of where we would have been if we had grown with the rest of Canada. That is more than \$1,000 per family in Manitoba.

The Premier has had two chances to answer my question. I will ask it again or will he strike out on the third try? I ask the Premier: Is his goal in this mandate to do equal to the rest of Canada, better than the rest of Canada or worse, and, if he plans to do better, what is he going to do differently because what he has done the last four years is not working even to keep up to the rest of Canada?

Hon. Greg Selinger (Minister of Finance): In the last four years our GDP growth has been 2.7 percent when the Canadian average has been 1.8 percent. Personal disposable income, the bottom line for Manitobans, has grown at 1.6 percent over the last four years, second best in the west of Canada.

It goes without saying that our unemployment rate at 4.9 percent has been either the first or second lowest in the whole country, and for young people it has been the lowest in the country.

I can tell the member opposite we will continue to achieve outstanding performance in the economy with very high participation rates of employment, around 69 percent, a historic high for this province.

Agricultural Policy Framework Interim Payments

Mr. Larry Maguire (Arthur-Virden): Mr. Speaker, in mid-September, the Minister of Agriculture, when she signed the federal government's new agriculture disaster and safety net policy program with the federal government, I and the Agriculture critic for the Province of Manitoba witnessed that this Minister of Agriculture promised that an interim payment of cash would be in the disaster-stricken hands of farm families in this province by the end of October.

It is near the end of November, Mr. Speaker, and not one dollar has flowed to these farmers. It is another broken promise from this Minister of Agriculture and becoming part of rural Manitoba's history.

Can the minister tell these disaster-stricken farmers in Manitoba where their Agricultural Policy Framework interim payment is?

Hon. Rosann Wowchuk (Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Initiatives): At that time, we indicated that the federal government was making arrangements to allow for an interim payment, and, in fact, interim payments are being made.

The member is wrong to say that no money has flowed. The number of people who have applied is at a very low level, but some people have made application for their interim payment, and money has flowed.

So the member is wrong to say that nobody has applied for the money and nobody has gotten

any money. The number of applications is low but money is flowing.

Mr. Maguire: No doubt applications are there, but the money has not flowed to these farmers. They have phoned consistently.

Mr. Speaker, this minister is so void of ideas and solutions that she is ready to grasp at any federal offer to help regardless of how little support it may be. Will she pay attention to this and if she has a special agreement with the federal government, as she pointed out that she had in signing these, then will she share this information with us today and stop misleading the people of Manitoba and the farmers of Manitoba by making sure that these programs are flowing to the farmers of Manitoba, which she said would be there at the end of October.

Ms. Wowchuk: Well, perhaps, Mr. Speaker, it should be the member opposite who should apologize for misleading the House because he just said that there was no money flowing.

There is a program there. There is an interim program. People can make applications for that program. Some people have applied for the program, Mr. Speaker, and a few of them have received money. I would hope that we would see more applications for the program in order to see cash flows.

But, Mr. Speaker, people are taking advantage of Manitoba programs. They are taking advantage of our loan program, which the Opposition critic criticized right from the beginning, and money is flowing through that program at a very low interest rate, and producers are also being helped by all of the other programs that we created this year.

Cash is flowing and prices are increasing for cattle, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: Order. I would just like to remind all honourable members when using words that Speakers have ruled parliamentary and other Speakers have ruled unparliamentary, such as the word "misleading," I would just like to kindly ask all honourable members to be careful using that word, because all members in here are honourable members.

Speakers have ruled it parliamentary; other speakers have ruled it unparliamentary. I just do not think there is a place for that here. I just kindly ask honourable members to respect each other as honourable members. The honourable member—*[interjection]* I am just reminding all honourable members. I heard it from both sides of the House. That is why I am reminding all honourable members. I am asking the co-operation of all honourable members.

Mr. Maguire: The fact is that farmers of Manitoba are no longer even skeptical. They are absolutely outright pessimistic about the programs that this Government says they have put in place and congratulated themselves for it in advertisements that have not flowed to the farmers in Manitoba.

Mr. Speaker, do Manitobans in disasters have to wait another three and a half years before there is any provincial government support coming into their hands in rural Manitoba?

Ms. Wowchuk: Well, Mr. Speaker, farmers from Manitoba are getting support. I do not know who the member opposite is talking to, but I have visited with many producers and farm organizations who have indicated that the programs that we have in place are working, whether it be the low-interest loan program that the Opposition member criticized, whether it be the deficiency program that the federal government and the Province shared, or the Manitoba slaughter program that the federal government did not participate in.

The producers of Manitoba are taking advantage of this program and the producers of Manitoba are seeing hope. I would say that the members opposite should start listening to producers, and looking at the opportunities that are out there rather than painting such a negative story about agriculture when in reality things are turning around there.

* (10:50)

Livestock Industry Feed Assistance Programs

Mr. Glen Cummings (Ste. Rose): Mr. Speaker, this Minister of Agriculture has spent a lot of time talking about her programs, but I continue

to have feedlot operators call me who say that at the tail end of the first feed support program, they were told it was out of money; they were ineligible. Their cycle happened to be out of sync with this Government, and they are told again that the second program for feed support has run out. These people got no support at all or very little out of the first one. Is she prepared to deal with that issue?

Hon. Rosann Wowchuk (Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Initiatives): Mr. Speaker, when we put in place the slaughter deficiency program, we did it in consultation with the people involved in the cattle industry, the Manitoba Cattle Producers. Manitoba Cattle Producers asked us to change the program to a feed program because there was not enough livestock being slaughtered. It was always in agreement that the money would continue for the slaughter program and then part of the money would be used for a feed program.

