

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

Official Report
(Hansard)

*Published under the
authority of
The Honourable George Hickes
Speaker*

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.
CULLEN, Cliff	Turtle Mountain	P.C.
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 Garri	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.
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.
MITCHELSON, Bonnie	River East	P.C.
MURRAY, Stuart	Kirkfield Park	P.C.
NEVAKSHONOFF, Tom	Interlake	N.D.P.
OSWALD, Theresa, Hon.	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.
SWAN, Andrew	Minto	N.D.P.
TAILLIEU, Mavis	Morris	P.C.
<i>Vacant</i>	Fort Whyte	P.C.
WOWCHUK, Rosann, Hon.	Swan River	N.D.P.

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Thursday, November 3, 2005

The House met at 1:30 p.m.

PRAYERS

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

Bill 202—The Good Samaritan Act

Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights): I move, seconded by the MLA for Inkster, that Bill 202, The Good Samaritan Act; Loi du bon samaritain, be now read a first time.

Motion presented.

Mr. Gerrard: Mr. Speaker, the purpose of this legislation is to provide protection for individuals who provide assistance in emergencies to limit the extent to which they can be held liable or sued for wrongdoing, except if the rescuer acted with gross negligence. The purpose of this legislation is to encourage more people to help others when there are emergencies.

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

PETITIONS

Amending of The Architects Act

Mr. Ron Schuler (Springfield): I wish to present the following petition and these are the reasons for this petition:

On September 16, 2005, the Manitoba Court of Queen's Bench revealed a significant conflict between The Engineering and Geoscientific Professions Act and The Architects Act.

Currently architects are exempt from The Engineering and Geoscientific Professions Act, but engineers are not exempt from The Architects Act.

This decision will have a negative effect on the province's building and construction industries, increase costs to municipalities and other levels of government, lead to a brain drain, increase red tape and delay projects.

Previous to the ruling, a choice existed between engaging architects or engineers to perform specified work according to their disciplines while protecting

the safety of the public as guided by the Manitoba Building Code.

Over the last seven years, the Manitoba Association of Architects (MAA) has rejected the two negotiated solutions. Therefore, legislative change is the only reasonable and sustainable solution.

Given that the ruling's implementation date is immediate, we call on the government to take appropriate steps in changing the legislation during the current session.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To request the Premier (Mr. Doer) to consider amending The Architects Act to provide engineers an exemption similar to that enjoyed by the architects under The Engineering and Geoscientific Professions Act.

Signed by Brent Sellers, Hugh Williams, Christina Tokarz, Bryan Henry and many others.

* (13:35)

Provincial Electoral Reform

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

The background to this petition is as follows:

Whereas the provinces of British Columbia, Ontario, Quebec, Newfoundland, New Brunswick and Prince Edward Island recognize the need for reforming the electoral system.

Whereas the federal NDP Leader Jack Layton is demanding federal electoral reform and former NDP Leader Ed Broadbent has stated "Canadians want change. They want more not less democracy. It is imperative to reform our electoral system."

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To request the Premier and the Manitoba NDP to consider following the initiatives of other provinces and the federal NDP by advocating change to the way MLAs are being elected in Manitoba.

To urge the Manitoba Legislative Assembly to request that Elections Manitoba's Election Advisory Committee consider establishing a majority supported reform proposal that would change Manitoba's electoral system so that it would better reflect how Manitobans have voted.

Signed by Esmeraldo Cenina, Jave Bantug and Enrico Serrano.

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

ORAL QUESTIONS

Devils Lake Diversion Water Testing

Mr. Stuart Murray (Leader of the Official Opposition): Mr. Speaker, water from Devils Lake began flowing three months ago, in August of this year. The Premier indicated that scientists would be testing water before it started flowing. I believe his words were scientists would be on Devils Lake, in Devils Lake and under Devils Lake.

My question is to the Premier. Did the scientists perform the tests? If so, where is the report and will he table that report today?

Hon. Gary Doer (Premier): Mr. Speaker, the scientists at the time I made the statement were on the lake, were in the lake, and they were under the lake, some 22 scientists. Those results were submitted to the Canadian environmental department. They were submitted to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife and the lab in Idaho. They were further submitted to our own lab in terms of the two scientists that we had on the lake.

The report is being compiled in the water office of the President, the environmental office of the President. The preliminary indications we had when we commented on it were that there were no endangered or dangerous species in the lake, Mr. Speaker. There are some biota issues that we believe have been successfully dealt with. There are two algae, one of which is in Lake Winnipeg now and another one which we have to manage. There is also one pathogen that is on a pickerel that is thriving in Devils Lake that we are concerned about so we are getting analyses from our scientists. I expect the full report to be released shortly, but some of the issues that we felt were very important for the protection of water in Manitoba have been dealt with with the testing.

Secondly, Mr. Speaker, we have wording that we want to sign off with in legal form. It is being negotiated between Canada and United States in the President's office dealing with other matters that, as the member opposite has indicated in the past, are very, very important to us.

Mr. Murray: Well, Mr. Speaker, this Premier said on August 2, that was 13 days before the water started flowing, he said the following, and I will quote: "Part of the problem is what is in the lake and we do not know what is in the lake. I have always believed we should know and find out what is in the lake."

* (13:40)

I ask the Premier again, he seems to have a lot of answers. Does the Premier know, and if he does know, will he table today the results of the finding of the scientists in Devils Lake?

Mr. Doer: First of all, the agreement is between Canada and the United States in dealing with the water issues. It is an international boundary water commission that it falls under. Secondly, I am not going to leak information out of the President's White House office on water quality because there are two issues that are still very important for us here in Manitoba.

One, Mr. Speaker, we have agreement that following the tests we will have mitigation to deal with the higher flows that are proposed by North Dakota next year if the water levels continue to rise. The mitigation that we are looking at is the ultraviolet filter or an advanced sand filter. We do not want to jeopardize those negotiations that have been agreed to be funded by the two national governments. We do not want to jeopardize that. So I would expect the member opposite would want us to respect that.

Secondly, Mr. Speaker, there is the issue of taking an agreement that has been made by North Dakota, Minnesota, Manitoba, Canada and the United States not to have an inlet from the Missouri River system across the Continental Divide into Devils Lake as part of a two-stage process. That is—*[interjection]* Well, the member from Emerson has been spending the last couple of years saying Devils Lake is not an issue. Now he is yapping from his seat.

Mr. Murray: Well, Mr. Speaker, quite the opposite. The member from Devils Lake has been open and

honest in his discussions with respect to Devils Lake. That is what he has been. It is this Premier—

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Mr. Murray: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The issue simply is that this Premier spun a lot of rhetoric to Manitobans. He spun a lot of rhetoric to Manitobans before the water started flowing. Manitobans deserve to have that information because this Premier started making very serious statements such as to the people of Manitoba with respect to Devils Lake. The Premier said that North Dakota was on the verge of pumping polluted water in Manitoba, and it would have very serious disaster conditions for Manitoba.

So I would like to ask the Premier: Having made the political rhetoric statements to the people of Manitoba, can he simply back up his statements about how concerned he was to make sure that he had signed us in the water, under the water and on the water with respect to Devils Lake? Will he table the results?

Mr. Doer: Well, I just indicated in the answer to my first question the general assessment that has taken place in terms of alien species that would be problematic for Lake Winnipeg and the Red River basin system were not discovered in the tests that took place under the lake, in the lake and on top of the lake. What was discovered were two algae and two pathogens, some of which are already resident in the Red River basin, and we are trying to—

An Honourable Member: So simply make it public. Make it public.

Mr. Doer: Well, as I said again in my second answer, the test results were between the country of Canada and the country of the United States, and we are respecting their international treaties in terms of release of information. As soon as we have the authority to release that information we will.

Secondly, Mr. Speaker, we will also be releasing that information with the desired mitigation process that has to go beyond the filter that was established in a very, very rudimentary way to deal with the findings of the scientists so that we can deal with proper mitigation, to deal with nutrient levels that are too high, phosphorus levels that are too high, the two algae and the two pathogens that we have to be concerned about.

* (13:45)

Thirdly, Mr. Speaker, we want to implement, through Ambassador McKenna, in legal form, the agreement we reached with Minnesota, North Dakota, Manitoba, Canada and United States not to build an inlet from the Missouri River, which we believed all along represented the greatest risk to water quality here in Manitoba with the definite species from the Missouri River system that would be problematic for Lake Winnipeg and dangerous for Lake Winnipeg.

Mr. Speaker, we feel that these measures we put in place have reduced some of the risks to Manitoba. I would point out when members opposite were in office they threatened to go to court. We did go to court. We did not win in the U.S. court, but some of the negotiated provisions that we have in place we won in NAWS, which was a Missouri River project which is a major precedent for us. We were not able to win in the North Dakota court, and, as I said, when those results are available we will make them public.

Devils Lake Diversion Water Testing

Mr. Jack Penner (Emerson): Mr. Speaker, on May 17 the Premier wrote in a commentary that appeared in the *National Post*, which I quote, "There would be huge environmental and economic consequences in Manitoba if water from Devils Lake was allowed to flow into the province of Manitoba." We now have approximately 246 million litres of Devils Lake water in Lake Winnipeg.

I ask the Minister of Water Stewardship what measures has his government taken to mitigate the damages to the economy and to the environment as a result of this water flowing into Manitoba and Lake Winnipeg.

Hon. Steve Ashton (Minister of Water Stewardship): Mr. Speaker, there is nothing like a convert. The Member for Emerson consistently over the last number of years has taken a position that, quite frankly, is not far off the position of the state of North Dakota, and, in fact, consistently has put forward arguments that have, I believe, often undermined the real concern that this government and most Manitobans have expressed about Devils Lake. I think that is important to put on the record.

The second thing, Mr. Speaker, is this summer, as part of an agreement between the U.S. federal government and the Canadian federal government, there was a scientific testing process put in place for

foreign biota. That has always been the major concern that we have expressed.

Mr. Penner: On May 17, the Premier also stated that additional phosphorous from the outlet would create a layer of algae several inches thick on internationally acclaimed beaches such as Gimli, Grand Beach and Winnipeg Beach. I ask the minister what is his department doing to clean up this environmental mess and who is going to pick up the cost of that.

Mr. Ashton: Again, Mr. Speaker, I remind the member opposite who consistently has dismissed the concerns about foreign biota that the key element is exactly what has been done this summer. It is by having the scientific testing. Manitoba was a part of that, in this case co-ordinated by the U.S. federal government, the White House, by agreement between Canada, the U.S., with further agreements between Minnesota, North Dakota and Manitoba.

We are, indeed, assessing in terms of the foreign biota concerns. As was pointed out by the judge in the NAWS decision, again he opposed us going to court on these water issues. The real issue with foreign biota is even a small chance of contamination, you are going to have catastrophic results. That is why we are doing the testing, that is why we are part of this agreement and that is why we continue to push for the appropriate mitigation to deal with any of the test results. That is the responsible thing, something the member opposite is opposed.

Mr. Penner: Mr. Speaker, all the court action and all the rhetoric from the minister so far has garnered no results and has not protected the lake waters in Lake Winnipeg. We have now 246 000 litres of Devils Lake untreated, unmitigated, unfiltered water in our lake systems. I want to know, would the minister tell this House what evidence he has to support these claims. Where is the evidence that this water has polluted and will be polluting the lake and when will he table his own report that he commissioned, and how many scientists were in Lake Winnipeg?

Mr. Ashton: Mr. Speaker, the report is being finalized. It involved two scientists from Manitoba, 22 scientists overall from both the U.S. and the Canadian side.

* (13:50)

I also want to put on the record that on NAWS, and he again not only opposed the legal action, he came into this House and read into the record an

editorial from a newspaper in North Dakota urging a boycott of, I think it was the province of Winnipeg. We, on NAWS, got a partial injunction and a requirement that the state of North Dakota will have to conduct full environmental assessment and mitigation of a project that would transfer water from the Missouri basin into the Red River. Our strategy and Manitoban strategy is working. The destructive comments from members opposite are not helping our case.

Transportation Infrastructure Funding Sources

Mr. Cliff Cullen (Turtle Mountain): Mr. Speaker, Manitoba Public Insurance collects on behalf of the Province of Manitoba in excess of \$100 million in vehicle registration and driver licensing fees. Manitobans believe that this money is being used to fix our roads. I ask the Minister of Transportation and Government Services will he confirm first today that all of these funds are being used to fix our roads.

Hon. Ron Lemieux (Minister of Transportation and Government Services): I am really pleased to see that the opposition has recently found some interest in transportation in Manitoba. As I pointed out yesterday, they let the roads fall apart in the 1990s. Now, all of a sudden, they have a renewed interest. Mr. Speaker, we spent more money, close to a billion dollars since 1999, on infrastructure in the province of Manitoba. We will continue to work with the stakeholders in Manitoba, the trucking industry and others, to ensure that we are going to improve not only safety but also improve all the economic benefits that are accrued as a result of a good transportation network.

Mr. Cullen: It is quite clear what the minister is not telling us. Mr. Speaker, vehicle registration fees have almost doubled since 1999. In committee the Minister responsible for MPI stated that these fees go right into general revenue. This is nothing more than another NDP backdoor tax. Will the Minister of Transportation and Government Services commit today to using this money to fix our highways?

Mr. Lemieux: Mr. Speaker, we have an opposition who voted against the budget. We added an additional almost \$16 million into the Transportation budget. We have an opposition who continually votes against any kinds of initiatives that look positive in any way. If they look around the city and take a look at the northeast Perimeter, take a look at the road going into Headingley, all the initiatives that we have come forward with, continually they have

been against every single initiative that we have tried to propose and put forward, and that is who the public of Manitoba see, against everything. They mothball everything. We are a building party. We will continue to build better roads in Manitoba for all of its citizens.

Mr. Cullen: Mr. Speaker, I think it is time to give Manitobans the facts. The Province collects \$100 million from MPI, \$155 million in gasoline tax, \$80 million in motive fuel tax. That is a total of \$335 million. Yesterday this Premier (Mr. Doer) told the House every cent in gasoline tax should go back into transportation infrastructure. If we refer to the 2004 Annual Report for the Department of Transportation and Government Services, it indicates that the Province spent only \$187 million on roads. We simply ask: Can this minister explain the \$150-million shortfall?

Mr. Lemieux: The member opposite wants to speak about the facts. You know, Mr. Speaker, since we have been government we have spent close to \$60 million more, comparatively speaking, over the last five years than did their government in transportation. We are continually talking to the industry. We are looking at all kinds of new initiatives with regard to transportation and, as I mentioned before, there is the opposition who voted against our budget putting more money into transportation. So on one side they say you have to cut, cut, cut. The next day they are asking you have got to spend, spend, spend. Where do they stand?

When we asked them about what kinds of initiatives they have they talk about initiatives like, well, maybe you should take a look at toll booths. Maybe you should take a look at raising other kinds of taxes. Where do they stand with regard to toll booths? Where does the Conservative Party of Canada stand on putting more dollars into the province of Manitoba?

*(13:55)

**Winnipeg Regional Health Authority
Chief Cardiologist Recruitment**

Mrs. Heather Stefanson (Tuxedo): Mr. Speaker, in 2003 the Koshal cardiac care report was released, and the WRHA was told that it desperately needed to recruit a chief cardiologist. Yet, more than two years later that position is still vacant, and the WRHA has stated that they may not hire a chief cardiologist for another few years. I would like to ask the Minister of

Health why he is dragging his heels on hiring a chief cardiologist in this province.

Hon. Tim Sale (Minister of Health): Mr. Speaker, I am delighted that Dr. Menkis has been able to recruit additional cardiologists. When Dr. Koshal did his review there were 11. There are now, I believe it is 17 or 18. The report from Dr. Koshal suggested we needed another 10. I am informed that, by the summer of 2006 with the next graduating group of residents, we will have more than 21 cardiologists in the city. I am delighted with the work that Dr. Menkis has done in surgery in consolidating heart surgery at St. Boniface Hospital, a tertiary care, excellent hospital in our city, and I think that the member should just wait and be patient for another couple of weeks.

Mrs. Stefanson: Today. Make the announcement today then because Dr. Koshal has said, and I quote, "If they want to hire someone they can hire someone. It is a question of how much effort they want to put in."