When the feed program was started, Mr. Speaker, there were more animals registered than we anticipated would be registered, and the money had to be distributed within the numbers that we had. I do not know what the member is talking about the second feed program. It was not a second feed program, it was a drought assistance program.

Mr. Speaker: Time for Oral Questions has expired.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

Chazzan Anibal Mass

Mr. Stuart Murray (Leader of the Official Opposition): Mr. Speaker, on November 16, 2003, I was delighted to be in attendance at the Installation of Chazzan Anibal Mass at the Shaarey Zedek Synagogue. It was a wonderful ceremony. It was a ceremony full of life, learning and music, and it was one of the first installations of a cantor at the Shaarey Zedek in some memory.

I would like to just pay tribute to Chazzan Anibal Mass, who was born in Buenos Aires. As a child, he participated in well-known children's

choirs at the Collegio Bet-Am Medinat Israel, Mr. Speaker. Chazzan Mass's interest in liturgical music came while studying for his own bar mitzvah and immediately after completing his studies, Chazzan Mass was selected as a full-time Chazzan by the Israelite community of Santiago, Chile, where he served for over eight years.

It was during that time that one of our Manitoba ambassadors, Mrs. Leslie Wilder, discovered Chazzan Anibal Mass and through her hard work and efforts, Mr. Speaker, he was brought to the Shaarey Zedek Synagogue where he was installed as the cantor.

I would like to offer a mazel tov, Mr. Speaker, to Chazzan Anibal Mass, his wife Betina Lidenbaum, their sons, Marcelo and Nurit. It truly was a wonderful, wonderful way to spend an afternoon, and I was delighted to be there.

Domestic Violence Prevention Month

Ms. Theresa Oswald (Seine River): Mr. Speaker, it is my privilege to rise today to speak on behalf of the many Manitobans who are working to seek justice and healing for those who are the victims of domestic violence. November is Domestic Violence Prevention Month. I wish to bring attention to individuals, the majority of whom are women, who have been harmed by domestic violence, and to thank the many community organizations who have dedicated time and energy to raise awareness and to support those in need.

I recently participated in an annual breakfast launching Domestic Violence Prevention Month. I would like to thank the three organizations that hosted the launch: Réseau action femmes Manitoba, l'Entre-temps des Franco-Manitobaines and Pluri-elles.

J'aimerais féliciter sincèrement ces organisations pour le travail important qu'elles font à l'année longue pour répondre aux besoins des femmes et des familles des communautés francophones du Manitoba.

Translation

I would like sincerely to congratulate these organizations for the important work they do throughout the year to meet the needs of the women and families of Manitoba's Francophone communities.

English

With the support of these organizations along with numerous provincial programs, including the Family Violence Prevention Program of Manitoba Family Services and Housing, we can hope that people caught in a cycle of violence can end the abuse and rebuild their lives.

En déclarant novembre le mois de prévention de la violence familiale, nous avons l'occasion de mettre nos ressources en commun et de sensibiliser collectivement le public sur les questions qui ont trait à la violence au foyer.

Translation

In declaring November Domestic Violence Prevention Month, we have the opportunity to pool our resources and collectively promote public awareness of issues related to domestic violence.

English

Mr. Speaker, abuse takes many forms, sometimes subtle in its cruelty, sometimes overt in its violence and, sadly, sometimes deadly. The cycle of abuse is often passed from generation to generation for both victims and abusers, but with public education campaigns by the Manitoba government such as Domestic Violence Prevention Month and with the help of our impassioned community organizations we can work together to prevent the harm and to help people look forward to living in a society that values respect and dignity for all.

Fred McGuinness

Mr. Mervin Tweed (Turtle Mountain): I am pleased to rise today to recognize Brandon-area resident Fred McGuinness on being appointed a member of the Order of Canada. This

announcement was made on August 5 of this year.

The Order of Canada recognizes people who have made a difference to our country. It is our country's highest honour for lifetime achievement. Fred McGuinness is most deserving of this recognition. He is a man who loves his province and his country and he makes no bones about sharing this message. He has been particularly dedicated to spreading the word about rural life and the countless possibilities that exist in rural Canada.

Mr. Speaker, many became familiar with Mr. McGuinness' work during his career as a newspaper journalist. For example, he was a publisher and vice-president of *Southam Press* and vice-president and editor of the *Brandon Sun*. He has also spent many years freelancing for organizations such as the *Reader's Digest* and the CBC.

Mr. Speaker, thousands of Canadians heard his stories on CBC Radio's "Morningside with Peter Gzowski." Countless others read his long running column "Neighbourly News" in more than 60 rural newspapers across Manitoba and beyond.

Mr. McGuinness is also well-known for his love of history and he has worked on many different books on social and popular history. In fact, he received the McWilliams Gold Medal for best Manitoba history book in 1985. He also received the Order of the Buffalo Hunt for being an interpreter of the rural scene.

Community involvement has always been an important part of Mr. McGuinness' life. He has served on the boards of organizations such as the International Peace Gardens, the building committee of the Keystone Centre and the Provincial Exhibition of Manitoba, among others.

Author Robert Davies recently devoted a section of his new book, *Prairie People*, to Fred McGuinness. As Mr. Davies so aptly points out, Fred McGuinness touched readers' hearts with his chronicle of what prairie people are all about.

Mr. Speaker, please join me in congratulating Fred McGuinness on being appointed a member of the Order of Canada.