In 2004 the WRHA said they were doing everything they could to recruit a chief cardiologist, yet in July of this year the WRHA said they may not hire a chief cardiologist for another few years. I ask the Minister of Health again why does he continue to compromise patient safety. When will he implement the recommendation of the Koshal report and hire a chief cardiologist?

Mr. Sale: I believe, Mr. Speaker, the member asked a question about today's announcement of a new \$1.6-million state-of-the-art CT scanner for the hospital in Brandon. It would be the fastest scanner in Canada, 64-slice scanner. It will enhance the work of Dr. Tamayo, who is a noted neurologist there who is running the stroke program in western Manitoba which is a state-of-the-art program.

We also announced \$340,000 in capital to do 300 knees in the good town of Minnedosa. In regard to our excellent record on heart surgery and cardiac care we attain the levels Dr. Koshal recommended, and we have kept them in place since he made his recommendations.

Mrs. Stefanson: Mr. Speaker, I do not know what part of chief cardiologist this minister does not understand, but we do not have one in the province right now. They made promises before. Again they have not met up to those promises and this is unacceptable.

I ask the Minister of Health again, as we are short five cardiologists for the WRHA, why has he failed to act on this recommendation. When will he hire a chief cardiologist? I am not talking about all the other things he is talking about. I am talking about a chief cardiologist. Where is it? When can we expect that position to be filled?

Mr. Sale: First of all, Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Health does not hire a chief cardiologist. The Minister of Health oversees a system in which the head of heart surgery, Dr. Menkis, hires a chief cardiologist to serve the Winnipeg Regional Health Authority. Dr. Menkis is in discussion with such a person, and we are very optimistic that there will be an announcement shortly.

Justice System Conditional Sentencing

Mr. Kelvin Goertzen (Steinbach): Mr. Speaker, on the eve of another Justice ministers' meeting, where the minister now promises to again shake his fist at Ottawa, we are reminded of the last ministers of Justice meeting where he said he would go and he would work to abolish all conditional sentences for drinking and driving causing death. After six years of talking tough, he went to Ottawa and he caved and those conditional house arrest sentences are still available because of the deal that he agreed to. The minister has shown that he has no credibility on this issue. Why should Manitobans believe him now?

Hon. Gord Mackintosh (Minister of Justice and Attorney General): Mr. Speaker, the vivid imagination of the member opposite is worthy of note, but I remind the honourable member that the change to the national criminal laws of Canada can only come in one place and that is by change in the House of Commons that is introduced by the federal government.

*(14:00)

Mr. Speaker, we have been working with the federal government and, indeed, all of the provincial and territorial governments, including many Conservative governments, to bring about change. We have had successes and will continue to urge change particularly in the areas of firearms, meth production and the two-for-one credit, among others.

Mr. Goertzen: Mr. Speaker, the minister is practising revisionist history. He said on May 7, 2004, that he fully supported the efforts of the Mothers Against Drunk Driving to eliminate conditional sentences for impaired driving offences

that result in serious injury or death and he would continue to press the government. That was before the conference last year. Then he went to the conference and he signed on to an agreement that does nothing to change the law. Those offences are still going to be available. He sold out Manitobans. He sold out the mothers against drinking and driving. Why should we believe him now when he caved the last time?

Mr. Mackintosh: I would strongly urge the member to do some research, Mr. Speaker. He should really be aware that MADD Canada is 100 percent fully supportive of the federal government's change to conditional sentences.

Mr. Speaker, on the issue of conditional sentences the federal government has made a step forward. It is certainly not perfect, but it is a change now. If members opposite were at the table there would be no change in Ottawa. At least they are moving ahead.

Mr. Goertzen: When we are at the table we will fight for victims, Mr. Speaker. That is what we will do. Because this minister did not stand by his word there will be house arrest sentences again available, and they will be given out in Manitoba to individuals who are convicted of drinking and driving causing death, of serious acts of violence and of child molestation.

Will the Minister of Justice today assure this House that the next time this happens in Manitoba, rather than standing up and shaking his fists at Ottawa like you have done for the last six years, he will put out a press release and he will apologize to the victims because he sold us out on this issue, Mr. Speaker?

Mr. Mackintosh: Mr. Speaker, when the members opposite were at a table they cut at least 16 benefits to victims of crime in this province and that is their record. On the changes that are necessary from Ottawa, there are needs in this country that must be addressed in terms of the criminal law. The firearms law has to move to a new level.

Mr. Speaker, we have to make changes when it comes to the area of meth production and the bulk movement of ephedrine into and across this country. We have to make changes when it comes to impaired driving, moving to .05. We have to make changes to the two-for-one credit, and we have to strengthen the youth criminal justice law.

Manitoba has gone to those meetings and delivered change after change after change because we have worked with our partners, Mr. Speaker. We are going to continue to work for the public safety of Canadians.

Gaming Social and Economic Impacts

Mr. Ron Schuler (Springfield): Mr. Speaker, Manitoba's problem gambling rate has increased by 119 percent since 1999. This Doer government continues to jeopardize Manitoba's future in order to fund this Premier's (Mr. Doer) spending addiction. I ask the minister how many more innocent Manitobans is he willing to hurt before calling for an independent review into the social and economic impacts of gaming on Manitoba.

Hon. Scott Smith (Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs and Trade): Mr. Speaker, when we came into government in 1999, there was absolutely no program in place by the previous government regarding responsible gaming in the province of Manitoba. The previous government expanded gaming throughout this entire province, from VLTs in 1991 to '99 the expansion of casinos in the province with no responsible gaming policy.

When we were introduced into government we knew that was a priority for Manitobans. We established the responsible gaming policy and that is working very well with AFM and many of the others in the community, Mr. Speaker. We will continue to work for Manitobans. The members opposite did not.

Mr. Schuler: Mr. Speaker, now we learned that Nova Scotia has pulled the plug on 1000 VLTs, cutting their number of VLTs by 30 percent. The Doer government has increased the number of VLTs by 19 percent to over 5300 since 1999. Will the minister call for a moratorium on the expansion of gambling so a proper independent review can be done into the social and economic impacts of gaming on Manitobans?

Mr. Smith: Mr. Speaker, just to correct the member, as he obviously gets confused with his numbers, this side of the House had the Bostrom Report that was done. The only expansion that has gone out is to assist First Nations communities throughout Manitoba. There has been no expansion with the VLTs on the corporate side in the province of Manitoba. The member again gets it wrong. They expanded from 0 to 5300 in eight years. We have kept our number the same. The only assistance we

have had is with our First Nations communities which we followed the Bostrom Report on and introduced a responsible gaming policy into the province for Manitobans.

Mr. Schuler: Mr. Speaker, even Newfoundland and even Alberta have realized the devastating effect of gambling and have reduced their number of VLTs by 15 percent. This Premier (Mr. Doer) has again shown his insatiable greed by increasing VLTs by 18 percent since 1999 while destroying Manitoba families.

Mr. Speaker, will this minister first read his own documents and read the truth about what is happening in Manitoba, stand up for Manitobans and call for an independent review into the social and economic impacts of gaming on our citizens, our neighbours, our families, all Manitobans? Will he do the right thing?

Mr. Smith: Mr. Speaker, it is always interesting to watch the member opposite try to push and pull the cart. It is interesting to note that the expansion of gaming and the casinos that was done through the nineties, at an overexpenditure of \$100 million by the way, was brought into the province of Manitoba. We have introduced the responsible gaming policy, working with professionals in Manitoba to address what we believe are important issues with AFM and others in the province of Manitoba.

Mr. Speaker, prior to the last previous election we had the Leader of the Opposition (Mr. Murray) basically saying it is a no-brainer to look at how we can have some expansion in gaming in the province of Manitoba with Assiniboia Downs and many others. We had the member from Fort Whyte demanding we get rid of VLTs in the rural areas. Where is that now? I do not believe in push and pulling the cart.

Crocus Investment Fund Public Inquiry

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Inkster): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Premier (Mr. Doer). What is very clear—*[interjection]*

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Mr. Lamoureux: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. What is very clear is that the Premier of our province has put the public interest behind his own personal, selfish, political interests in dealing with the whole Crocus fiasco. Over 33 000 Manitobans have lost in excess of \$60 million, and this government is trying to

override what is in the best interest of the public by not allowing for a public inquiry. I have a very simple question for the Premier. Why will the Premier not call a public inquiry? It is simple.

Hon. Greg Selinger (Minister of Finance): As I have indicated to the House before, we amended The Auditor General's Act in 2001 to give very specific powers to follow tax credit dollars wherever they go. That gave our Auditor unique powers among all the auditors general of Canada to review labour-sponsored venture capital funds. Our Auditor did that and with a report of 245 pages with numerous recommendations, over 100 recommendations, of which 20 were for government. We are following every single one of those recommendations to ensure that this does not happen again.

Mr. Lamoureux: My question is again for the Premier. The Crocus board has approximately \$5 million in liability insurance. There is a lawsuit that is out there that could see \$150 million being tagged to the Crocus fiasco, Mr. Speaker. That means there are a lot of personal friends and appointments that this Premier made to the Crocus board that could end up going broke over this whole fiasco.

Mr. Speaker, the concern is: Is there going to be a bailout by this Premier and this government? Is there going to be some sort of a settlement in order to keep this whole issue quiet? I would like to get assurance from the Premier of this province that not a single tax dollar will be spent on the Crocus fiasco without there being, first and foremost, a public inquiry. Will he give us that assurance today?

*(14:10)

Mr. Selinger: Mr. Speaker, first of all, the member is just simply wrong in the facts. The only appointee in the previous Crocus board was a government official. We moved away from the practice of the previous government of appointing high level officials connected to Executive Council. We appointed a public servant with specific expertise in the commercial banking area. Under the new legislation, there is no government appointee to any labour-sponsored venture capital fund in this province. We have already said publicly that we will not claw back tax credits on any settlement that is done so that the people who have made the investments do not bear any additional risk. We will not claw that back. The federal government has now also agreed not to claw that back. We will let the class action lawsuit, the inquiry by the Manitoba

Securities Commission, the RCMP investigation proceed and the Canadian revenue collection investigation proceed.

Mr. Lamoureux: Mr. Speaker, excuse me, we are talking about the MFL union buddies, and we know how close this Premier and this government are to some of those union leadership. These are the people who we are talking about.

My question is for the Premier. Manitobans have a right to know. I am challenging the Premier to assure this House, put very simply, very simply, and I am talking about his union buddies, not a single tax dollar will be spent on the Crocus fiasco, not a single dollar without there first being a public inquiry on this issue.

Mr. Selinger: Again, Mr. Speaker, there has been a very thorough Auditor General's report and investigation into the Crocus Fund, an investigation that is only possible under the broad powers we have provided in The Auditor General Act in this province, which are unique in the country. I can assure the member opposite that we have taken corrective measures in legislation last spring, and any further measures to shore up the ability of venture capital to meet the purposes for which it was intended in this province will be brought to the Legislature for appropriate discussion and debate, and Manitobans will be well-served by that legislation.

Flood Protection Ice-Breaking Machine

Mr. Gregory Dewar (Selkirk): Mr. Speaker, my question is to the Minister of Water Stewardship, and I ask this question on behalf of residents of Selkirk, St. Andrews, St. Clements and Springfield. As members know, ice-jams have caused property damage in these areas for generations. My question is to the minister. What action is our government taking to alleviate this problem?

Hon. Steve Ashton (Minister of Water Stewardship): This has certainly been a challenging year for Manitobans and a very unusual year in terms of the extent of flooding both being province-wide and continuing into October.

One of the greatest areas, I think, of encouragement was the degree to which we made progress in terms of dealing with the perennial problem of ice-jamming. I want to thank the Member for Selkirk and also the Minister of Education (Mr. Bjornson). I know that both have been very strong in

advocating for \$140,000 for an ice-jamming committee to work with R.M.s, hydrometric monitoring. But most encouraging is the Amphibex. We have committed to purchasing an Amphibex, two thirds provincial money, one third municipalities. I want to congratulate the municipalities and give the federal government one more chance to be part of this solution of the perennial problem of ice-jamming in Manitoba.

Manitoba Economy Growth Strategy

Mr. Gerald Hawranik (Lac du Bonnet): The Royal Bank of Canada financial outlook reveals a very troubling economic report card for this Doer government. Both the Chartered Accountants of Manitoba and the Chambers of Commerce agree. For the past five years, economic growth in Manitoba averaged only 2.2 percent per year. Manitoba was ninth in economic growth in Canada. Every province in Canada except Saskatchewan outperformed Manitoba. Will the Finance Minister now admit that he has failed to create an economic climate in Manitoba that is necessary for sustained and long-term economic growth?

Hon. Greg Selinger (Minister of Finance): Mr. Speaker, perhaps the member opposite has been preoccupied. He may have missed some of the solid reports coming out from independent forecasters across the country. The Manitoba economy is set for a solid year. TD Bank forecasts predict 3 percent growth. We have had consecutive years of private investment exceeding the national average. We have seen 55 percent of all jobs created in the private sector. We have seen private investment occurring in this province which has created new research and development, new investment, new technology and new training in the biotech sector. In addition, we have seen that the real challenge in Manitoba is educating enough people to fill all the jobs because we have the second-lowest unemployment rate in the country.

Mr. Hawranik: Mr. Speaker, even with that 3 percent growth projected for this year we are still second lowest in Canada. The Royal Bank report also reveals that for the last five years employment growth, and I am glad he mentioned it, Manitoba only averaged 1.3 percent a year. Again, Manitoba was ninth behind only Saskatchewan. In the meantime, this Doer government continues to use public money to employ everybody in sight and the private sector jobs, in fact, last year shrank by 1400

jobs in Manitoba. I ask the Minister of Finance why has he failed to create an economy capable of creating those long-term private-sector jobs in Manitoba.

Mr. Selinger: Mr. Speaker, the member forgets that since 1999 there have been over 37 000 jobs created in the province. The annual growth in our economy in the last six years, the annual growth, is very close to \$800 million a year which compares to \$500 million a year during the period they were in office. Our growth of the economy has been 33 percent in the last six years. We have gone from \$32 billion GDP to \$42 billion GDP. This economy is growing because we are governing in partnership with all sectors of this economy.

Mr. Speaker: Time for Oral Questions has expired.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

Neighbourhood Watch District 6

Ms. Kerri Irvin-Ross (Fort Garry): Mr. Speaker, I would like to inform the House about an evening of recognition that took place on Tuesday, October 11, for the local Neighbourhood Watch program, University/Pembina District 6. This night was a great success in acknowledging all the hard work accomplished by local community leaders.

The festive evening was organized by members of the community in appreciation of the work done by the block captains of Neighbourhood Watch District 6. The hundreds of residents who are block captains act as the livelihood of the program by engaging in such activities as delivering semi-annual newsletters and recruiting new members and volunteers to help maintain the program. Among those in attendance was Deputy Mayor Gord Steeves, Chief of Police Jack Ewatski, City Councillor Justin Swandel and myself. We were all there to lend continued support and recognition of the vital role this organization plays in keeping our communities safe. Door prizes were donated by various Fort Garry businesses and individuals to show their appreciation to the volunteers that support Neighbourhood Watch.

Mr. Speaker, Neighbourhood Watch programs promote co-operation between neighbours which is necessary for a vibrant and secure civic life. They also help develop the positive relationship between the police and the community and keep the lines of communication open between the public and government services. Their hard work is important both in contributing to a neighbourhood crime

prevention strategy and guaranteeing that our communities remain healthy and safe. I would like to thank all the volunteers, especially all the block captains, for volunteering their time and experience to this important grass-roots program. Thank you.

Property Tax—Education Portion

Mr. Larry Maguire (Arthur-Virden): Manitobans are the highest taxed in Canada, whether it is a single-family earner of \$30,000 or less or a double-earning family of \$60,000 or less, but, Mr. Speaker, the situation that this government is faced with today is it does not know how to make the priority decisions that are required to alleviate the tax concerns of cash-strapped Manitobans.

* (14:20)

There is an area that if they had a heart and a priority that they could reduce those taxes in, and that is in the area of eliminating the education tax off residences and farmland in Manitoba. This government has seen a windfall of funds, as we have just seen in Question Period, Mr. Speaker, a \$525-million addition to the revenues in their base financing of this province every year. That is up from an average of \$275 million, and the NDP have yet not made it a priority.