Garth Pischke

Ms. Marilyn Brick (St. Norbert): Mr. Speaker, the importance of a team coach cannot be understated, especially the hard work, the dedication and the days spent encouraging young athletes to develop their talents and to work together to become a winning team.

I would like to acknowledge in the House today the work of such an individual, Mr. Garth Pischke, who is a constituent in the riding of St. Norbert. He works as a head coach for the Bison men's volleyball team and just recently he coached his 1000th winning volleyball game on November 10, 2003.

Mr. Pischke graduated with a BA from the University of Winnipeg. Since that time he has taught volleyball and golf for the physical education program at the University of Manitoba, my alma mater. During his 24 seasons at the University of Manitoba, the Bisons have qualified for the CIAU National Championship 21 times and the Bisons have amassed nine CIAU gold medals, nine silver and one bronze. From 1996 to 2000, he was the national coach for the men's team. Thirty-five of the athletes he has coached have represented Canada in national team programs.

In addition to coaching volleyball he has also contributed to the community as a volunteer coach for the Youth Basketball League at Richmond Kings Community Centre during my tenure as president at the club.

Mr. Pischke himself has a background that is just as remarkable. As a player he has won many national championships and was a member of the Canadian Olympic Team in the 1976 Montreal Olympics and the 1984 Los Angeles Olympics.

(11:00)

His work in the Manitoba community cannot be understated. His knowledge and skills are what helps the University of Manitoba men's volleyball team maintain its astounding record and has helped in the growth and development of many young athletes.

I would therefore like to congratulate and thank him for his contribution to the Manitoba community. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Communities in Bloom Competition

Mr. Larry Maguire (Arthur-Virden): Mr. Speaker, today I am proud to share with this Assembly the recent honour bestowed upon the Town of Boissevain. In the International Communities in Bloom 2003 Competition, Boissevain and its partner of the last two years, Audley, England, won in the category for small towns. The purpose of the Communities in Bloom Competition was to challenge communities to foster civic pride and environmental responsibility while improving their quality of life through beautification.

At the awards ceremony in Stafford, Ontario, the mayor of Boissevain, Mr. Ed Anderson, accompanied by Boissevain residents Lorraine and Garnet Holmes accepted the trophy on behalf of their home town. Boissevain was recognized for its community beautification, recycling efforts, total community involvement in development and improvement projects. Amber cherry trees greeting visitors as they drive into Boissevain, historical murals and 200 petunia baskets lining the town's boulevards are but three of the many displays that contributed to Boissevain's international success.

I would also like to congratulate the town of Birtle, Mr. Speaker, which received an honourable mention in the international competition. Many Manitoba towns did well in the Canadian Communities in Bloom Competition, and I would like to congratulate Neepawa and Roblin, winners in their respective categories, with honourable mentions going to Hamiota, Binscarth, MacGregor, Souris, Virden, Dauphin and Brandon.

I would also like to take this opportunity to congratulate the many volunteers who worked together to make Boissevain and other Manitoba communities truly beautiful. These volunteers spend much time throughout the year working on and maintaining an attractive community. The hard work and commitment of the Communities in Bloom volunteers provide lovely surroundings and a peaceful atmosphere throughout Manitoba. Their efforts deserve our recognition.

Mr. Speaker, we live in a truly beautiful province, and on behalf of this Assembly I am

delighted to extend our congratulations to those who work so hard to keep Manitoba communities beautiful and in bloom. Thank you.

Mr. Speaker: The honourable Attorney General, on House business.

House Business

Hon. Gord Mackintosh (Minister of Justice and Attorney General): On a matter of House business, would you please canvass the House to see if there is agreement to waive the time frame for the filing and House Leader selection of Private Members' resolutions set out in Rule 31(2) and 31(3) for this session, so that these actions take place at a time of the House leader's choosing? That has been the subject of discussions with the parties opposite.

Mr. Speaker: Is there agreement to waive the time frame for the filing and House Leader selection of Private Members' resolutions set out in Rule 31(2) and 31(3) for this session, so that these actions take place at a time of the House leaders' choosing? *[Agreed]*

* (11:00)

ORDERS OF THE DAY

GOVERNMENT BUSINESS

THRONE SPEECH DEBATE (First Day of Debate)

Mr. Gerard Jennissen (Flin Flon): Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the Member for Seine River (Ms. Oswald), 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 Second Session of the Thirty-eighth Legislature of Manitoba.

Motion presented.

Mr. Jennissen: Mr. Speaker, it is a privilege to open the debate on the Throne Speech for this the Second Session of the Thirty-eighth Legislature of the Province of Manitoba. I want to start by welcoming you, as well as the Clerk and the

table officers, the Sergeant-at-Arms, the pages and all others who make this institution function smoothly. I also welcome my colleagues, particularly those who were newly elected last June, and I welcome them to this interesting Chamber.

I want to also, Mr. Speaker, commend you on your outreach program. I happened to be in the school the other day and the Grade 5 students talked quite positively about their experience with you and the Member for River East (Mrs. Mitchelson). In fact, being an old teacher, I could not get out of the habit of quizzing them as to whether they had really learned their material, and they had indeed learned their material. I was surprised that kids in Grade 5 would use words like "permafrost" and "inukshuk" and "Nunavut" and "polar bears," and so on. It was very interesting. I want to commend you on your outreach program and bringing an understanding of democracy to the children in our schools. This is not the only place I find that you have been. When I was in Leaf Rapids, you had also been in that school.