Now, Mr. Speaker, they muddle around the edges, as we said with their Throne Speech, by reducing the taxation on farmland by 33 percent, 50 percent and, in this Throne Speech, increasing it to 60 percent. Yet, when I go out to talk to farmers in rural Manitoba who are suffering extensively from drought in '03, frost in '04, flood in '05 and to all of those community businesses that are suffering because of them having to close down as well, and I learned of more of those again last night, there is much concern in rural Manitoba and many auctions sales that will be held this fall yet.

This government, if it had a heart, could eliminate the education tax completely off of farmland and residences in Manitoba, as we said we would do in '03 and would have done by now if in government.

Mr. Speaker, there were funds available in that budget to do it and this government did not make it a priority. Farmers today are telling me that, even with the rebates, they are only seeing a 10 percent reduction in the taxation that they have to pay in Manitoba on education tax. If they really wanted to help our farmers in all communities they would

eliminate the tax off of farmland and residences immediately.

Flood Protection

Mr. Gregory Dewar (Selkirk): It is with great pleasure that I rise today to share with members news of the recent purchase of the Amphibex ice-breaking machine by this government, Mr. Speaker, joined with the City of Selkirk and the R.M.s of St. Andrews and St. Clements. These areas will enjoy an added measure of flood protection in the coming spring through the machine's proven capabilities for preventing and clearing ice jams. This machine is one of a broader strategy which includes additional monitoring and education.

Mr. Speaker, as members know, ice jams have been a reality in the Selkirk area for generations. They are the inevitable product of a slow-moving, shallow river in a northern climate. Ice as thick as four to five feet is not uncommon. As members know, our community has suffered property damage from ice jams in the past.

Mr. Speaker, we have listened to the concerns of area residents who have raised this issue. Last spring we brought the ice-breaker to Manitoba for a successful test run both here in the city of Winnipeg and on the Red River north of Selkirk. This year, after federal funding fell through, our government provided \$350,000, which was two thirds of the capital cost of the ice-breaker.

This versatile machine can also be used for clearing and restoring waterways, installing water pipes, cleaning wastewater treatment ponds and controlling vegetation, Mr. Speaker.

On behalf of my constituents, I know on behalf of the Member for Gimli (Mr. Bjornson), I would like to thank the R.M.s of St. Andrews and St. Clements and the City of Selkirk for their support in acquiring this machine. I also want to thank the Minister of Water Stewardship (Mr. Ashton) and his department for its ongoing commitment to find innovative and effective ways to prevent harmful flooding in Manitoba. Thank you.

Addiction Gambling Rates

Mr. Ron Schuler (Springfield): Mr. Speaker, today during Question Period we raised the issue that Manitoba's problem gambling rate has increased by 119 percent since 1999. We find out from study after study that the addiction gambling rate is the highest in the country. We have a 9.4 percent addiction

gambling rate, far in excess of any other province in Manitoba.

Mr. Speaker, this is affecting our families, and we see it as we go from household to household how many families are affected by gambling in Manitoba. We see it with friends. We see it with our neighbours. We see it in our communities and we hear it from Manitobans. This is costing a lot of children food off the table. It is causing spouses to have to make all kinds of choices because the other spouse is gambling their money away. In fact, we have heard of cases where people have committed suicide because they do not see any other option other than going that way.

Mr. Speaker, we also find out that in other areas, for instance Nova Scotia, they did a proper independent review on the economic and social impacts of gaming in the province. We have seen a rise in Manitoba under various governments, and now is the time for Manitoba to do the equivalent action.

In Nova Scotia they found out that, in fact, there was so little gain with VLTs that Nova Scotia pulled the plug on over 1000 VLTs, a decrease of 30 percent. They did the right thing. They are making decisions based on the science, and, time and time again, we are calling on this government to do the right thing, look for the science and have an independent review.

In fact, even Newfoundland and Alberta have reduced their VLTs by 15 percent. We stand in this House one more time and we ask the Doer government to look into having an independent review into the social and economic impacts of gambling.

Eastman Education Centre

Mr. Harry Schellenberg (Rossmere): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to call the attention of all members to a historic announcement that was made recently by our provincial government that it will commit \$1million in funding to the new Eastman Education Centre and Steinbach campus. In June, our Premier (Mr. Doer) was on hand with local dignitaries for the official sod-turning ceremony for the new Eastman Education Centre building, the first of many structures which are planned for this dynamic institution.

The Steinbach campus is to be more than a mere university or college. It will be a learning commons that will include post-secondary institutions, a new

middle school, a cultural centre and residential colleges as well as various support services. The Steinbach campus will bring a wide range of post-secondary services to southeastern Manitoba and ensure that students will be able to attain their scholastic goals close to their home communities. The Steinbach campus will also offer programs and courses that target specific economic sectors, such as agriculture, health and manufacturing, to meet the needs of this fast-growing region.

Mr. Speaker, one of the key future tenants of this learning commons will be the Steinbach campus of Red River College which presently operates out of the Towne Square mall on Main Street. However, this space has become inadequate to accommodate swelling enrolments. In the last six years, our province has seen a 30 percent enrolment increase at post-secondary institutions due in large part to the relatively low tuition fees that Manitoba's students enjoy in comparison with the rest of the country.

Our government is pleased to enter into a partnership with the local community and Red River College to provide current and future students of southeastern Manitoba with a state-of-the-art post-secondary institution. I congratulate the community for its efforts in support of this initiative and wish them success in creating this facility. Thank you.

ORDERS OF THE DAY GOVERNMENT BUSINESS ADJOURNED DEBATE (Fifth Day of Debate)

Mr. Speaker: Resume debate on the proposed motion of the honourable Member for The Maples (Mr. Aglugub) that the following address be presented to His Honour the Lieutenant-Governor, and the proposed motion of the honourable Leader of the Official Opposition (Mr. Murray) in amendment thereto, and the proposed motion of the honourable Member for River Heights (Mr. Gerrard) in further amendment thereto, standing in the name of the honourable Member for Burrows (Mr. Martindale), who has 10 minutes remaining.

An Honourable Member: In conclusion—

An Honourable Member: Stand, done, stand.

Mr. Speaker: Cannot stand. You cannot stand it.

Okay. I have been informed the honourable Member for Burrows has concluded his comments, so we will move on to the opposition side.

Mr. Denis Rocan (Carman): Mr. Speaker, on behalf of the people of the great constituency of Carman, it is a privilege to rise today and respond to the Speech from the Throne.

I would like to begin by formally welcoming you back, Mr. Speaker. I know all honourable members appreciate your direction and guidance and we look forward to working in your presence over the coming weeks. I would also like to acknowledge the contributions of the table officers with their diligence during session and knowledge of the proceedings, the Sergeant-at-Arms and his staff for keeping with parliamentary tradition, those who work so hard in Hansard at getting our comments on the record and the gallery officers for ensuring the public is given every opportunity to come and watch House proceedings, such as Vince Greco here this afternoon.

I would also like to take this opportunity to congratulate our pages, and I am sure you will find your experience in the Manitoba Legislature most memorable. I would like to thank you in advance for all the work you will be doing to ensure House proceedings run as smoothly as possible.

* (14:30)

I would also like to take this time to welcome our new legislative interns. I know how valuable your work is to our researchers and honourable members and I am sure you will find your experience over the coming months to be most rewarding. The internship program would not be possible without the direction and support of your academic director, and I would like to thank Professor Jean Friesen, former MLA, for once again taking on this role and our rep on that same committee, the honourable Member for Portage la Prairie (Mr. Faurichou).

Mr. Speaker, every year at this time, we are presented with the Speech from the Throne. This was the seventh such speech for the Doer government and it was one of empty and tired rhetoric. The people of Manitoba have heard it all before. This government's Throne Speech completely lacked a vision that speaks to the young people of this province. I am concerned because it is absolutely vital to the future of this province and this province's economy that this NDP government make some real investment in the future of our young people. What is their incentive to remain in Manitoba? Why would any young, educated and highly employable person remain in the highest-taxed province in Canada?

These people are just beginning to get their feet off the ground, Mr. Speaker. They are looking for high quality, accessible post-secondary education. They are looking to purchase real estate; they are taking over their parents' farms and their parents' businesses. They seek employment. They are looking for opportunities, and in this Throne Speech we hear nothing, no incentives, no opportunity, nothing but the same tired platitudes that they have heard before.

Many of our young people of this province are here because they were born here. In fact, they are carrying on a long family tradition. Generations before them, their grandparents arrived here in Manitoba and they worked hard, Mr. Speaker. They contributed to the great legacy which their grandchildren have inherited today, but will they will be able to carry on their legacy? Will it be in their own economic best interest to remain in a province where they are consistently the highest taxed, where private-sector investment is consistently low and where there is no such thing as a promise made and kept?

Will they remain here in Manitoba where, under this NDP government, they may be unable to find a doctor and where they will undoubtedly have to just get in line for essential health care services like diagnostic testing and surgery? Will they remain in a province where drugs and gangs flourish, where they may feel unsafe walking on the streets? Will they remain in a province that fails to deliver any clear plan of action for sustaining rural communities?

Mr. Speaker, I would like to speak today of opportunities. Young Manitobans will seize the opportunities provided to them and they will turn them into something great. At a time of unprecedented revenue, this government has failed again to show any recognition that a thriving and competitive tax environment is essential to making Manitoba an attractive place to live and do business. There was nothing in the Throne Speech to show that this government is making economic growth and job creation a priority. Over the last two years, Manitoba has ranked ninth out of the 10 provinces in job growth. Ninth of 10, that is a dismal place to hold and young people know it.

When they see statistics like this, what they do not see is any incentive to stay here. Young people also know about debt, Mr. Speaker. By this point in their lives, they probably have some debt of their own, especially if they are attending a post-secondary institution. What they do not want is more

debt. They know that, with the NDP's lack of fiscal responsibility, they will be simply inheriting this province's massive \$20-billion debt. Why would they choose to spend their first taxpaying years trying to pay off this government's debt? They know that this debt threatens the financial strength and future prosperity of our most beautiful province of Manitoba. There was nothing in the Throne Speech to address this. Nothing that outlines a vision for reducing this debt. Nothing that indicates it will not be passed down to our young people and then on to their children.

Then there is the issue of post-secondary education, one of the highest priorities for many young Manitobans. In their Throne Speech, the Doer government attempted to paint a rosy picture of post-secondary education. They told the House that Manitoba colleges and universities experienced the largest increase in enrolment in Canada, but the Throne Speech was missing a vital component, Mr. Speaker. Young people wanted to see this government's plan for sustainable, long-term funding of Manitoba's colleges and universities. They are saddled with an increasing number of fees because this government is unwilling to properly fund post-secondary education. Many young people will pay for quality education, but they are not happy paying for this government's mistakes.

Young people are also starting to get their first taste of paying taxes under a NDP government. They are shocked, Mr. Speaker, when they discover that on top of paying back their student loans, taking on their first mortgages, paying their gas bills and fuelling their cars, they are shocked to find out how little is left. They are even more shocked and dismayed when they realize that their friends in Alberta, their friends in British Columbia, their friends in every other province in Canada, are all paying less in taxes.

Furthermore, our young people are not enticed by the idea of paying education property tax on their residential property or on their farmland. It is a deterrent, Mr. Speaker. To many young Manitobans, it simply does not make sense to stay here in Manitoba and become property owners when they can go elsewhere, purchase land and save themselves thousands of dollars every year in education property taxes.

But let us not forget, Mr. Speaker, that young people exist outside the borders of Manitoba cities. What do young rural people have to look forward to?

They, too, share the problems of their counterparts in the cities, but with additional concerns particularly related to agriculture, those from farm families have watched their parents' best efforts being devastated by the effects of BSE, drought, flooding and a downturn in grain and cereal crop prices. Then they have watched as this NDP government stands idly by.

Manitoba's agricultural producers were left with very little comfort in this Throne Speech. Their parents will have nothing to leave to them under this government, and Manitoba will lose its young farmers to other provinces. That is the consequence of this government's inaction and unwillingness to do more than simply acknowledge the plight of farmers. Young Manitobans understand the critical importance of agriculture to Manitoba's economy, and they are asking why this government fails to grasp this concept too.

However, Mr. Speaker, the problems facing rural young people do not stop with agriculture. Like all of us, they dread the day when they or a loved one may face a medical emergency, but depending on where they live they may not be able to access an emergency room for miles. This is because this government has quietly closed many, many rural emergency rooms and they continue to do it.

But it does not stop there. These same people, the rural people of Manitoba, are hit again with a double whammy of ambulance transfers. If they require the services of an ambulance because they are experiencing a medical emergency, they had better hope that the nearest facility has the doctors and equipment needed to help patch them up. If not, if this government has once again been unable to properly staff and equip rural medical facilities, then this patient will have to be transferred via ambulance to another medical facility. And what happens if they are not transferred back within 24 hours? Well, rural patients will get a bill, a bill sometimes for thousands of dollars, a bill to pay for the ambulance transfer.

This policy treats rural people like second-class citizens, and no Manitoban should have to stand for it. Young people will protest this government's policies by simply relocating, and we should not allow that to happen. Rural Manitobans are strong and hardworking individuals who are asking for the opportunity to succeed, and this government owes them at least that.

* (14:40)

This government cannot create or stop the rain. It cannot control BSE when it happens in another province, but it can control its response to the weather and its response to agricultural crises. It can put an end to its discriminatory ambulance transfer policies and it can properly staff and equip rural hospitals. It can increase slaughter capacity, as it has been asked to do so many times before. Rural Manitobans are asking this Premier (Mr. Doer) and this government to step up to the plate and deliver a clear vision and an effective plan for sustaining rural communities and yet again this government has failed. Manitobans deserve so much better.

Another issue that should be of critical importance to all Manitobans is the environment. Young people today are concerned about the environment, Mr. Speaker, perhaps more than any other generation before them. They are right to be so concerned because they are the ones that will ultimately suffer or benefit from our actions today. I would be remiss if I did not applaud this government's actions on the St. Leon wind farm, which is a step in the right direction, I might add. However, there was absolutely no mention of any new measures this government plans to take with respect to the environmental policy. Nothing.

Great advances in science and technology have increased our knowledge of the Earth and our ability to respect it and preserve its resources. In Manitoba, young people will suffer for this government's inaction. This NDP government completely ignored issues of conservation and the environment in this Throne Speech. To young Manitobans, this is completely unacceptable.

These are our young people. They are not immobile. Many of them have education. They are motivated and ambitious and, as much as they would like to remain here where they grew up, it simply does not make any sense to them to do that. They will move elsewhere, Mr. Speaker, depriving our province of a resource that cannot be replaced. But it is not just our best and brightest that we are losing under this government. We are losing the face of Manitobans. It is our responsibility as legislators and as citizens of Manitoba to make sure that our future generations inherit a province filled with opportunity and endless possibilities.

In order to do this, a sound plan and a sound vision is necessary. This Throne Speech demonstrated that this NDP government was severely lacking in that department. I thank you very

much, Mr. Speaker, for giving me this opportunity once again to put these remarks on the record.

Mr. Harry Schellenberg (Rossmere): Mr. Speaker, I am privileged to speak to the 2005 Throne Speech and speak in support of it. The Throne Speech continues the vision and strategy that this government has promoted since 1999. This Throne Speech has made commitments to combat crime, deliver better health care, clean energy development and energy sales, also, a commitment to a Manitoba home-heating strategy and a commitment to supporting rural Manitoba in these challenging times. These are some of the issues the Throne Speech addresses. But I would like to digress for a moment.

As a former teacher of many years, I would like to welcome the pages here and the interns. We are proud to have you here. You are honour students and I have read some of your resumé's. They are excellent. Your volunteering and your academic record is superb. You are an excellent example of our youth today and we look forward to working with you.

Mr. Speaker, when I travel across the province, Manitobans are very supportive of the good work of this government. People feel that the government is making progress and is supporting families, building communities and building a better Manitoba. This is a government for all Manitobans, not just for the privileged few in our society. I have met people from all over Manitoba and when I go into communities, I am always made to feel welcome. I have met people from Virden, Hartney, Killarney, Winkler, Morden and Steinbach.

Mr. Conrad Santos, Deputy Speaker, in the Chair

In Steinbach, I made a member's statement recently, or I made it today, and I commented on the Eastman Education Centre and the Steinbach campus. We are doing good things in many communities across this province. I also must mention Altona, and I was recently in Boissevain, where I grew up, and many other places. They express their satisfaction of the good work this government is doing. In fact, our licence plate says, "Friendly Manitoba," and I experience a friendly attitude when I go into these communities. Mr. Speaker, I get phone calls from many constituents, not just in Winnipeg but from rural areas as well about various issues. They tend to be optimistic about the future of this province.