Young people did mention at some of the schools, however, that they were less than impressed with us sometimes that were in this Chamber and particularly that we do not exhibit a very courteous attitude to one another, particularly during Question Period. I guess that brings into question whether we are really good role models to those youngsters when they are sitting in the gallery watching how we behave during Question Period. I know it is part of the institution and part of the history that we have to be somewhat fractious and that we have to be a little adversarial, but I think sometimes, Mr. Speaker, we do go to extremes. *[interjection]* As my honourable colleague says, it is better than swords, and he is absolutely right.

Mr. Speaker, I had the privilege and the pleasure again a few days ago to be at the Lieutenant-Governor's reception. I was there with friends from Cranberry Portage, or at least they were formerly from Cranberry Portage. One of the interesting things they told me as they spent the evening there was: We thought we could tell the Liberals from the Tories from the NDP, but wandering around this place they all look alike. They all sound alike. They are all friendly. They are all courteous.

I guess they were wondering out loud why it is that when they walk into this Chamber there is this sudden transformation, this metamorphosis when we come in, poof, like we are zapped with a ray and there is then the blob of the Tory right and there is a blob of the New Democratic Party left and there is a small blob in the middle of the Liberals. It is a very small blob in the middle, but I always say a small fig leaf is better than no fig leaf at all.

It is interesting to know how drastically we change. It is almost a Jekyll and Hyde transformation, a Cinderella transformation. Perhaps the cameras have something to do with that. I do not know. However, Mr. Speaker, we will take into account the many times that you caution us to be mindful of our language in this House.

This Throne Speech, Mr. Speaker, is about much accomplished and more to do, which was one of the slogans that our party used. It is about building on past successes. In 1999, the people of this province chose a different direction, chose a different government. Since 1995, we have been fleshing out, we have been concretizing that new direction. Again, in 2003, the voters of this province made a clear choice, an overwhelming choice, that they wanted us to maintain that direction. So it does not matter what the naysayers say in this House, it is obvious that the people of Manitoba want us to continue with the direction we first set in 1999.

I understand that the Throne Speech is a very general document, but throne speeches do point the way. They do signal intent and direction, and there are words you can use to describe throne speeches, and, of course, the Opposition will never use positive words, but I would say that if you look at this objectively, you would say that this Throne Speech is balanced, that it is sensible. It is practical. It is achievable. There is an innovative and creative aspect to it that is comprehensible. No sector, no community, no group has been omitted, and it has a positive tone, a very positive tone.

I remember in the mid-nineties, when I looked at throne speeches and I read throne speeches, entire sections of the province were ignored, particularly northern Manitoba. Very often Aboriginal people were hardly mentioned or just mentioned in passing. That is no longer

the case. There is a positive tone to this Throne Speech despite the harsh realities that exist out there.

* (11:10)

We are aware of some of those realities. The BSE crisis and the drought that have devastated farm family income, we are aware of that. We are trying to address that. We know that there is a softwood lumber dispute with the United States that is very hard on our forest industry. We know that when the dollar goes up in value it hurts us, particularly the export industry. We know that the mining sector is hurting right now, that zinc prices are near record low, and that is not good for northern Manitoba.

Despite this, if we want to be honest and objective, we have adjusted to those new realities. This Government is flexible, sticking to the path that we have set, yes, but flexible, proactive and willing to change if situations warrant or demand it. I want to point out some examples of this. Not too long ago, we created a new ministry in this Government, the Ministry for Energy with its adjunct of Science and Technology. That was a new important direction.

We have an absolutely new Ministry of Water. I think this acknowledges how important water is, how water touches every aspect of our lives, and how, in this province, hydro depends on our water supply, how water touches our need for recreation, particularly in northern Manitoba. We need clean drinking water, potable water, irrigation water. We know that there will be parts of the world where wars will be fought over water. I think it was foresight and vision to create a water ministry. It was a very positive step in a right direction.

We also created a Ministry for Healthy Living. Again, it shows that we are flexible and we are adjusting to the reality that is out there. I am particularly proud that all three of these ministers in these ministries are capable, active, dynamic people who, I know, will do a tremendous job. Would that have been possible under the former government? I highly doubt it.

We know that the status quo is not good enough. It is seldom good enough. We have to be proactive and we have to be flexible. Take, for example, we have got a new stand-alone tourism agency which cannot be anything but good for this province, particularly northern Manitoba. The Throne Speech clearly indicates that northern Manitoba was not forgotten. There is strong support for the Northern Development Strategy. As a northerner, I would like to touch upon some of these aspects that affect northern Manitoba.

Mr. Conrad Santos, Deputy Speaker, in the Chair

The Northern Development Strategy was initiated by the northern MLAs shortly after the 1999 election. I remember that first meeting, Mr. Deputy Speaker, in Grace Lake in The Pas where we put forward our concerns. We were worried that the concerns of northern Manitoba might not get to the front burner, but at least we knew they were at least on the back burner. We were trying to get them to the front burner. In the former government, they were never even on the stove [*interjection*], but they did burn us, as the honourable member says. We isolated certain general areas of concern on which we had to focus. Those concerns were basically in order of importance, or at least in the order in which they arose: housing was the number one, health, transportation, education and employment training

The Northern Development Strategy was designed to improve quality of life for northerners, Mr. Deputy Speaker, to expand education and employment opportunities, to increase economic opportunity and to co-ordinate services and investment in northern Manitoba.