Mr. Speaker, I have heard several people from the opposition speak on debt. They are obsessed with debt. They have tried to scare people about the debt in this province. The opposition is trying to make a case that debt is growing. Actually, we are paying down the debt, and our bond rating for various agencies is being upgraded. Our economy is growing. Our economy is doing well. Let me just refer to an article in the *Free Press*, November 1, 2005. The headline reads: "Manitoba economy set for solid year." The Toronto-Dominion Bank forecaster predicts 3 percent growth, one of the highest across Canada. That tells me that our business community supports and appreciates what is happening here. I do not hear them contradict what the *Free Press* just pointed out here. It is all quiet in the opposition right now.

The opposition is trying to say that they know business and finance, and they have the business acumen. Several MLAs have spoken here on debt. Well, Mr. Speaker, I think we all remember Grant Devine in Saskatchewan. He left the biggest mess in the history of the province. In fact, after he was finished, they wiped out the Conservative Party, and they made a new party called the Saskatchewan Party. They wanted to forget the past. Premier Harris in Ontario also left a real mess in Ontario. Peter Loughheed in Alberta left a debt, even with all the oil and gas royalties.

Of course, at the federal level we have the largest debt which was created during the Trudeau years, the Mulroney years and the early Chrétien years, which equalled \$560 billion. We never hear them speak about the federal debt. The Mulroney share was more than half, which was \$297 billion. We are still paying just over 20 cents on every dollar of federal government revenue towards debt. That is why we had to cut our programs. They cut back on the provinces, and we are left with these programs with no revenue.

Mr. Speaker, the Leader of the Official Opposition (Mr. Murray) once worked for Brian Mulroney, so he should know all about debt. Here in this Legislature, the Leader of the Official Opposition is accusing others of creating debt when he was part of the Mulroney team that saddled Canada with the greatest debt in its history. As a result of this debt, social programs were cut. Education, health and other support programs for families and communities were cut across Canada. The provinces were left stranded with many of these cuts and had to go it alone. What the opposition in

the Legislature does is attack the symptom and not try to use rational thought and deal with the cause.

* (14:50)

When I speak to people about waiting times in health care, I always try, if I have time now, I always try to explain why there are waiting times. It is because Ottawa has cut back on health care across Canada. Ottawa cut back on education. Ottawa cut back on day care. Ottawa cut back on all these social programs because we are paying off the debt. When I say that, they become quiet and they appreciate it. I tell them that things are getting better. We are getting debts at Ottawa under control. So things are improving.

Mr. Speaker, the provinces, and I would say provinces of all political stripes did quite well on their own. I think we are coming out of this mess and we are improving many, many various services to families and communities.

The Member for Burrows (Mr. Martindale) recently made a member's statement about three political parties across Canada on debt, and the report said that the NDP had the best record in balancing budgets. Yet, here in this Legislature they try to reverse that, but studies will tell you our record is the best. In fact, Mr. Speaker, the Tories, I think, have the worst.

Crime is a social problem that we must all work on together, and it is something that we as a province, as a community, as individuals, should focus on. It is not just up to the police or the lawyers or courts, but the whole community must work together and face this challenge, and I am quite certain we can meet the challenge. I would just like to tell you a few things, what we have been doing to fight crime—[interjection]

Mr. Speaker, I hear the Member for Steinbach (Mr. Goertzen) talking here. He is always talking about crime, but I will just point out to him and everyone here what we have done. We have doubled the Gang Prosecution Unit. We have Canada's first community prosecutor. Downtown Winnipeg is the first area to be targeted for new proactive prosecution strategy that works with Winnipeg police and local stakeholders to target street crime and other locally identified priorities for both aggressive prosecution and co-ordinate prevention strategy.

We have more police. Nine new Aboriginal police officers will be stationed in northern

Manitoba. These resources are in addition to the 54 police officer positions that were announced in Budget 2005, including 23 in Winnipeg and two in Brandon. So we are putting more police on the streets. We are closing down more gang houses. We have also swifter offender accountability. The award-winning Front End Project will now expand beyond domestic violence cases. This project, led by the Chief Judge to ensure matters go to trial sooner, will extend to all adults in custody over the next year.

We have also done something in prevention. I never hear anything from the Justice critic, the member from Steinbach, on prevention. He always deals with a symptom, but there is such a thing as dealing with prevention, dealing with the cause. Mr. Speaker, we have developed a new Crime Prevention Fund. The government of Manitoba, in partnership with the federal government's National Crime Prevention Strategy, will make \$1.6 million available.

We have 50 Lighthouses across Manitoba. Greater opportunity for youth will be provided by exceeding the 2003 election commitment of 40 Lighthouses. This gets young people off the street. We have Project Gang-Proof phase II. This will be strengthened and new components will be added. The views of community organizations and others will be relied on to recommend how this successful initiative can be more to reach out to youth and parents. We will have more citizens' patrols.

We have Neighbourhoods Alive! safety projects. A total of \$400,000 is being directed at inner city community-driven initiatives. This includes safety corridors for Winnipeg's Spence neighbourhood and North End to address break-ins and sexual exploitation. We have a world-class parenting skills initiative coming forward. We are working with immigrants and refugee communities to combat crime.

So, Mr. Speaker, we have not stood still on this very issue. There is a challenge, but we are meeting the challenge.

Mr. Speaker, I would just like to talk about health for a minute. I would like to focus on what has been done in northeast Winnipeg. We have done a lot of good work in the Concordia Hospital, one example would be the hip and knee replacement, the cancer unit. We have in northeast Winnipeg the River East Health Access Centre developed, which is very much appreciated by the community so we have moved ahead in health care in northeast Winnipeg.

Mr. Speaker, I hear them speak on health care, continuously attacking our government's progress, you might say, but I would like to just point out the Tory legacy for a few moments. As I first got elected in 1993, the Tories wanted to close down the emergency ward in Concordia Hospital as a result of the cuts to health care. They wanted to close the emergency ward. Also, I remember, they got an American specialist by the name of Connie Curran who was going to fix our health care system. In a sense, she did fix our health care system. She added that American touch to our health care system instead of that Tommy Douglas touch that cares about people.

Well, Mr. Speaker, there were rumblings in northeast Winnipeg and that emergency ward that they wanted to close never closed. Also, soon after the '95 election, the Tories wanted to close the community hospitals such as Concordia, Seven Oaks and others. This was all about the Connie Curran plan from south of the 49th parallel, and the people demonstrated and finally it was dropped. We are builders of hospitals, we are builders of care facilities all across this province. When I go to different communities, there is an appreciation for this.

You would think the Tories would have learned from their maxims about hey, you do not close hospitals, you do not close emergency wards, but they tried to privatize the home care system and the people resisted. I was part of the coalition that fought the home care privatization and the closing of the Concordia Hospital and other issues. I remember the home care coalition went down Springfield Road that looked like Halloween. Almost every home took a sign. They were against privatizing home care and they backed off. That is the Tory legacy.

Mr. Speaker, after they had the home care privatization fail, they had another issue that they dealt with or they tried to deal with.

An Honourable Member: What was that, Harry?

Mr. Schellenberg: The frozen food fiasco. They brought this frozen toast, this frozen food, into the personal care homes and institutions. People, of course, resisted. That is their legacy and I hear them get up in the Legislature criticizing health. Well, their legacy is shameful. They do not stand on higher moral grounds. They do not stand on higher moral grounds when it comes to debt, either.

Mr. Speaker, I would just like to say a few things that we have done in health care. We have

increased the number of doctors licensed to practise in introducing special programs for foreign-trained doctors. We have increased the medical college spaces and provided special loan incentives for Manitoba graduates that have practised. Since 1999, the Province has provided funding to add 23 spaces to the University of Manitoba Medical School. It takes up to seven years to educate a doctor and we are just beginning to see the results of expanded medical education and improved retention of our graduates.

* (15:00)

There are 235 more doctors registered in Manitoba today than there were in 1999. Following this year's record of 96 new doctors, in the coming years, a co-ordinated recruitment office and Web page will be created to support RHAs and communities in their recruitment efforts. In 1999, there were two MRIs in this province, dedicated to patient care. Since that time, four MRI machines have been installed at the Health Sciences Centre, St. Boniface Hospital, Brandon Hospital and most recently the Pan Am Clinic. These investments allow four times as many procedures to be performed. In the same period 16 new CT units have been added, doubling the number of scans. More than 20 new ultra sounds have been replaced or installed, again doubling the tests performed. As more machines are added the demand for diagnostic services grows.

Mr. Speaker, we have been building hospitals and renovating hospitals all across this province. I will just give you some of them where we have made improvements: Swan River, Brandon, Ste. Anne, Portage la Prairie, Beausejour, Gimli and Steinbach. Additionally, our government has opened up new primary centres in Camperville, Waterhen, Flin Flon, Riverton, Niverville, Sprague and the R.M. of Montcalm. More surgical work has been directed to hospitals outside of Winnipeg, allowing for an increase in high-demand procedures such as hip and knee surgeries. Also we have replaced all 160 of the province's ambulance fleet, which is completed.

Mr. Speaker, I could go on. As I go around the province, I feel from the people they appreciate the good work we have done.

The light is on. I guess that means I must quit. I just started. I have much more to say, but the opposition members can come to me later and I will fill them in. I thank you very much.

Mr. Cliff Cullen (Turtle Mountain): Mr. Speaker, I, too, would welcome the opportunity to make some comments on the Speech from the Throne. Certainly, I think, Manitobans deserve better from this current government. Another missed opportunity is how we view this Speech from the Throne from our perspective.

I do want to say I would like to welcome the Speaker back to the Chair. We had the opportunity to visit with the Speaker on a number of occasions over the summer, both myself and my family, and we certainly enjoyed his company.

I do, too, want to welcome the pages to the House. I look forward to having some fun over the next few—

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order, please. The Member for Turtle Mountain. I have to recognize the member.

Mr. Cullen: I will start over then.

Well, thank you very much, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Yes, it is a pleasure to be able to put some words on the record in regard to the Speech from the Throne. We on this side of the House clearly view that there is another missed opportunity on behalf of this current government. There are so many more things that we feel can be done in the province of Manitoba.

I do want to welcome the Speaker back to the Chair. As I did mentioned, we had the opportunity to visit with the Speaker on a number of occasions over the summer, both myself and my family, and we certainly enjoyed his company.

I want to welcome the pages to the House as well. We look forward to their good work over the next few weeks and in the next session as well.

I know we do have a very interesting and eager group of interns on both sides of the House and we look forward to working with them. Hopefully, we can learn something from them and hopefully they can take some things home from us.

I do also want to welcome the staff here and any visitors that might be in the gallery today.

An Honourable Member: Not a one.

Mr. Cullen: It is pretty quiet.

I want to give you a perspective from the constituents of Turtle Mountain and how I think they would view this Speech from the Throne. I think the first thing they would look at is in terms of the

finances of the province of Manitoba. The thing that strikes me and I think strikes the constituents of Turtle Mountain is the debt; the provincial debt is now over \$20 billion and climbing.

An Honourable Member: Up \$3 billion.

Mr. Cullen: As my colleague from Steinbach points out, that is an increase of over \$3 billion since this government took over in 1999.

What it means to Manitobans is that we have to pay interest on that debt to the tune of \$767 million a year. So what it does is it has added a mortgage to all Manitobans and to future generations of Manitobans. It would be nice to say that we had an extra \$767 million to put towards health care, put towards infrastructure, put towards agriculture and economic development, but, unfortunately, we are committed to spending that three quarters of a million dollars on interest. So the bottom line, Mr. Deputy Speaker, is that the debt of the province is increasing to the tune of \$1.5 million per day, and it is a legacy this government continues to expand on.

Not only that, Mr. Deputy Speaker, but we as Manitobans are now the highest taxed people in Canada, and we were hoping that this Speech from the Throne would do something to address that, but, unfortunately, we did not see any incentives there, no new tax cuts announced. We were hoping that there might be something in terms of that.

When we look at some of the economic growth in Manitoba, the numbers say that there has been an increase in 36 000 jobs. Unfortunately, Mr. Deputy Speaker, of those 36 000 jobs, approximately 25 700 of those were in the civil service, so what we are finding is we have increased the number of civil servants, and therein lies a bit of a problem in that we have to generate more income to pay those civil servants.

I just want to refer back to, it was a Chartered Accountants of Manitoba study that recently acknowledged that Manitoba did experience only a 0.9 percent increase in the employment rate of 2004, and, again, that is one of the lowest rates of increased employment across Canada.

So there certainly are a lot of things that can be done in terms of the finances in the province here. I guess when we look at job growth, we were the ninth out of 10 provinces, so, certainly, that is not a very good statistic.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I do want to talk about agriculture because it is very important to the constituents of Manitoba and particularly in my region, in Turtle Mountain. What we are finding is that we have had an increase in our input costs, just an astronomical increase in those types of costs that are required to grow crops. On the other side, which is the downside, we have had a real decrease in the commodity prices. So, in essence, we are getting hit from both sides.

We really have a real issue with Manitoba. The unfortunate part is that the CAIS program does not respond to where we are at right now in Manitoba in agriculture. We have decreasing margins. In fact, in a lot of cases we have negative margins, and with our incomes going down or being non-existent, the CAIS program is not responding satisfactorily to those farmers who really need it. The crop insurance program, we know, will probably pay out a record amount this year, and that is just a sign that we have had just a devastation in our crops this year, in the commodities around Manitoba. So there is going to be very little opportunity for farmers to generate revenue. So we hope that some of those crop insurance payouts will certainly help people get through the winter. Hopefully, that will give them a little bit of money to take to their bankers so that they can get back on the land next spring.

* (15:10)

The unfortunate part, again, with this CAIS program, it is not a bankable commodity so that the producers cannot take it to their banker and say, "Here is what I am going to get." They have no guarantee of what they are going to receive even once they complete their forms. They have to pay their accountants \$1,500, \$2,000 to complete their forms, and even then when the accountants say that they expect there may be a payment, that is not necessarily the case. Those revisions are quite often made within the CAIS program, so those farmers really cannot bank on those types of programs. So really, fundamentally, that program has to be looked at to see what can be done to improve it.

We have had the opportunity, in regard to the BSE situation, that the border is now open, so we are starting to move some product across the line. The prices have increased for feeder cattle. So that is a good sign. Unfortunately, we would like to see slaughter capacity here in Manitoba. I know we have had lots of talk from this government over the last two and a half years about a facility in Dauphin. At

this point in time, nothing has moved forward. In fact, Mr. Deputy Speaker, we have not seen any increase in slaughter capacity and federally inspected facilities in Manitoba. That is something that we would hope should be moved forward by now. We expected if the government would get out of the road and let private enterprise in here and do this, it would be developed.

I know we are having the same issue in Neepawa. There is a group there, a company there, that would like to develop, so if we could just get the government onside to get some of this infrastructure in place, we could move ahead and actually be slaughtering animals in Manitoba.

It really speaks to the whole economic development issue in Manitoba. The minister is moving ahead to try to get some staff in the GO offices. We certainly need staff in there. We still have a number of offices that are short-staffed with the lack of, they were formerly called ag reps, we are still short some of that ministerial staff because agriculture is getting complicated and the producers need some of this assistance, some of this guidance, to help them through the process. So it is important that this government move forward and fill those vacancies in those various areas.

Hopefully, with the announcement in biodiesel that was made, I am hoping that will start something in terms of that particular venture in Manitoba. We are hopeful that the small amount, I know it is not near as high as what some of the neighbouring provinces are allowing for biodiesel, especially the Americans. I heard just last night the Americans' incentive program is certainly much more valuable than ours. So, hopefully, that incentive program will be enough to get business started in Manitoba but we know that the draw might still be to ship our product across to the U.S. side of things.

Mr. Speaker, I do want to talk a little bit about health care as well, how health care is very important to rural Manitobans. If we look at health care in the Westman region in particular, we certainly are facing our challenges. I know the government will rant and rave about their new facility that they have built in Brandon. The unfortunate part was they did not send any doctors. They did not send any doctors out to Brandon to look after the facility. So what we are finding now, instead of the hallway medicine that we are used to, we now have a system of highway medicine where we have to ship our residents from Brandon into Winnipeg for treatment.

Mr. Speaker, just on the ambulance issue, actually I had one of my constituents just last week was supposed to be shipped from Winnipeg back to Brandon. Unfortunately, there were no ambulances available for that particular transfer. So now that we have gotten into this system where we have highway medicine, obviously we need more ambulances to get these people back and forth.

But if the government would just recognize the fundamental issue here. The fundamental issue is we do not have doctors, we do not have nurses, we do not have lab technicians in rural Manitoba. We have a shortage. I will give you an example, for instance, in the Brandon region. There is one pediatrician in Brandon. There are 147 pediatricians in Winnipeg and one to service the entire western half of the province. There is an inequality in this system. What we are finding, Mr. Deputy Speaker, is these specialists are moving out of western Manitoba. They are heading either to Winnipeg or right outside of the province altogether. It is a real cascading effect because in the RHA, the Assiniboine region RHA, at this point in time we are 17 doctors short, 17 doctors short, and at least 10 more in the Brandon RHA, so at least 27 within that western region of the province. The doctors view it as they do not want to be the last one in the hospital, so they are out there trying to find themselves jobs.

So it is a very cascading effect, and I think this government has to take a view to recognize that it is an urgent issue and it has to be addressed. There has to be a plan in place to recruit doctors, nurses, lab and x-ray technicians. There has to be a plan in place to retain those doctors and nurses and lab and x-ray technicians. Some of these technical people, I know, are very important to the system too. For instance, in Glenboro this summer, we had a lab and x-ray technician who was injured. What happened was it resulted in the closure of the emergency facility in Glenboro for two months. So, Mr. Deputy Speaker, we find this unacceptable.

Just recently, in Deloraine and Boissevain, we found a doctor shortage there. So those emergency facilities are also being closed. What it is now, it is impacting the doctors in Killarney. We are short of doctors in Killarney. But the doctors in Killarney are requested to cover those facilities as well. So what happens is it just expands through the region and we end up everyone being short of the doctors. So it is certainly a very important issue.

I think it is time that this government put its ideology aside and had a look at the alternatives. There are a number of things that can be done to end the wait lists in Manitoba. Just last year alone the wait lists in Manitoba increased by 15 percent.

So we know throwing money in the health care is not the answer. We think it is time to step back and have a look at how health care is delivered. We think that this government should have a look at how things are delivered to help Manitobans that are waiting and suffering in pain. My constituents are being forced to use their own money and to go out of province to seek treatment. Quite frankly, we find that offensive.

The other thing that has been done here too is, even in Winnipeg, we are finding the hospitals and the maternity wards are being closed. I quote the Victoria maternity ward, that facility is being closed as well. So we wondered about where the NDP government is headed in terms of their health care progress.

Mr. Speaker, I also want to talk a little bit about education. As we know, education is important to all Manitobans and to our future generations. It is important that we have programs in place to educate our youth and, hopefully, the second thing, would have a good economy to try to retain our youth here in Manitoba. So education is a very important issue for rural Manitobans and all Manitobans. It is very important that Manitobans have a safe environment to go to school in. It is something that I know our Justice critic is working with, trying to ensure that we do have a safe environment in schools, that we do not have the bullying issue. We hope that the government will take that to task and make sure that the bullying issue is resolved. Certainly, we heard from the Retired Teachers' Association just last week at the time of the Speech from the Throne. They certainly have some outstanding issues with this current NDP government.

Well, I think when we talk about education, one thing that comes to mind is the property tax, that education is being funded by property taxes throughout Manitoba. Clearly, it is our view, as the Progressive Conservative Party, that landowners should not be facing the burden of being responsible for funding education. We know the government has taken a slight view to change things. Of course, they, in our view, are not going very far. We think they should take the initiative and really do it right and

take more of our suggestions and move them forward.

Mr. Speaker, I also want to talk a little bit about some of the initiatives that we think will help rural Manitoba. I look at what has been done in St. Leon in terms of their wind farms and their wind farm production, energy production there. We think there is great opportunity for further enhancement of wind farms and that opportunity, we think, should be available to all of Manitoba. It is our view that the government should get out of the way and actually let these companies that want to invest in Manitoba invest here in Manitoba. We know there is about \$2 billion of investment ready to be invested in the wind farm technology.

*(15:20)

So, Mr. Speaker, we are hoping that the government will move ahead on this initiative. My biggest fear is if we do not move ahead quickly on this initiative, this pool of money will look elsewhere, whether it be another province or whether it will go to the United States. So I think it is something that is very important that this government better get onside and get on track very quickly.

Another issue that is very important for the people of Turtle Mountain and, I think, across southern Manitoba this year was the torrential rains we had. Not only did it wipe out our crop land, but it also significantly impacted our hay land as well. In my particular area, we were faced with flooding in a number of the lakes, so a lot of the cottages were greatly impacted. A lot of the river valleys were flooded as well. It caused significant economic distress to rural Manitoba.

We know the EMO process is very, very slow. We have had people who have had claims in for close to six months now and those claims have not been resolved at this point in time. We are just starting to find some cheques coming in the mail now. So there are a lot of issues out there with the EMO process. We think it has to be sped up. We are not sure if it is a shortage of resources there, but certainly there are a lot of those claims are outstanding. So certainly we do need some work to be done in terms of the infrastructure and how it is handled through the EMO. Municipalities were dramatically affected by washed out culverts and roads. Again, they only get a portion of that funding back.

Just to talk a little bit about infrastructure, clearly, in Manitoba, we are in a deficit position. I think we are close to a \$7-billion deficit on infrastructure. The highway deficit alone is over \$3 billion. We do not see this particular government moving ahead to sign a deal with the federal government to move the gas tax revenue ahead. I think we are probably going to be the last province that is going to have a deal where we can access the federal money. Mr. Deputy Speaker, we certainly hope that the government will move forward on that particular issue as well.

There are so many other items that I would like to discuss. I know we have a lot of issues that we are going to be bringing forward to the government. Unfortunately, the Speech from the Throne does not address a lot of the issues that we would have hoped that it would have addressed, so I think you will see this side of the House voting against the Speech from the Throne.

With that, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I thank you for allowing me the time to express my views on behalf of the constituents of Turtle Mountain. Thank you very much.

Ms. Kerri Irvin-Ross (Fort Garry): Mr. Speaker, I am proud to rise in support of the 2005 Throne Speech for the Thirty-Eighth Legislature. This speech reaffirms the pride and reflects the bright, prosperous future for all Manitobans. I am proud to be part of a government that represents everyone. This is carried into our policies and our programs that you see every day.

You will have noticed that, in the Throne Speech, it touches on every region and sector in Manitoba. As we go forward, we respect the input of communities to ensure that their best interests are being represented. The elements and priorities of community economic development express goals of economic and social development, and that is what I believe that our Throne Speech represents. The principles are balanced to ensure that the needs are being met to promote community prosperity and wellness for residents. I am going to use the goals and principles of community economic development as an example to talk about our Throne Speech.

One of the primary goals is healthy citizens. That is dealt with by health care, but also a continuum of care, care that looks at prevention. I would like to begin with health care and what we have done in health care to promote Manitobans. We have become part of the national health strategy to

measure the benchmarks for wait times in five treatment areas: cancer care, heart treatment, diagnostic imaging, sight restoration and joint replacement. But, Mr. Speaker, you must know that we have also put a Manitoba flavour to this as well. We have also included the importance of covering wait times for children's dental services, mental health programs, pain management and treatment of sleep disorders. We took it a step further, and this is in the best interests of all Manitobans.

I heard the member from Turtle Mountain talk about health care and put on the record some facts that I think that I need to correct. We have increased the number of physicians practising in the province by 235 since 1999, and this includes a record 96 new doctors being secured last year. That will go a long way to support our health care system. We have also provided and supported training of nurses that continue to provide the much needed support for our health care system.

I heard the member talk about ambulances, and I just want to put this in the record, that we are improving emergency medical services in rural and northern Manitoba by replacing all of the province's 160 ambulances with state-of-the-art vehicles. These will be all linked by phone to a new emergency service command centre for Brandon that will support our rural Manitobans.

Healthy citizens is much more than health care. We need to talk about our prevention strategies. I am very proud to be part of the government that takes prevention seriously. I will only give you a few examples of what we do around prevention. One is the in motion strategy, which has been announced approximately a month ago, where we want to get, we want Manitobans to become physically fit, to practise and exercise daily for 20 to 30 minutes. This is going to help them emotionally and physically and psychologically.

We are going to look at the basic needs for Manitobans, ensuring that they have affordable housing available to them. This is done through different programs. The Affordable Housing Initiative is one of them. Also a really important program that supports healthy citizens is Neighbourhoods Alive! Neighbourhoods Alive! is an important program that is throughout the province of Manitoba and promotes community groups to identify what they see as priorities in their communities and helps to implement them. There are a lot of important things that have happened through

the grass roots to promote healthy citizens at the community level. We help to deal with human dignity. This is human dignity as another core CED, Community Economic Development value that works for self-respect for all members. This again is by meeting the basic needs of all Manitobans.

We look at poverty reduction strategies to support Manitobans, and there are very many of them. Improvements to child care. As you will know there have been announcements made about the increased spaces for child care across Manitoba. More than 175 early childhood educators have graduated since 1999 to provide support to the system. Our government has also made child care more accessible to Manitobans by providing child care on-line that gives parents easier access to registration and subsidy applications.

We also have, I am very proud of a committee, the Healthy Child Committee of Cabinet, and through that committee which represents different government departments but has also outreached into the community again to support healthy citizens, through that program we have created 26 parent-child centre coalitions across the province. Each of them decide for themselves how they are going to support their communities in the parent-child centres. I am very proud to say that we have two that have started: one in General Byng School has begun, and there is also one at Bonnycastle School as well, which are very active. They are very active in providing literacy and numeracy and also parent support.

*(15:30)

So, Mr. Speaker, that is just one example of what we are able to do when we listen to the community to provide support. There is another one, Triple P parenting. The Positive Parenting Program is also an initiative that has been started by this government, and what it does is it promotes caring relationships between parents and children and develops support systems, so if they are having issues or challenges, that they know where to go and get that support and will get it readily. I think this is very important to support families and, once again, healthy citizens.

We also have developed a better Income Assistance program, and that has been through the National Child Benefit Supplement being restored that has put \$14 million annually back into the pockets of low-income Manitobans. Also, the food allowance for Income Assistance participants in

northern Manitoba has been boosted by 20 percent to help combat the high prices of food in northern and remote areas. A healthy diet means healthy citizens, building independence by bringing down barriers for low-income people to get back into the workforce, providing training opportunities, educational opportunities and, yet again, family supports such as child care to ensure that they are able to make that and to empower citizens to make their own choices and their own decisions that will contribute to all Manitobans and make themselves healthy citizens.

Now, we need to talk about the production and local use of goods and services. We have heard many announcements recently, and I am proud to say how these announcements have been developed to support the rural economy. There have been challenges in agriculture and we will admit there have been challenges. Acts of God have happened, but we have been able to identify positive proactive solutions that, again, come from the community, support them, will provide them with employment opportunities and, also, diversify the agriculture.

So we need to look at the clean energy advantage. That is a very good example of what we have been able to do. The announcement around biodiesel has been referred to, and that is going to provide employment and clean air for Manitobans. It is very exciting. But we have also been able to sell power to Ontario. This is going to provide support to all Manitobans. There is going to be more opportunities in the future.

In talking about rural Manitoba, we have employed 10 economic officers, who, I am positive, will use economic development strategies to look at the strengths of rural Manitoba and to develop programs and opportunities for employment and business so they can continue to live and to thrive in rural Manitoba and continue to support Manitoba.

It is a very exciting time to be a part of government, Mr. Speaker. Every morning I wake up and pinch myself. I cannot believe that I have the privilege of representing Fort Garry in this incredible Chamber and to be a part of such a strong government and a proactive government, yes, and a government that has a vision for all Manitobans.

Neighbourhood stability is another important aspect of community economic development, and this really looks at what do you do in a community to make sure that it is a happy, healthy, safe and secure place to raise your children. You look at the revitalization of downtown. People will say that that

is a really good example, and it is. As our Premier (Mr. Doer) likes to say, the building crane has returned.

We have some major construction that has been completed, that has begun, and that is on the books to begin. The MTS Centre is a huge cornerstone for us. It has brought people back into the downtown. People have said that they are very pleased to see the economic spin-offs from that initiative. I know that the Millennium Library will be opening next week and that is a lot of excitement for people all over Winnipeg.

There is also the Hydro building. I would just like to take a few minutes and talk about this Hydro building and what they are doing as far as a community economic development strategy. When they tore down the existing buildings, they used—

An Honourable Member: It almost looked like a jail.

Ms. Irvin-Ross: My own members are not to heckle me. There are certain rules we have here.

An Honourable Member: You just got my attention.

Ms. Irvin-Ross: The member from Brandon East now has my attention. I appreciate that. I thought you were listening all along.

The Hydro building, what they have done as they disassembled this building is they used it to reconstruct another building and to re-establish an eco-network system. This is exciting. People were so proud. What this has done is it has taken product from one building that would have been hauled to the landfill. Instead of being hauled to the landfill was used in the upper level of the Mountain Equipment Co-op for green associations who are promoting health and green environmental strategies for Manitoba. The pride that those organizations felt as well as Hydro was remarkable. It was incredible to be a part of that announcement.

When you are talking about neighbourhood stability, it is really important to talk about safety. Yes, we do support enforcement. We have had more police officers, funding for more police officers in Winnipeg and in Brandon, but we have also looked at prevention strategies. I think that is really, really important. Part of the prevention strategies is through the Lighthouse program. That is a program where it encourages youth to come from off the streets and to go into schools and to participate in activities.

I am proud to say that we have one Lighthouse in Fort Garry, and that is at General Byng School. I know that nightly, they are open five days a week, and there are at a minimum 60 youth attending. That is remarkable. They feel it supports the community, supports the youth, gives them other opportunities but also it supports our school system because they feel a sense of belonging. That is so important when we are talking about neighbourhood stability and healthy citizens. We have community solutions through community partners. I know that our Minister of Justice (Mr. Mackintosh) works diligently with the partners to define solutions to support youth in Manitoba.

I really want now to talk about another third principle and that is skill development, that is training opportunities that are being provided to all Manitobans. We have invested more money in vocational training and that is helping to bring down the barriers as well. It is exciting, it is very exciting, to see what we have been able to accomplish. We continue to work with modernizing the post-secondary education. We need to look and to celebrate the record of capital investments we have made to post-secondary institutions. An example is the Richardson Building at the University of Manitoba. I had the privilege of touring that building, and there are going to be some remarkable things and research going to be happening. Again, that will support all Manitobans and will encourage health for all Manitobans by the products that they are going to be delivering from there.

* (15:40)

We need now to talk about, as I said, we are a government that goes way beyond the Perimeter, we are a government that looks at the needs of rural Manitoba and I have touched only on a few—*[interjection]* Yes, as my colleague from Brandon East has reminded me, that the Assiniboine Community College is going to be redeveloped at the Brandon Mental Health Centre. That is very exciting. That touches on the education and training but also our support for rural Manitoba.

When our agriculture industry was going through a very difficult time, we stood shoulder to shoulder with them and to support them and to help come up with proactive solutions. I am proud to say that one of those solutions because of the financial hardships was to reduce the education tax on farmland by 50 percent, and now in this existing Throne Speech, another 10 percent—60 percent. I

cannot go any further without saying we got two thumbs up from KAP for the work that they heard and our vision.

I am getting the signal and the light is blinking. I am not done, and I know that people are very, very disappointed. I have so much more to say. I guess I will be like Harry and encourage the opposition to meet with us at a later time, but I want to talk about that the Throne Speech represents a positive vision that builds on the strengths of all Manitobans. It builds on our capacity, our competency, our capital and also co-ordinates and communicates with partners that are all over the province. I am confident that this Throne Speech is a positive blueprint for the future of all of us. Thank you.