The Northern Development Strategy is a guide for all government departments. A working group of senior government officials co-ordinates the delivery of northern services assisted by the Community Economic Development Committee of Cabinet. Northern concerns that were ignored for over a decade are dealt with as a priority. It makes us, as northerners, feel good. It makes us feel that we are once again part of Manitoba.

I would also like to point out, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that the Throne Speech does not ignore Aboriginal people, which is a grand departure from the former throne speeches we used to read in the mid-nineties. Aboriginal people are not forgotten, not forgotten. It is new; it is obviously new that an Aboriginal Issues Committee of Cabinet has been established. That is a new and positive direction. This Aboriginal Issues Committee of Cabinet will accelerate the TLE process, the treaty land entitlement process. It will deal with Aboriginal education. It will formulate and develop a Manitoba Métis strategy among other things.

There is a new advisory council on First Nations and Indigenous Arts and Cultural Activities. That is an important new first step. There is a new Aboriginal Action Plan for youth education, basically to make sure that our Aboriginal high school students finish school and that we can help them fit into the job market.

There is a new devolution of Aboriginal and Métis child welfare services. There is a new University College of the North and a dual credit initiative that goes with that, a college. By the way, I might point out, that was not unanimously applauded by our Tory friends. I think that is unfortunate because it is an oversight to assume that northern Manitoba does not play a massive role in the economy of Manitoba. Northern Manitobans are tired of being second-class citizens. I am very happy to tell you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, we have never been treated as such under this Government.

As well, Mr. Deputy Speaker, there are ongoing initiatives such as the First Nations mining partnership, hydro development partnership, particularly Wuskwatim, the partnership with Nelson House. ACCESS programs are still in effect, BUNTEP and so on, very important programs. I have had the honour in the past to work with some of those BUNTEP programs in Cranberry Portage, Norway House, Pukatawagan, and I was always struck with the ultimate common sense that was being used. People from northern areas were being trained in the North, so that if you train northern teachers, they tend to stay there. We do not have to import them from Toronto or elsewhere. Those are very important strategies, not to mention the Healthy

Child initiatives, the diabetes prevention strategy, the restorative justice initiative, and so on and so on and so on. Aboriginal peoples were not forgotten and are not forgotten in this Throne Speech.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I would also like to talk, as a northerner, a little bit about the fact that I am proud of this Government because it is a government that was the first to recognize the reality of climate change. It did not try to dodge it like some other provincial governments did. This Government took the Kyoto Protocol very seriously. They did not question the science that indisputably points out that climate change is happening, that global warming is a factor, that the burning of fossil fuels does lead to greenhouse gas emissions and climate change.

The science is there, Mr. Deputy Speaker. In fact, a gentleman told me yesterday that for the last 20 years NASA satellites have been monitoring northern Manitoba and have discovered that, for example, precipitation levels are dropping ominously. Also, scientists on the ground have pointed out that in the last 50 years in northern Manitoba, surface temperatures have increased by at least one degree Celsius. That may not sound like very much, but it can lead to tremendous repercussions for northern Manitoba.

It affects winter roads and supplies. It affects permafrost which will melt and thus then develop more atmospheric pollution. More droughts, more forest fires are possible. Shorelines will be altered. It will affect the Port of Churchill and shipping, perhaps in a positive sense, but it may also affect wildlife such as polar bears in a negative sense.

This Government is absolutely committed to clean energy, to green energy, hydro-electricity, hydrogen fuels, ethanol and wind power.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, Manitoba is uniquely situated to take advantage of creating this clean and green energy. In terms of developing hydro-electricity, we are looking at building dams such as Wuskwatim, Kiask, or Gull, Notigi, Conawapa and possibly others. Only about one half of our hydro-electric potential in Manitoba is being used at the moment.

Our water resources, you have to realize, are to us in Manitoba what oil resources are to Alberta; what oil is to Alberta, water is to us. The difference is that oil is non-renewable, but water is. So we are in a very favourable position in this province. We need to focus on harnessing those resources. We have to obviously do things like build a Bipole III at some point and get involved in extending an east-west electric grid so that power flows as easily east and west as it does north and south.

The Province is going to get involved. Hydro itself is going to get involved with wind power, which is an exciting new potential. I used to visit wind turbines in Germany and Holland many years ago. At that time, I noticed that any one of those wind turbines would produce anywhere from a quarter-megawatt to half a megawatt of power, electric power. Right now, we are installing, or will be installing, wind turbines in Manitoba that have the capacity of 1.65 megawatt. In fact, in some places they are testing wind turbines that are over 2 megawatt and, in some places, even 5 megawatt. So there is all kinds of potential.

* (11:20)

What we are really saying is that if Wuskwatim produces and will produce 200 megawatts, 125 wind turbines right now would equal the same power output. Of course, there is one catch to this. The wind does not always blow, one could argue, except for this House.

Health care. I would like to point out that in northern Manitoba health care is extremely essential to our people that tend to be scattered in very isolated communities. It has been a No. 1 priority for this Government, both in 1999 and also in 2003. I am very happy that this Government has seen fit, as mentioned in the Throne Speech, to increase college spaces from 85 to 100. Before, we increased them from 70 to 85. In other words, we reinstated the 15 spaces that the Tories had cut. There are many more nurses on stream, many more medical specialists being trained.