Mr. Glen Cummings (Ste. Rose): Mr. Speaker, first of all, let me say a word of appreciation to the member from Fort Garry. That was nice hand-holding, feel-good, optimistic, forward-looking rhetoric. Note, hand-holding, feel-good message. My people in the area that I represent are fighting for their very lives out there, and from the comfort of Fort Garry she says she is going to solve our economic problems, when this House time and time again has raised the fact that we are now further in debt in this province than we have ever been. From the comfort of Fort Garry, and the member from Thompson probably feels comfortable in Thompson, too, I suppose, but from the comfort of Fort Garry she is going to tell the people in Alonsa that the ambulance service is good for them. How about a doctor? That would be better. It is not the ambulance service that we are attacking. We are entitled to decent ambulance service out there. What we are more entitled to is some service from doctors and hospitals where we can expect our people to be properly cared for.

Just let me put a personal story on the record to show the government that they do not understand what is happening in rural Manitoba. The people in Alonsa have taken their voluntary firemen and had to seek out a vehicle that they could put equipment in so that they could be the first responders to an accident to attempt to stabilize the person who was injured, while they were waiting on the ambulance to come. They are waiting on the ambulance to come; they have to have their own responder to take care of the person and stabilize them. This was brought about as a result of a very difficult and traumatic accident that occurred in the community, and to some extent they have gone a ways to solving that problem, but let us not gloss over. I am not

personally attacking the member from Fort Garry, but let us not gloss over the reality of what happens in rural Manitoba. Let us not gloss over the damage that was done by BSE, by flooding and by the very attitude of this government towards agriculture.

The Minister of Agriculture (Ms. Wowchuk), on a personal basis, I do not have any bone to pick with her, but she seems to not have the ear of the leadership on her side of the House. She is part of that leadership so she cannot avoid the responsibility for what has occurred in rural Manitoba, and in agriculture in particular, which is her area of responsibility, agriculture and rural development.

Mr. Speaker, it has been responded to, in part, by dealing with the issue of education taxes. We, in this House, believe that that problem should be solved once and for all, not that we need to get a cheque every year from the government. We are not about to be put onto a mailing list from the government, send a cheque in every fall if we apply. I think I heard one of the members of the government say, "Well, the farmers have not been applying yet for their tax rebate." That is because, in many cases, they have not had the money to pay the darn taxes, so they cannot apply to get the money back until they can present a paid receipt. That is how bad it is in some areas. That is why I can rightfully be incensed in this House about the government trying to gloss over what is happening outside of the perimeter.

The farmers hate the idea of having to go cap in hand to government, but they hate even more the concept that the provincial government, in many cases, will be the spokesman for the agricultural community to Ottawa. We need them to speak to Ottawa about the lack of understanding, the lack of support that agriculture is receiving in this country. We are being ground down by the European trade policies and by the trade policies that the American governments are appearing to pursue which are less than friendly. The fact is they have produced so much product, Canadians produce so much product, we have ourselves in a sea of product and a sea of debt—*[interjection]* Did I hear caviar mentioned over there? I do not think there is any caviar being served in rural Manitoba right now.

Mr. Speaker, let me put some numbers to what I am talking about. As this province goes further and further into debt under this administration, the annual interest payment is \$750 million and rising annually; \$750 million. Let us remember that that would be the

cost of the expansion of the floodway every year paid for in cash.

Do you think that the farmers who are concerned because there is no support to build some of the drainage ditches that are growing up with stumps out there in rural Manitoba and will not take the water off the lands, do you think maybe they would appreciate a little bit of that? Nobody is opposed to the expansion of the floodway, but let us put in context, in real context, what the debt can do to this province. There are a few people in this Chamber who are old enough to remember what Trudeau did to this country. At the very time that the growth year over year to the federal treasury was over 17 percent, we spent 23 and 24 percent growth. Therefore, we were spending more than we could take in at the peak of the growth period in this country. That is what this province is doing. *[interjection]*

Mr. Speaker, the peanut gallery from the NDP caucus is trying to avoid the conversation about what debt does to the governments and to the people of any jurisdiction when we continually drive up the debt. We are still paying the debt from the seventies and the early eighties, and we have not come out from underneath that.

An Honourable Member: And the nineties.

Mr. Cummings: Somebody back here is saying, "What about your debt from the nineties?" What about the debt from the nineties? Paul Martin clawed back a half a billion dollars from the revenues to this province in transfer payments, a half a billion dollars that had to be made up out of the tax basis of this province which comes out to a net of \$1 billion that this province had to absorb as a result of the policies of Paul Martin in Ottawa when he was the Finance Minister because he balanced the books of this country on the back of the provinces.

* (15:50)

Now we have a government in power in this Chamber who wants to spend beyond the revenues that are coming in at the very time when we have had the fastest growth in transfer payments from Ottawa that we have seen in the last three decades, the last three decades. I invite one of the members across to challenge me on that. The growth in transfers to this province has been growing at an unprecedented rate allowing the government to spend, and that is fine if they would stay within the parameters of what they are receiving, but we are driving our debt up further and that is what is so appalling. We context that with

what has gone wrong in rural Manitoba and agriculture production, granted through a great deal of the problem with weather, which is beyond everyone's control. Even the Prime Minister would admit that that is probably not something he has to take responsibility for. But, as government, all of us have a responsibility for making sure that we do what we can to keep some of our industries whole. I am sorry that I do not have a chance to directly address the Minister of Agriculture (Ms. Wowchuk) about the fact that this government is missing the big picture. Folks, you are missing the big picture. We need to go out and do things in this province to build a foundation for future opportunity.

We just heard a couple of members speak about how the MTS Centre was building opportunity for downtown. I happen to represent an area that has a huge percentage of cattle as part of the economy, so I will dwell on that for a moment. I also have some significant grain producers and a good part of my constituency, where the 1930s-style prices that we are dealing with right now are driving the small farmers out of business, and there is no action on the part of this government or the federal government to deal with that. They have made up their mind. They are gone. They are history. They are out of here. The fact is, my young farmers are saying: If I could get out of here with a little dignity, I would gladly leave. What they did this summer and the summer before in the cattle business, some of the young farmers said: I can work in the oil fields. I will make sure the calves are on the ground before I leave, and I will leave my wife to fix the fence, my father-in-law to put up the hay, and I will go and try and make a living so I can save the farm. That is the reality of what is going on out there. That is why I say you cannot sit in Fort Garry and tell us how you are going to solve the problems in my area. You cannot do it.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I am speaking very much about my own area today because I feel, obviously, somewhat passionate about what has occurred. We had three people working in the Ste. Rose ag rep office working full-time for the last couple of years with the cattlemen. What have we got now? We have got one. Reorganization. Bless this government. They centralized them into Dauphin. The cattle are around Ste. Rose, not Dauphin. So what are they going to do? Are they going to provide service? Are they going to send the service back to Ste. Rose on a part-time basis, or are they going to send the farmers to Dauphin? It does not make sense. There is nothing wrong with saying that the ag rep should also be part

of a significant development office. Sure, they should. That was always the job of the ag reps. In fact, friends of mine, my generation, who went into the agricultural service sector, said that it was an unwritten law that if you were the ag rep in the community, you were also the lead development officer, and any ag rep who has not recognized that for the last 20 years was not doing his job.

Now we have the ag reps being spread out in a different way across the province. Ministers in this government are certainly entitled to reorganize, but it does not seem to be making sense. Neepawa now gets its ag rep service out of Hamiota. Take a look at a map. Any of you, take a look at a map. Do you think Steinbach should be getting its service out of Selkirk? That would be close, compared to what we are doing.

Let me spend another minute on agricultural issues, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I have a lot of people in my area who farm on the flatland along the edge of Lake Manitoba. Lake Manitoba received a fair shot of extra water this year because of the diversion at Portage la Prairie. Every year, people realize that that is always a possibility, but what we have is some additional flooding that has taken away the opportunity for harvest of hay land by a number of my constituents. Now I put that out, that dilemma, out to this House. What would you do if somebody said to your constituents, "Well, the water only came up three inches on your lawn" or "The water was only six inches deep in your basement. That was not a big flood"? But in my area, six inches of water goes back a mile or even two miles onto land, the same as it does around Lake Winnipeg, only in this case it is going back on marshland that is very often harvested and there are people who depend on that for harvest.

Do those people have some call on the public purse to say because we diverted as much water as we did through the Portage la Prairie diversion in order to successfully reduce the flow here at the juncture of the Assiniboine and the Red? Do my farmers have a right or do they have an opportunity to say that they have been wronged or that they are entitled to some support to replace that feed?

Mr. Deputy Speaker, it is a dilemma, and it has been a dilemma for a long time. But, when the agricultural community is under as much stress as it is, why is not the government leading the way out there and saying, "We know the stresses that are occurring in the industry. We are here to try and help

ease those stresses and make it so that you can be productive within your community?"

We talk about tax relief. Why did the government add the school tax relief on to the Department of Agriculture budget? This is school tax relief. Why was it not put into the Education budget as reflecting the true cost of education? But, no, we have the Department of Agriculture out there saying "No, no, relax. We are putting money in the department. See, look here, the budget has not gone down; it has gone up. They put \$20 million in there."

An Honourable Member: Are you worried about the tax cuts?

Mr. Cummings: Well, the member says, "Am I worried about a tax cut?" I am worried about honesty in government, and I am trying to reflect that this government is all about politics and not about solving the problems, and certainly not able to understand the realistic situation that agriculture is now in. If you tell my people that we have more money in the Department of Agriculture right now, they would laugh you out of the coffee shop. It is not true. When you are putting funding for education in the Department of Agriculture budget, you are misleading the public; you are misleading the farmers. You are taking them for a bunch of suckers, and you will pay the price at the polls.

The debt load that we are facing in this province combined with the pure, unadulterated, misleading approach that this government takes to dealing with agriculture, I have one other issue that is very close to home, in my home, in the home of the Member for Dauphin (Mr. Struthers), and that is about when, when, when are we going to get some slaughter capacity in this province.

Mr. Speaker in the Chair

We do not have one additional piece of facility working in this province, Mr. Speaker. Not one. Alberta has built three plants; Saskatchewan had 24 applications. The company that wants to build in Neepawa has a kill plant and a cut plant both partly built and running, and they are doing 240 swinging carcasses, which is another word for a carcass that has been chilled and is ready to be cut into the primal cuts. They are doing 240 of those a week right now in Wolseley, Saskatchewan, and we have not turned one shovelful of dirt on Rancher's Choice, or on Natural Prairie.

* (16:00)

We are well past fighting over whether Rancher's Choice is properly located in Dauphin or whether or not the government supports it. Of course they do, and of course we do. There are members on this side of the House who bought shares, but why, why, why is not something moving forward? I talked to one of my ranchers the other day, well I should not say the other day, it was this past spring. I said "So how many cull cows have you got on hand?" This rancher is deeply involved in Rancher's Choice. He wants to make it go. He is trying to make it go, and I asked him how many cows has he got on hand. He has 100 cull cows that he had to get rid of this summer. I said, "Well, it will cost you a few bucks to feed them over the winter because Rancher's Choice is not done yet."

As I said, Rancher's Choice, even at this date, the 1st of November, to the best of my knowledge, has not turned one shovelful of dirt. That is not a problem with Rancher's Choice; it is a problem with support and direction from this government. They want to hide behind the fact that Rancher's Choice has not yet signed up enough cowmen. Rancher's Choice will have opportunities to buy thousands of head of cattle, but they are losing their opportunity today, and by contrast the company that wants to build in Neepawa is already test-marketing its product in Ontario, in Winnipeg, across Saskatchewan. They are test-marketing their label. The product is out there. The people want it. It is moving forward. They have the money for the investment.

The only thing this government has to do is indicate that there might be some support for infrastructure. That is government's role. Government can put money into infrastructure, and it can stand up and suggest and fully, with confidence, tell the public, "That is our role; we help with the infrastructure; we protect the environment; we make sure that the company which is producing this kind of waste can operate within the laws of the environment."

We are begging this government to go out there and sign an agreement of understanding with this company and assist Rancher's Choice in moving forward, either that or lower the cost of insurance on our semis because they are all going to be hauling our cattle into Alberta. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Inkster): Mr. Speaker, allow me to start off by giving a special thank you to

individuals who actually, through their efforts, afford me the opportunity to be here and to be able to participate as much as I am inside the Legislature, individuals such as my wife, my assistants whether it is Henry or Garth or Pritam. All four of those people allow me, through their efforts of protecting my bases at home, if you like, if I can put it that way, by dealing with the constituents whom I represent, the opportunity to be able to do as many things that I am able to do inside the Chamber.

Having said that, also to acknowledge our new pages and the staff, the Clerk, Hansard, and so forth, for the efforts that they put into making this Chamber operate as effectively as it is, and I trust that our new pages will, in fact, enjoy the opportunity that has been provided to them. I know that their time here is very much valued from all members inside the Chamber, and, Mr. Speaker, as one speaker had indicated earlier these are just wonderful youth who have a lot going for them and, no doubt, demonstrate great leadership in their local schools where they are coming from. So I pay a special tribute to those individuals.

Having said that, Mr. Speaker, I wanted to talk about a few things in this particular Throne Speech. First and foremost, I would acknowledge that our Premier (Mr. Doer) is, in fact, a fairly smooth individual, an individual who has recognized the way in which government can manipulate a situation and remain somewhat untouched in terms of negative publicity and so forth.

I want to be able to comment on a couple of the issues that I felt that the government really needs to be held more accountable for, while at the same time touch base on a couple of other issues that I know are of critical importance to the constituents that I represent.

So let me start off by continuing on the question that I had asked earlier today in Question Period, that being the Crocus Fund. Mr. Speaker, this is a fund that had just a phenomenal, phenomenal opportunity back in the nineties when it was actually created. There were all sorts of things that were put into place to ensure that individual businesses throughout Manitoba would be provided the opportunity to not only get their businesses up and running, but to be able to really promote Manitoba and get the average person to be involved in this fund. It was a huge, huge success.

In my petition I made reference to the actual numbers, Mr. Speaker, in excess of 33 000 Manitobans that have actually invested in the Crocus Fund, which is a phenomenal number of people when you really stop and look at it. A lot of these people for varying reasons saw this fund as the right thing to be investing in. They felt good, whether it was because of tax breaks, whether it was because they were investing in Manitoba, they had a lot of faith in this fund. I must say, there is a responsibility that the government had in terms of an appointment, the creation and so forth to ensure that this fund and its longevity would go well into the future because it provided so many opportunities.

It should have been able to provide opportunities, many more opportunities in the province. But we run into a problem in 2001, where there are issues that begin to surface. The provincial auditor has pointed out many of those issues. There were all sorts of red flags that were coming up, Mr. Speaker. We were disappointed that the government chose at the time to ignore those flags. As a result of ignoring those flags, Manitobans have lost out tremendously. Not only have the investors lost out, but also would-be companies in our province, to Manitobans as a whole, and it disappoints me. When you start to look at the opportunities that this government had to be able to look into it, to rectify the problem, I am disappointed that the government did not act when it was first made aware of the problems that were there.

I would suggest to you, Mr. Speaker, that this government was, in fact, negligent by not looking in and following up on those red flags. As a result of that negligence, those 33 000-plus investors lost in excess of \$60 million. That is a huge amount of money and now who knows what else this government is prepared to do in order to save face on this issue. We truly believe that there is a need for a public inquiry. I sat in the opposition benches for years and heard the then-Leader of the Official Opposition, today's Premier (Mr. Doer), call for inquiries on all sorts of issues. I would argue that this is, indeed, an issue that does merit the need for an inquiry.

I understand why, at least I think I understand why, it is that the Premier is doing what he can to resist, and that is because a public inquiry will likely and, I believe, would clearly show that this government, was, in fact, negligent. To what degree? Well, that is something in which I believe

Manitobans have a right to know. That is why we believe that this province would be better served by allowing that inquiry to take place and it has to be the Premier, Mr. Speaker, that initiates that inquiry. Because of that self-interest of preserving his political standing, we are not seeing that inquiry, even at the expense of what is in the best interests of Manitobans.

* (16:10)

I find that the government is going in the wrong direction and I do not know what it is going to take, but this government needs to recognize the real value of having that public inquiry. What we are asking the Premier to do at the very least is to give a commitment to the taxpayers of this province that under no circumstances whatsoever will another government dollar go toward the Crocus fiasco, not another dollar go, unless of course there is, at the very least, a commitment to a public inquiry. I believe that the reason why is because of the cozy relationship that this government has with the union, with some of the union elite of our province. That is the primary reason why I believe that the Premier thought if he just kind of closed his eyes that the issue would kind of dissipate, that it would not become a problem. I believe that that is what he was expecting. He rolled the dice on this issue and it did not turn out. Now we have the Crocus Fund and the Crocus Fund is going to end up to be no more. As a result, Manitobans in many different ways have lost out. That is the reason why I believe Manitobans have a right to know what actually has taken place.