In the North, we still hear over and over again how happy people are that the \$50 user fee

for transportation has been removed. We are happy that we have new ambulances: Snow Lake, Cranberry Portage, Flin Flon and other places. We have more nursing programs in northern and rural communities. I am particularly pleased that finally the upgrades in Snow Lake Hospital will take place, which is a two-bed personal care home addition. Flin Flon is proud of its Telehealth link, as well as Health Links in general. The Health Links line is very important to our northern people, but Telehealth is extremely important because now we do not, in some cases, have to move patients to Winnipeg. We can do it via media. We can talk back and forth from Winnipeg to Flin Flon. The Office of Rural and Northern Health will increase the number of health care professionals in northern and rural Manitoba as well.

There are still challenges, because when you are a patient in Flin Flon, for example, a bus ride takes eight hours normally, if the bus were not stopping anywhere, but actually it takes 12 hours. So that is a long trip, especially for senior citizens to be seeing a specialist in Winnipeg. There are a lot of costs associated with this as well. I am not saying it is a wonderful situation when our patients have to go south, but we have done as much as we can to alleviate that through the Northern Patient Transportation Program.

I would like to touch briefly on justice in the North. This Government was a government that took the AJI report very seriously. It did not let it gather dust on the shelf as the previous government did. This Government works in partnership with Aboriginal communities. We are working with Aboriginal communities to establish new Aboriginal policing and probation services. An Aboriginal restorative justice program will also be initiated. Reforms of the Provincial Court and Legal Aid are under way as well. The Lighthouse program is a positive crime prevention strategy for young people. It has been expanded. I am happy to say it has been expanded to Flin Flon. In fact, I talked with some of the people in the Flin Flon Friendship Centre and they were ecstatic over this program. They say their youth from 10 to 14 years old now have activities that are non-criminal, not saying that they were criminal before, but it gives them strategies, it gives them ideas, things to do, because there is not an awful lot sometimes in northern Manitoba

for our young people. They feel bored. These programs are very, very positive. Activity nights at the youth centre are very popular, gym nights at the Ruth Betts School, teen dances, and so on. The program co-ordinators are very, very happy with this new Lighthouse program.

When you talk northern Manitoba, one of the things that always comes up is the mining industry. It is an industry that is extremely important to the economy of this province and particularly to the economy of northern Manitoba. It is a \$1-billion industry. Unfortunately, it is a cyclical industry and sometimes it hits lows. We are in a low right now and we have been there for quite a while. Some metal prices have been rising, but prices like zinc are still extremely low. It has affected our mining industry in northern Manitoba.

The lifeblood of the mining industry is exploration. You have to keep exploring. You have to keep finding new ore bodies. You have to keep prospecting. We are facing the reality that when you have a non-renewable resource like a particular find of minerals, eventually, the mine will cease. Yes, in the past we have closed or we have downsized certain mining towns. I am thinking of Herb Lake, which is completely closed; Wabowden, which has bounced back; Sherridon, which is much smaller than it used to be, but, also, in the more recent past, Lynn Lake lost its gold mine. Bissett, and Leaf Rapids very recently lost its one and only mine. Those are one-industry towns so it does affect the people dramatically.

Despite some of those negatives, there are also some positives. One of the positives was a few years ago when Hudson Bay Mining & Smelting brought over an airplane from South Africa called the Spectrum, filled from the nose to the tail of that plane with highly sophisticated instruments, and when that plane flew over northern Manitoba, literally dozens and dozens of mineral anomalies were discovered. Most of them we have not even checked out yet. So there are some positives as well.

The other positive is, Mr. Deputy Speaker, sometimes if the dollar drops, then some of the marginal operations spring back to life because

they can still be profitable. As well, everyone tells me in the mining industry, and I go to every mining conference I can in this province because they are very, very important conferences, all the explorers tell me that the MEAP program, the Mineral Exploration Assistance Program, is a wonderful program and want us to continue it.

There is a diamond strategy we have in this province. I might add there is a mining task force as well that came up with some very important recommendations to strengthen the mining industry. I was very proud to be part of that mining task force.

Transportation is a key for northern Manitoba because so many of our communities are isolated. Some have regular roads, some have only winter roads, some have only airports. I should add as an aside, it was under the Schreyer government that most of the 22 northern airports were actually created. There is an extensive network of winter roads and we have actually expanded them, particularly to Tadoule Lake, Lac Brochet and Brochet.

Challenges remain, Mr. Deputy Speaker. We still have to look very carefully at Churchill, the Churchill line and the Sherridon line. We want to maintain those lines. We do not want to give up those lines. Churchill particularly is not only important as our only inland port, but it is a great tourist destination. We want to keep those lines operating. So it is a high priority of this Government to make that happen.

Now roads cost money. I could give you an example. The road to South Indian Lake was a very expensive proposition that ran into tens of millions of dollars. It was built under the flood agreement, but it was supposed to have been built anywhere between 1991 and 2001. Now the Tories did not build that road. Only when we came to power in 1999 did we actually build the road and, believe me, we had to hurry because we were running into a time-frame problem. This Government did act.

In wrapping up, I want to remind all honourable members that it is an honour to be a speaker here today. I want to point out to them that when we talk about the future of this province, the Golden Boy still points north, even

though he is wearing apparently a new golden skin, which, I think, was put on with Manitoba gold, was it not?

Mr. Speaker in the Chair

I want to point out that Manitoba's economic potential, a large chunk of it is still locked up in northern Manitoba. Our hydro development capacity could be doubled. There is still enough room there to double it. Hydro is an important resource for this province. Wind farms could be constructed; micro-turbines could be constructed up north, which would help some of the diesel communities like Shamattawa or Tadoule Lake or Brochet or Lac Brochet. It would be very useful for those isolated communities.

As I said before, there are many mineral anomalies in northern Manitoba that have not yet been fully explored. I think the potential for finding new minerals or diamonds is very, very high.

The tourism industry, of course, it is a no-brainer to say the tourism industry fits northern Manitoba: the lakes, the water, the fishing, the hunting, the ecotourism, and so on. It is all there for us to enjoy.

* (11:30)

I want to end, Mr. Speaker, by saying that there will be people who will criticize this Throne Speech. There will be people who will praise this Throne Speech, but, apart from the Throne Speech, we could look at some symbols at how things have changed for the positive. I look at my city of Flin Flon and I find a Flintoba Mall that did not exist in 1999. We have three major stores and a new highway thanks to my colleague from Thompson. When you drive into that city, it actually looks like a city for the first time in a long time. It has become a service centre for all of northern Manitoba. I feel sorry that we are drawing some of that business away from The Pas. I apologize to my honourable member, but my business friends are very pleased.

The skyline of Flin Flon has changed. It is a very tangible, very visible symbol of this Gov-

ernment. It is not just Flin Flon. If you want to go to Winnipeg, you will see the skyline changing too. You know that we have cranes. We will have a new Hydro building. We have the True North complex. We have the Red River community College Downtown Campus. So the skyline has also changed in Winnipeg. It has changed all over this province.

Let not the Opposition say we have not done anything, because, if you drive into the town of Flin Flon, it will not take you more than two minutes to realize we have done an awful lot.

Mr. Speaker, I think this Throne Speech is a positive Throne Speech. I think it indicates clearly and I have given you some examples that it shows that Manitoba is on the move. We would like to keep it that way.

Point of Order

Mr. Speaker: The honourable Member for Carman, on a point of order?

Mr. Denis Rocan (Carman): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker, I wonder if you can canvass the House, Sir, to see if there would be a willingness to call it 12:30 once the seconder has finished her remarks. That would give my leader an opportunity to start up on Monday in Orders of the Day. Is there willingness of the House?

Mr. Speaker: Is there willingness of the House to call it 12:30 after the seconder has spoken? Is there willingness? *[Agreed]*

* * *

Ms. Theresa Oswald (Seine River): Mr. Speaker, I am most honoured today to second the motion made by the honourable Member for Flin Flon (Mr. Jennissen). From one former English teacher to another, I truly appreciate the thoughtfulness and craftsmanship of his remarks.

I would, on behalf of the MLAs in the class of 2003, both on this side of the Chamber and the other, like to extend my gratitude to our colleagues in the Manitoba Legislature who have been unfailingly supportive in our first months as members of the Legislative Assembly. Your

guidance and encouragement has made the transition a relatively smooth one.

I would like to extend congratulations to the members of Cabinet, new and experienced, and wish you well in the challenges that are ahead.

I am thankful to the First Minister for his support and guidance and for offering me the opportunity and privilege of serving as his Legislative Assistant. I suspect there will be much work and learning ahead, but I am delighted at the opportunity to serve all Manitobans in the best way I can.

I reserve my greatest thanks for the people of Seine River who have placed their trust in me by electing me to represent them, and, in particular, to the many volunteers and friends, far too many to be named individually, who worked so hard to help me achieve this goal.

I am deeply honoured and humbled to stand before you today to deliver my inaugural speech in the Chamber. I am also confident as I stand here, however, because of the strength and determination and sense of commitment I carry as a result of my upbringing and my family. My mother, Margaret Emily Oswald, but please call her Peggy, gave me a passion for language and a thirst for knowledge.

My brother, Greg Oswald, shared with me his genuine love of people, great sense of fun, and, through the constant parry and thrust of sibling interaction, taught me the benefits and, indeed, necessity of quick wit and an ever-ready rebuttal.

My other brother, Brad Oswald, who was, incidentally, recently proclaimed Winnipeg's funniest person with a day job, has been a constant source of amusement throughout my life and has also been so much more: a big brother, a tireless supporter, a confidant, an inspiration and, perhaps most importantly, a friend.

My late father, Raymond Kenneth Oswald, was exactly what everyone hopes their dad would be: a loving, supportive parent who gave me every opportunity to succeed and then stood

in the background smiling proudly whenever I did.

Of course, there are others to whom I owe a debt of great gratitude as I stand here today delivering my first speech in the Chamber. I attended great schools in south Winnipeg that gave me every opportunity to be involved in music, drama and athletics and prepared me well for the academic challenges that confront every student. I had great teachers, like Pat Stanger and Peter Cowie who taught as much about social justice as they did about curricular subjects. I had fantastic experiences in athletics, like playing volleyball at Dakota Collegiate for former national team coach Dennis Nord, who understood that the best kind of co-operative learning occurs when one plays as part of a team, and play we did, all the way to the provincial championship. Glory days, they will pass you by.

In total, these opportunities provided me with the best learning environment one could possibly have hoped for. As I stand before you today, I see that it was a precious time that prepared me well for the professional challenges I faced as an adult.

After completing my Bachelor of Education and Bachelor of Arts at the University of Manitoba, I began my teaching career in yet another enriching and nurturing environment, Glenlawn Collegiate. During my time there, I had the opportunity to teach about 1500 students over the course of 11 years, and I loved it. I had the privilege of working for some of the division's finest administrators: Brian Thorarinson, Al Thomson and Donna Bulow, leaders in every sense of the word who made me work hard and guided me through the hard lessons that must be learned along the way.