Mr. Speaker, election laws are critically important to democracy. The government, a few years back in fact, changed the election laws and, I would argue, manipulated the election laws to the degree in which they knew that they would in fact have an advantage over every other political party inside this Chamber and beyond this Chamber. The government, the Premier and the backroom people that made the decisions knew that the changes were going to have a negative impact on all political parties except for one. That is the reason why they brought in the legislation in the way that they brought it in because it was not the Election Advisory Committee or the elections finances advisory committee that made the recommendation on that legislation. This was legislation that the Premier instituted, even though there was not a consensus at the Election Advisory Committee level.

What you need to do is you need to reflect on what happens in Québec, on what happens in Ottawa in terms of how political parties are financed. Mr. Speaker, we acknowledge we would love to see business corporations and unions banned from being able to financially contribute to political parties, but let us not say that that is in fact what has happened here. This government has, in fact, broken the intent of the legislation of the finances act. It will be interesting to see in terms of what is going to be the consequence of that because I suspect it will be a lot like what we see with the Crocus Fund: a government that has intentionally done harm to our province, one, in an economic way and, another one, in regard to democracy in our province, has done intentional harm. Yet it just kind of closes its eyes and says that it has not done anything, comes up with the political rhetoric, knows the 10-second clip to be able to say in order to try to make it look as if they have done nothing wrong.

Well, Mr. Speaker, this government has done things wrong in a very significant way in the changes that it has made to The Elections Finances Act. We look forward to seeing The Elections Act, The Elections Finances Act, that they talk about reintroducing or bringing into this Legislature. I can tell the government that I am going to go over that piece of legislation with a fine-toothed comb to find out just how this government again might be trying to manipulate the situation that is going to make our province even that much more undemocratic.

I can tell you, with the hearings that I have heard, that if you gave people a choice, they will tell you that they want an equal financial playing field more than anything else when it comes to electoral reform. They do not want one political party to be given an advantage over other political parties.

Well, Mr. Speaker, I bring up these two issues because I believe that this is really a part of the core of the problem that we have in Manitoba: that the NDP, under the leadership of the current Premier (Mr. Doer), has a heavy bias toward the union elite. I believe that the government needs to come clean as to what degree they are in fact influenced by that. I will suggest to you that there are union elite within this government that have more influence than Cabinet ministers, that definitely have more influence than the backbenchers inside this Chamber. I truly believe that that is, in fact, the case, that this government is dominative even though they come forward with legislation that says that they are going to try to get unions and corporations out of the

political process. Nothing could be further from the truth.

I believe this government is more in the pockets of the union elite than any other government being in the pocket of anything in provincial history in the province of Manitoba and it can, in fact, be substantiated. I would challenge any member, especially a member from this Cabinet that sits on that inner circle which includes some of that union elite—I would challenge them to confront this issue with me in front of any sort of university political science class or anything of that nature because I will tell you something, if they accept the challenge, they will lose. They will lose because they cannot defend the relationship that they have and the bias that they have and something needs to be done with regard to that bias.

Electoral reform is something in which I and the Manitoba Liberal Party support and we will continue to advocate for that. I ask members of the governing party to recognize what individuals like Ed Broadbent, what individuals like Jack Layton, what I would suggest to you the party membership within the New Democrats are saying. They want to see electoral reform. If you knock on 100 doors you are going to find the issues that are most important are crime, health care and so forth. I will give that, but if you talk to the average person in the street, they will tell you that they expect electoral reform to take place if it means making our democracy healthier.

I truly believe that the membership of the New Democratic Party and the federal leadership of the New Democratic Party want to see that electoral reform, that the people that do not want to see it within the New Democratic Party in the province of Manitoba are those individuals that have a vested interest in preserving the status quo, Mr. Speaker. The reason why they have that vested interest is because they want power more than they want public interest being served. That is the reason why they oppose any sort of electoral reform.

This Premier has a wonderful opportunity; unlike other NDP leaders across this country, this Premier has an opportunity to ensure that there is electoral reform inside our province. He can do it. He can make it happen unless, of course, he is one of those individuals that believe the preservation of power is more important than what is in the public's best interest. If you provide Manitobans the opportunity through a referendum, I truly believe that they will vote in favour of electoral reform.

Look what happened in British Columbia. Look what is likely going to happen in Prince Edward Island, Mr. Speaker. Provide Manitobans the opportunity and they will accept the need for electoral change. You cannot justify a political party that achieves 5 percent of the vote getting absolutely nothing in terms of representation inside this Chamber, yet a party that gets 40 percent, 45 percent, gets to spend a billion dollars. The need for change is there. What we need is the political will and the political integrity of a leader to say yes, and it needs to go beyond just the Leader of the Manitoba Liberal Party. We are challenging the leaders of all political parties to recognize that need and I appreciate the efforts and the willingness to be open to this idea from my own leader.

*(16:20)

Mr. Speaker, I wanted to talk about two other issues that I thought were very, very important to touch base on. One is the issue of taxation, of money, of the overall economy. I am growing more and more concerned, as my constituents are, in regard to the spending habit of this government. We need to recognize that when they had taken office back in '98 and '99, that budget which was a PC budget which the NDP supported back then proposed to spend \$6,045,000,000. In the most recent budget this government is proposing to spend \$8,128,000,000.

Mr. Speaker, Manitobans cannot afford to see a government spend so recklessly that if, in fact, there was a change in power in Ottawa and there was a 10-percent cut in transfer payments that Manitoba could risk going bankrupt, that we would have to see massive borrowing or we would have to see massive tax increases because of government neglect in the way that it is spending money. It is a critically important issue and this government needs to come clean and start looking at how it is spending its money. You cannot spend that type of money in that short of a timeframe and expect that life is going to go on in a wonderful, colourful 3-D image well into the future. You need to be more responsible with the way you are spending tax dollars.

You have had opportunities to deal in a real way with issues that are important to Manitobans, issues like education and how education is being financed. You had an opportunity to be able to deal with how education is being financed and you have blown that opportunity. You have wasted that opportunity and it is so sad to see. As a result, Mr. Speaker, we do not know when that issue is going to be resolved. As the

Leader of the Manitoba Liberal Party has suggested in our amendment, reducing it on the farmland, funding of education to 80 percent is something that we need to be able to act upon. So that is a concern that my constituents, I believe, have and share with me.

Another concern that I believe we need to have a great deal more discussion on is the issue of crime. Manitobans as a whole, not only my constituents, are concerned about crime in our province. You know, if you were listening to the questions that were being posed by the Leader of the Manitoba Liberal Party over the last few days, you will see that there is a genuine attempt to try to get to the causes of crime, Mr. Speaker, dealing with the causes of crime and what this government is doing to deal with those causes. When we talk about the impact of fetal alcohol syndrome and the impact that that is having on crime in our province, it is overwhelming. We see a department, as my leader has pointed out, that seems to be condoning the types of programs that are doing nothing to be able to address that issue. We need a government that is going to be more proactive at dealing with the causes of crime.

You know, I have had opportunity to canvass my constituents on crime. As I say, we can talk about the causes and the failure of this government in how it is has not been able to deal with those causes, but I can tell you that at the street level, when you knock on doors or you solicit opinion, you will find that there is a genuine lack of confidence in our judicial system. Our Minister of Justice (Mr. Mackintosh) and our Premier (Mr. Doer) have to share the responsibility.

One of the questions that I had asked my constituents was "Do you feel that our judges are doing a good job?" Would you believe over 90 percent of the individuals, over 90 percent of the residents that I represent, I believe, feel that that is not the case, Mr. Speaker. There is a lack of confidence and it goes beyond our judges. It goes to our Minister of Justice. We need stronger leadership from both the Premier and our courts on the issue of the crimes that are being committed.

I am going to share with the Premier some letters that have been provided to me, individuals who took the time to sign a letter indicating to this Premier and to our courts that they have lost confidence in our judicial system. That is an issue that needs to be dealt with and I will share those with the Premier sometime probably over the next week, in excess of

300, I believe it is likely over 350 homes in my constituency.

Do a multiplying factor. These homes are typically families where there are kids, a spouse and so forth. We are talking a significant percentage of people that, on the street level, feel that they do not have confidence in our judicial system, and there are things that the Minister of Justice can be doing.

There are things that he can be doing in terms of supporting our Crowns, looking at some of the decisions that are coming down and saying where the system has let us down, that maybe we should be launching more appeals through the Crown's office. The Minister of Justice does have a role in that area. We can talk. You know, I raised to the minister, and I will try to give him a heads up because this is a question that I will likely approach him on at some time over the next little while. I was in Ontario, and I had met with the Minister of Justice over there responsible for, among other things, the ankle bracelets. This is an issue that I brought up with the Minister of Justice, and the Minister of Justice does not believe that it has a role in the province of Manitoba.

Well, Mr. Speaker, this is the type of thing in which I believe the Minister of Justice needs to get his head out of the sand. He has been the Minister of Justice since 1999, and has proven one thing and one thing alone. That he has been an absolute failure at dealing with crime that the people at the door want the government to deal with. Totally. You know, look at the results. Whether it is automobile theft, child prostitution, gang activity, crystal meth, you name it, it is all on the increase in our province. Take a drive down, and I know he lives out in North End, or he is often in the North End, it can get awfully depressing very quick if you starting taking a drive and you find out that, look, there is a serious problem, and it is getting worse. It is not getting better.

We need to see action from the government, whether it is the ankle bracelets or being more proactive. Yet we have great organizations that are out there. I will cite Marymount as an organization, Mr. Speaker, that you could virtually quadruple its resources, and it probably still would not be able to meet the demands that are out there. There are children that are being taken out of homes and turned into prostitutes because this government has failed to be able to provide for adequate programs. Even individuals that have highly functional families have

children that are leaving their homes and falling into this trap because this government has fallen behind in dealing with issues like the Leader of the Manitoba Liberal Party has talked about, the causes of crime.

Mr. Speaker, these are the very real issues that the residents, not only in North End Winnipeg but all Manitobans, want to see this government deal with in a tangible way, and we have not seen that. The good example with that would have been the ankle bracelets. Why do we not have them in the province? Because I raised the issue, and the minister thinks that there is only GPS. There is more than just GPS ankle bracelets that are out there, and I will kind of give you that heads up. There is a question coming on it. Find out. It is in Ontario today. There is more than just GPS ankle bracelets. Hopefully, the minister and whoever might be looking at possible questions for the minister will get the response for it. This way, the minister will be at least somewhat prepared. Crime is a critically important issue that constituents that I represent, and Manitobans as a whole, want this government to start getting serious with the causes of crime, and so forth.

Mr. Speaker, one of the mistakes would be if I was not to comment on health care. Health care is a critically important issue. Always has been, always will be. We want to see a government that is going to spend smart on health care. It is more than just throwing money; it is spending smart. There are opportunities that will ensure that we can, in fact, spend a lot more money in areas that will allow for not only cost-savings, but will allow for better services to the clients of our health care.

* (16:30)

We all recognize the importance of health care. I appreciate efforts of Jack Layton in supporting the Liberals on the health care front, and my federal leader is fighting for a public health care system. We, in the province of Manitoba, as Liberals, see the value of health care. That is the reason why we fight for it, virtually on a daily basis in many different ways, and we are asking the government to start looking at better ways to spend that money.

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

Do members wish to have the subamendment read?

Some Honourable Members: No.

Mr. Speaker: Dispense?

Some Honourable Members: Dispense.

Mr. Speaker: Dispense.

THAT the Motion be amended by deleting items (d), (l) and (n) in the amendment and by adding at the end of item (z) the following words:

(aa) the government's failure to commit to completely eliminate all education tax on farmland, and to move to 80 percent provincial funding of education instead of the present level of less than 60 percent;

(bb) the government's failure to commit to legislate a legal right to timely access to quality health care and to provide for an approach which implements this right;

(cc) the government's failure to commit to the principle of accountability in the delivery of public health care services in Manitoba;

(dd) the government's failure to provide for and to deliver on a vision for its direction in health care in Manitoba as exemplified by the closure of the maternity ward at Victoria General Hospital without an adequate plan for the future;

(ee) the government's failure to recognize the importance of fetal alcohol spectrum disorders and the government's failure to adequately provide for the critical need to diagnose and treat this condition well and to reduce the incidents of FASD and crime in Manitoba;

(ff) the government's failure to adequately address the causes of crime;

(gg) the government's failure to address poverty in Manitoba including overhauling the present social assistance system;

(hh) the government's failure to provide for an adequate approach to drainage and water management in Manitoba in order to provide for better support for farmers;

(ii) the government's failure to recognize the urgent need to contain the leakage of toxic metals and other chemicals from the very large

toxic waste tailings pile at Sherridon in northern Manitoba;

(jj) the government's failure to develop a plan to restore the walleye (pickerel) fishery on Lake Winnipegosis to its historic levels;

(kk) the government's failure to deliver on their promise of establishing, in co-operation with the federal government, the Lowlands National Park;

(ll) the government's failure to provide for an adequate plan to develop the tourism industry in Manitoba;

(mm) the government's failure to work co-operatively with the Métis people of Manitoba in order to improve conditions for all Manitobans;

(nn) the government's failure to commit to a process leading to electoral reform and improved democracy in Manitoba.

Mr. Speaker: Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt this subamendment?

Some Honourable Members: Agreed.

Some Honourable Members: No.

Voice Vote

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

Some Honourable Members: Yea.

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

Some Honourable Members: Nay.

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

Mr. Lamoureux: Mr. Speaker, we would request if we might have a support to call for Yeas and Nays.

Mr. Speaker: A recorded vote having been requested, does the honourable member have support? If the honourable member has support we need four members. Please rise.

An Honourable Member: No.

Mr. Speaker: The honourable member does not have support.

An Honourable Member: On division.

Mr. Speaker: On division.

* * *

Mr. Speaker: We will now resume debate on the amendment. The last speaker was the opposition. It would be the government side.

Hon. Dave Chomiak (Minister of Energy, Science and Technology): Mr. Speaker, it would be my pleasure and honour to have the opportunity of speaking today in this Chamber about the Throne Speech and about a vision that has been laid out for this province very clearly, a building on the success and the successes in ventures that started in 1999.

This is a government that clearly has a vision and a direction of where this province should go and, in fact, reflects the aspirations and the needs of Manitobans in every geographic setting of this province, from the north to the south, from big city to a small hamlet, from east to west, and the opportunities to grow Manitoba together with all Manitobans is evident in this Throne Speech. I find it strange and disquieting that we have the members of the opposition forming a bloc, a bloc on the right, Mr. Speaker, to block—

An Honourable Member: Two blocs.

Mr. Chomiak: Two blocs to block what is a vision and a plan for all Manitobans. Members on the opposite side of the House have a position of opposition to every single initiative brought forward. Is it thought out? No. It becomes a reaction. When one reacts like Chicken Little from the falling sky, eventually the public stops listening, Mr. Speaker.

Let me talk about some of the initiatives brought forward in this Throne Speech that we will see rolled out in the next days, months and years ahead. Mr. Speaker, it is strange that during the discourse of Question Period over the past several weeks we have heard nary a question about the future of the province or about the Throne Speech. Rather, we have heard rhetoric, we have heard history, we have heard personal petty attacks on personality, which is something that I think is disquieting and disheartening that occurs during the course of this Legislature. Nonetheless, that was what has happened.

Has anyone on the opposition side talked about the largest power sale in 20 years in the province of Manitoba? Have we heard a word from across those benches? Have any members opposite stood up to talk about the expansion and the building of a 130-million litre ethanol plant in Manitoba that will provide opportunities for Manitoba producers, for all of Manitobans, and will displace a thousand barrels

of imported oil a year? A thousand barrels of income that floats out of the province will come back into the province as a result of this initiative. Have members opposite talked about that? No, they are voting against it, as they voted against every positive initiative brought forward by this government in a blanket chorus of nays from members opposite.