Without a doubt, one of the most rewarding experiences was working alongside one of my own former teachers, Arpena Babaian, who picked up exactly where she had left off when I was a student, challenging me, inspiring me and always making me want to do better and be better. I also met new educators, some of whom, like Irene Nordheim, became mentors and supporters and who respected me enough to tell me to move on; that is, on to new educational challenges like taking a position in student services in a high-needs K to Senior 1 school or

applying for the position of vice-principal in an exceptional-needs school.

In June 2003, the people of the constituency of Seine River entrusted me with the responsibility of being their representative in the Manitoba Legislature. This is a profound honour, indeed, for no member of our party has held this seat since the creation of Seine River in 1990. Prior to the 2003 provincial election, the seat for Seine River had been held by Mrs. Louise Dacquay for 13 years, and although we do not share a common political vision, I would like to pay tribute to her for her years of dedicated service to the members of our constituency.

During my years as an educator, one of the great joys I encountered was serving as coordinator for leadership programs for junior and senior high students, programs that provided opportunities for students to acquire skills beyond the academic realm that are essential to the development of young people into citizens, so that they could make a meaningful contribution to our society. One of the benefits of supervising these programs and watching students grow into thoughtful, compassionate, responsible citizens was that the experience prompted me to re-examine my own sense of duty and my potential for public service. Simply put, those students taught me, and what I learned about myself made it possible for me to be here today as a member of the Legislative Assembly and to wholeheartedly support the vision for our province's future that is found in yesterday's Speech from the Throne.

As I have gone door to door in my constituency, the people of Seine River have told me time and time again that health care and healthy living are issues of utmost importance. I am delighted to see that yesterday's Throne Speech builds on the accomplishments of the last four years and identifies improvements that will be made in the areas of health care and healthy living as this Government moves forward. I know my constituents at Vic Wyatt House and Kirchhoff Gardens will appreciate improved access for Manitoba seniors to health information, health promotion, prevention of illness and improved recreation options.

The staff, students and families connected to the nine vital, vibrant and extremely well-attended schools throughout Seine River will certainly appreciate the introduction of new school programs aimed at the promotion of physical activity and nutritious food choices. There can be little doubt that improved health and fitness in our schools will create long-term benefits for the various volunteer-driven community sports organizations in my constituency, including the dozens of teams that call Dakota Community Centre home, the diverse group of athletes of all ages who meet and compete at Maple Grove Rugby Park, and the hundreds of young football players, aged 7 to 18, who belong to the historic St. Vital Mustangs, the second oldest amateur football club in Canada.

Another message I hear repeatedly from my constituents is that environmental issues, issues related to green spaces, water and clean air, remain a top priority throughout Seine River. It goes without saying that the creation of a Water Stewardship Department will be welcomed by residents of my constituency who make their homes along the Red River and the Seine River and even in proximity to the Red River Floodway, which has undergone significant improvements to its control structures and carrying capacity during the last four years.

* (11:40)

It will be of great significance to all people of Seine River, including the hundreds of next-generation residents who are currently enrolled in the six major child care facilities in the community, that a new biofuels act and the continuing development of alternative energy sources such as wind-generated power and hydrogen fuel were featured prominently in yesterday's Speech from the Throne.

Like all Manitobans, the people of Seine River have an abiding interest in economics, both personal and provincial. Many of my constituents will benefit directly from the 6% middle-income tax cut that takes effect on January 1, and all homeowners will feel the positive effects of continuing property tax relief that has seen property tax levels remain flat while property values, particularly in areas like Seine River, have continued to rise.

My constituents share in the province-wide benefits of low hydro and auto insurance rates, and, if you want evidence of the statement in yesterday's Throne Speech that more young Manitobans are building their futures at home, look no further than Seine River where new housing starts are at their highest level in more than a decade.

Considering that Seine River is one of the fastest growing areas in the province, it should come as no surprise that education and opportunities for youth have consistently been identified as top priorities by the people in my constituency, and, given my own background as an educator, I am inclined to agree. The expansion of targeted training options in nursing, new media and aerospace sectors, as well as six new programs supporting continued growth in life sciences and biotechnology will help to ensure that the young people of Seine River and all Manitoba communities receive high-tech training that will lead to high-paying jobs at home.

I myself have a particular appreciation for the inclusion of the principle of citizenship in the title of the renamed Ministry of Education, Citizenship and Youth. As stated earlier, it was the pursuit of citizenship awareness and a sense of community responsibility by my students that inspired me to choose the path that has led me to politics and public service, and, as an aside, I am sure that my former colleagues in the teaching profession who work so tirelessly to provide

many of the opportunities for youth that were outlined in yesterday's Throne Speech will take great delight in the fact that this Government has taken the bold step of ensuring that the school year will not begin until after Labour Day.

In closing, Mr. Speaker, I would like to reiterate what a great honour and privilege it has been to speak in this Chamber today and to once again express the tremendous pride with which I speak in support of the Speech from the Throne. Manitobans have demanded and deserve a government that acts decisively and with clear direction on issues such as water protection, clean energy development, increased education and opportunities for youth, and sustained and sustainable economic development throughout our great province.

I am proud to be a New Democrat. I am proud to be a member of this Government, and I look forward to serving the people of Seine River and, indeed, all the people of Manitoba in the months and years ahead.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: Order. When this matter is again before the House, the debate will remain open as previously agreed.

The hour being 12:30, this House is adjourned and stands adjourned until 1:30 p.m. on Monday.

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Friday, November 21, 2003

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