Have members opposite, Mr. Speaker, embraced the idea of biodiesel, of biodiesel clean energy, alternative markets for all Manitobans that will see resources that are, perhaps not first-grade, Canola oil or other products, flow into a renewable resource that will be used in the transportation agriculture sector where, in fact, the vast majority of costs relate to transportation? Are members in favour of having industries spread around Manitoba producing biodiesel in communities all around Manitoba? No, Mr. Speaker. What do we hear? We hear nays from members opposite. Nays to rural Manitoba. Nays to the economy. Nays to clean energy.

Mr. Speaker, we have an opportunity in this province to have a significant impact on the lives of men and women across this province. We have an opportunity to develop in the North and to develop in a way, in partnership with First Nations, that has not happened in this province. There is an opportunity for us to grow and develop hydro and transmission capacity in the North that will see employment in the North, that will see training in the North, that would see opportunities for economic development in the North that have not occurred in such a quantity or in such a direct fashion at any time in the history of Manitoba through the development of clean electricity of which Manitoba has, hydro-produced. Ninety-eight percent of our electricity is hydro, clean, renewable energy.

Not only will we have an opportunity to be an economic generator for the rest of Canada by spreading around our clean, renewable resources, but we will also have an opportunity to affect the lives of men and women in Manitoba who have never had an opportunity over the past 100, 150 years to share in this growth and to share in this wealth as Manitobans, together. We have that opportunity, Mr. Speaker. We have that opportunity to grow this province and to grow this vision and to grow this Manitoba to include all Manitobans.

I think that members on this side of the House are committed to that opportunity and, I think, even further, Mr. Speaker, than most Manitobans are

committed to this opportunity. Most Manitobans, who work co-operatively, who share together, share the vision of growing Manitoba, growing Manitoba in conjunction with First Nations, growing Manitoba not only for our own benefit, but to share the resources and the benefits that we have with all Canadians.

I have not heard a word, a single word, Mr. Speaker, from members opposite on these matters. Not a word, and I suggest that one of the reasons that members opposite have coalesced into this small right wing, reactionary, Sterling Lyonesque type of opposition is because they are out of touch. They are out of touch with Manitobans. They are out of touch with the vision. They are out of touch with the economy. They are out of touch with today's both interest and directions that we need to grow and must grow as a province.

Mr. Speaker, there are initiatives in this Throne Speech that will help all Manitobans. I thought it passing strange, to quote a terminology often used by the former member, former Minister of Finance in the government of one Gary Filmon—he used to often use the word "passing strange"—that members opposite are not supportive of an initiative that will see the heating bills for residential customers in Manitoba smoothed out for a rate increase of only 6.3 percent. Roughly 200 000 Manitobans, 200 000 consumers, will see the impact of this smooth-out of these rates. Members opposite have chosen, and I suggest it is indicative of their stature in the Legislature and their stature across this province, to oppose that initiative, as they oppose every single action.

* (16:40)

Mr. Speaker, members opposite make a lot of noise and make a lot of discussion about police officers in the province of Manitoba. An initiative has been brought in to expand, over a two-year period, the recruitment and training of police officers in the city of Winnipeg. Now, members opposite will take the position that it was their idea. You know, it does not matter whose idea it was. If it is a good idea and helps the people of Manitoba, we are fine with it, but let us take it a little further. When we talk about this idea, generally, in a democracy, one puts one's vote where one's idea is. Let us look at how members opposite voted when it came to additional police officers for the city of Winnipeg or the province of Manitoba. They were right behind us with—no they were not. They did not vote for the budget, whoops.

They did not vote for that initiative but they were right behind—no, they are going to vote against the Throne Speech. They are going to vote against the implementation of the very initiatives that they say is their idea.

Well, their voting record speaks louder than the "hoos" and the "hahs" that we hear from members opposite, whether it comes to crime, whether it comes to policing, whether it comes to health care, whether it comes to energy, whether it comes to the rural economy, whether it comes to First Nations. On every initiative, Mr. Speaker, they speak one word and they vote another way, consistently.

Mr. Speaker, let me talk about the future of this province. We have an opportunity in this province, as I have said earlier, to share some of the initiatives and share some of the wealth. It is not just in hydro. It is not just in energy diversification, though we have a role that we can play in the Canadian federation and have played in the Canadian federation with respect to initiatives that will deal with Kyoto and deal with climate change and deal with the economy in the future. But it is much broader than that, and it has to do with training and education.

Mr. Speaker, there is a program in place, a tripartite agreement, federal government, provincial government and Manitoba Hydro, a \$60-million program that is training hundreds of Manitobans to be employed not just within the hydro field or the hydro sector and the hydro sphere of trades and qualifications and employment. It is much broader than that.

There will be an opportunity for Manitobans to be trained to go to other jurisdictions, to come back, to spread the training around, to participate in economies all across this country. We are participating in that initiative, and members opposite have what to say about that initiative? Not only have they voted against those initiatives, but they have not had the intellectual or the visionary capacity to grasp this as crucial to the future of this province.

Mr. Speaker, I hesitate to even elaborate in the area of health care because I think those words speak for themselves. I note that we were visited by a former Minister of Health in this Chamber but 48 hours ago. The former Minister Don Orchard graced this Legislature recently by visiting us and spending time in Question Period, spending time in the loge, watching members opposite. I think it speaks

volumes that the presence of Mr. Orchard in the Chamber was perhaps a reminder to all members of the matters that Mr. Orchard brought to this Manitoba that one of my colleagues talked about. Connie Curran talked about nurse slashing, talked about hospitals closing. It is very interesting that, as Mr. Orchard carries out his activities and as matters continue, we will see the continuing emergence of a right-wing reactionary opposition that caters to a very narrow spectrum, a very narrow portion of Manitoba that is a time of the past, that is a time of a different era.

As we talk about a Manitoba that can grow with our young people, that can grow with our demographic make-up, that can grow through immigration, where do members opposite stand on immigration, one of the lifebloods of this province? I daresay they stand, again, in that narrow, narrow segment of the population, that they stand in that very narrow segment against any form of change, any form of growth, any activities or opportunities that spread out beyond the very, very narrow spectrum.

I am afraid, Mr. Speaker, that we are seeing a province that is growing, is expanding, has a vision, and being left behind is the opposition who are involved in all sorts of matters that relate to matters, shall I say, rather than applying their energies and applying their interest to the growth and to the expansion and to the well-being of all Manitobans.

I think that is unfortunately a reality that we face, but our vision and our view of how Manitoba should proceed I think goes much wider than this Chamber. It goes much wider than narrow interests of political partisanship, and it goes toward the heart and the essence of what this province is made of, of hard-working men and women, many of whom have been here for hundreds, indeed thousands of years, many of whom who came to this land through their parents or grandparents within the last 150 years, many of whom have migrated from other provinces and parts of the United States to build an economy in a province that is seen as balanced, that is seen as fair, that is seen as co-operative and is seen as an opportunity for all to embrace in this pan-Canadian country that we have created, and is seen as an example to other provinces and other nations as a place where everything is not perfect, but where people, men and women work together to achieve and to have an opportunity to grow and to look at

each other civilly and to work together to build a better future for Manitoba and for all.

Within this Throne Speech, we see the vision, the building blocks upon which the economy has grown over the past six years beyond Canadian growth expectations, has created more jobs or more opportunities in the private sector. One need not even look no further, Mr. Speaker, than the talents of the communities that are thriving in southern Manitoba, for example, many towns and communities that are represented by members opposite who consistently vote, day in and day out, against any government initiatives or any ventures, be it co-operative or otherwise relating to those communities.

One only needs to walk down the street and see the enhanced activity in the city of Winnipeg, to see the streets alive with people again, to see activities. One need only go to the universities and colleges that are seeing record enrolments. Does not the state of, the status or the way one measures an economy or measures one's opportunities by looking at the young and looking at the old. We are looking at the young and we see unprecedented opportunities, both in training and education, and when we look at the old, we see the network of resources that have been put in place, enhanced and improved by this government over the past six years to welcome and to assist those who are older demographically as we welcome those from younger years who are becoming part of the lifeblood of this province.

Mr. Speaker, this Throne Speech lays out for all Manitobans a direction, part of a building process that started in 1999, after the lean years, the very lean years from 1988 through to 1999 that I need not recount, because most Manitobans and, I daresay, members opposite are fully aware of the growth and stagnation that occurred. This government has tried to work with all Manitobans, every sector of the economy, not in a command fashion but, indeed, in a co-operative fashion working with all members of society, with all components of society, to build the economy, to build lives that are better for all Manitobans and to build a future that will have opportunities in employment, have opportunities in education, have opportunities in the arts and the culture, and to all Manitobans as we proceed to work with all Manitobans in developing.

I was very proud, Mr. Speaker, to be able to attend the Bio conference in Philadelphia in 2005, to walk the halls in Philadelphia and to know that delegates from every single country and state of the

world, 20 000 delegates, they knew of Manitoba. They knew of the initiatives of Manitoba. I was very proud to walk over to the main platform and to see a Manitoba student amongst the 10 finalists in North America for a science fair, a Manitoba student competing amongst students across North America, to be the top 10 in Philadelphia. People knew of that place, Winnipeg, people knew of that province, Manitoba, people knew of that growth and the vibrancy in that place.

* (16:50)

I was proud to be at a place where a Manitoba teacher was awarded an award in North America for best science teacher, Mr. Speaker. In Philadelphia, U.S.A., they lined up at the Manitoba spot where Manitoba businesses and Manitoba development were outlined to all of the delegates and where we had the opportunity to share some of our growth and some of our intellectual capacity with all the 20 000 delegates. I was very proud as a Manitoban to be at that conference and see the impact that development, technology, biology and science from Manitobans had had on both that conference and on the 20 000 delegates visiting throughout the world who attended that conference.

That just was not an exception. That was, in fact, the norm that we see with Manitoba energy, vibrancy and co-operation from all of us, that we could work together, every part of this province, every demographic, every single background, work together in Manitoba. I daresay that that is a vision that was given to us, to us who came to this province, to us who live in this province, to carry forth the further generations. That is both our task and our duty, and I believe this Throne Speech both recognizes that and builds upon that into the future. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Jack Penner (Emerson): First of all, Mr. Speaker, let me welcome you back to the Chamber. It is great to see you continuing as the presiding officer of this Chamber. I think you have done an absolute excellent job in the past, and we look forward to the same kind of performance in the future. Hopefully, you will be with us for many years. Some of us have been here many years.

Certainly, I also want to extend a hearty welcome to our new pages. I think you are going to find this a great experience. Certainly, you will see a lot of what seems to be dissension in this Chamber, but that is the nature of the debates as they go on. That is the way it has to be, because each of us has a

role to play in this Chamber. Each of us must take care of our critic's responsibility. We cannot always agree with the government, but we do from time to time, as you will see, commend the government for actions taken on certain issues. So I welcome you here. I hope you enjoy your stay, and may this be a tremendous learning experience for you.

I also want to say to the staff here, many of us have been here, or at least I have been here for 18 years now, and it certainly has been a great honour and a pleasure to have associated with many of the staff that have been here almost as long as I have. Some of them, as a matter of fact, were here when I came here. I am looking at one of them now. Certainly, you have done a tremendous job of serving us as members, giving us the advice we need to make sure that we do our job correctly. We commend you for that, and we hope that you are here at least as long as I am. Or maybe we can retire together at some point in time. Certainly, a great job done, and I want to commend you for that and welcome you back to the Chamber.

I want to also say to members opposite that as a government you have a very major role to play. It is not always an easy role, to meet those demands of the general public. One of them is, of course, to listen very carefully to the needs of Manitobans. That is a challenge in itself. To those of you who have ministerial portfolios, you have a management responsibility second to none in the province of Manitoba. You must look after your portfolios, and you must look after the expenditures and the needs to deliver the services that are required by the people of Manitoba.

To the Minister of Finance (Mr. Selinger) and others, I say your position is somewhat different. I refer in large part to this matter because of what we have seen at the federal level over the last two years. It is not a pretty sight when one has to experience those kinds of situations, or listen to what has gone on in Ottawa.

But to you, sir, Minister of Finance, I say that you have an opportunity to portray this Chamber as to what it really is. It is a place where we look after, to the best of our abilities, to the needs of our constituents, and at the same time, look very carefully at how we can accommodate that from a tax point, the contribution of a taxpayer, as well as the kind of liability we want to place upon our young people, those that are just coming along and some of them that have not even been born yet.

Those liabilities are largely driven by deficits, and that has always been a concern to me. That is one of the reasons I came here in the first place. I saw the kind of borrowings that were—*[interjection]*—and I know that the Member for Elmwood (Mr. Maloway) is again concerned, Mr. Speaker, about what I am saying, but in all fairness, and in all honesty, I think I am portraying what we are all about, as members of the Legislature. I will get to you in a little while. So, if you are kind enough to allow me the comments, I will make them.

But to the Minister of Finance (Mr. Selinger), as I have said, your job is somewhat different than most in your caucus. Yours is the responsibility to make sure that the services are rendered that are required, in reality, to judge very carefully what the needs are and what the demands are. Sometimes the demands are not always the needs, and that is your job, to judge very carefully how much money you allow to put in place into the various departments. That is your job, and then to determine whether the needs are greater than the values of the revenues that you have coming in. Sometimes, Mr. Finance Minister, when the demands are higher than your revenues coming in, the best thing to do is then to levy what is currently required instead of passing on the liability to future generations. Therein lies our biggest problem.

To those of you that are on the government's side but in the back benches, you also have a significant role to play. I want to refer to an opportunity that is not offered very many people in this Chamber. That is, when the American consul came to this Chamber and said, "Would some of you like to join and accommodate or go to Washington and meet with some of the people in Washington, to Kansas and Missouri, to meet with some of the legislators over there, to get a feel for how they operate and what the issues are there?"

I know the member was thinking that I was being critical. I am not. I am talking about our jobs. Whether we as opposition, or you as backbenchers, we also have that role to play, that we do the diplomatic kind of thing from time to time, that we bring back advice and offer assistance to those that

are the ministers, to our colleagues on the opposition, and try and present an atmosphere here of co-operation that presents reality. I think that is part of the biggest problem.

Those of us, my colleagues on this side of the House that are the opposition members, we have to judge very carefully what the answers of the ministers are when we ask them questions, whether they are real, or whether they are trying to be diversionary, to distract us from the reality of the debate. I think we need to really reflect. I am sorry that I will not be able to finish my comments today, but I will continue these comments tomorrow, because it reflects on the character of government. When government and ministers within their portfolios in answering questions to the opposition's queries try to answer in such a way that misleads, or distracts from reality, that, in my view, is not what we are here for. We should, I think, from time to time, reflect on that.

That is why I look at you again, Mr. Speaker, because you have so often warned us. When we use things that are misleading, and when we use strong language, you have warned us against that. I think all of us truly appreciate your guidance and your counsel when we do step over those bounds.

I think that all of us in this Chamber were elected to do one thing. We came here with the intent to make things better for the people of Manitoba. I think, collectively, we can do that. But we must then also be offered, as opposition members, the right to good advice from government, and clear, concise answers that we can take to our constituents and constituencies and say this is the reality. Some of the answers that we have seen come out of some of the ministers' mouths certainly would not lead me to think that that is reality.

Mr. Speaker: Order. When this matter is again before the House, the honourable member will have 20 minutes remaining.

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

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Thursday, November 3, 2005

CONTENTS

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS			
Introduction of Bills		Manitoba Economy Hawranik; Selinger	165
Bill 202—The Good Samaritan Act Gerrard	157	Members' Statements	
Petitions		Neighbourhood Watch District 6 Irvin-Ross	165
Amending of The Architects Act Schuler	157	Property Tax—Education Portion Maguire	166
Provincial Electoral Reform Lamoureux	157	Flood Protection Dewar	166
Oral Questions		Addiction Gambling Rates Schuler	166
Devils Lake Diversion Murray; Doer Penner; Ashton	158 159	Eastman Education Centre Schellenberg	167
Transportation Infrastructure Cullen; Lemieux	160		
Winnipeg Regional Health Authority Stefanson; Sale	161	ORDERS OF THE DAY	
Justice System Goertzen; Mackintosh	162	GOVERNMENT BUSINESS	
Gaming Schuler; Smith	163	Adjourned Debate (Fifth Day of Debate)	
Crocus Investment Fund Lamoureux; Selinger	163	Rocan	168
Flood Protection Dewar; Ashton	164	Schellenberg	170
		Cullen	173
		Irvin-Ross	177
		Cummings	180
		Lamoureux	183
		Chomiak	189
		Penner	192