

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

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The Honourable George Hickes
Speaker*

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 Garry	N.D.P.
JENNISSEN, Gerard	Flin Flon	N.D.P.
JHA, Bidhu	Radisson	N.D.P.
KORZENIOWSKI, Bonnie	St. James	N.D.P.
LAMOUREUX, Kevin	Inkster	Lib.
LATHLIN, Oscar, Hon.	The Pas	N.D.P.
LEMIEUX, Ron, Hon.	La Verendrye	N.D.P.
MACKINTOSH, Gord, Hon.	St. Johns	N.D.P.
MAGUIRE, Larry	Arthur-Virden	P.C.
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MARTINDALE, Doug	Burrows	N.D.P.
McGIFFORD, Diane, Hon.	Lord Roberts	N.D.P.
MELNICK, Christine, Hon.	Riel	N.D.P.
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PENNER, Jack	Emerson	P.C.
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REIMER, Jack	Southdale	P.C.
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ROCAN, Denis	Carman	P.C.
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ROWAT, Leanne	Minnedosa	P.C.
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STRUTHERS, Stan, Hon.	Dauphin-Roblin	N.D.P.
SWAN, Andrew	Minto	N.D.P.
TAILLIEU, Mavis	Morris	P.C.
Vacant	Fort Whyte	P.C.
WOWCHUK, Rosann, Hon.	Swan River	N.D.P.

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Monday, November 7, 2005

The House met at 1:30 p.m.

PRAYERS

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

Bill 7—The Architects and Engineers Scope of Practice Dispute Settlement Act (Various Acts Amended)

Hon. Nancy Allan (Minister of Labour and Immigration): I move, seconded by the Minister of Transportation and Government Services (Mr. Lemieux), that Bill 7, The Architects and Engineers Scope of Practice Dispute Settlement Act, be now read for a first time.

Motion presented.

Ms. Allan: This bill clarifies the scope of practice for architects and professional engineers. It facilitates joint practice between the two professions and harmonizes The Architects Act with the Manitoba Building Code for the purpose of determining when an architect or a professional engineer, or both, are required on building construction projects.

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

* (13:35)

PETITIONS

Provincial Road 340

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

These are the reasons for this petition:

The hard surfacing of the unpaved portion of PR 340, south of Canadian Forces Base Shilo towards Wawanesa, would address the last few neglected kilometres of this road and increase the safety of motorists who travel on it.

Heavy traffic has increased on PR 340 due to the many large farms involved in potato and hog production, agricultural-related businesses, Hutterite

colonies and the Maple Leaf plant in Brandon. A fully paved road would support local business and lessen the damage to vehicles.

Annual average traffic volumes on PR 340 are increasing with commuter traffic from Wawanesa, Stockton, Nesbitt and surrounding farms to Shilo and Brandon.

The arrival of the Princess Patricia's Canadian Light Infantry in 2004 and increased employment at the Maple Leaf plant in Brandon means there has been an influx of new families in the area. Improving the rural highway infrastructure in this location will be an additional reason for these families and others to settle and stay in the area.

Access to the Criddle-Vane Homestead Provincial Park would be greatly enhanced.

PR 340 is an alternate route for many motorists travelling to Brandon coming off of PTH 2 east and to Winnipeg via the Trans-Canada Highway No. 1. This upgrade would also ease the traffic congestion on PTH 10.

All Manitobans deserve a safe and well-maintained rural highway infrastructure.

We petition the Manitoba Legislative Assembly as follows:

To request the Minister of Transportation and Government Services (Mr. Lemieux), to consider hard surfacing of the unpaved portion of PR 340, south of Canadian Forces Base Shilo, towards Wawanesa.

Signed by Grant Thoman, Greg Decrosse, Tara Bell and many, many, many others.

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

Pembina Trails School Division—New High School

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

These are the reasons for this petition:

Overcrowded schools throughout Whyte Ridge, Lindenwoods, Linden Ridge and Richmond West

subdivisions are forcing Pembina Trails School Division to bus students outside of these areas to attend classes in the public school system.

Elementary schools in Pembina Trails School Division have run out of space to accommodate the growing population of students in the aforementioned areas.

Five-year projections for enrolment in the elementary schools in these areas indicate significant continued growth.

Existing high schools that receive students from Whyte Ridge, Lindenwoods and Linden Ridge are at capacity and cannot accommodate the growing number of students that will continue to branch out of these subdivisions.

Bussing to outlying areas is not a viable long-term solution to meeting the student population growth in the southwest portion of Winnipeg.

The development of Waverley West will increase the need for a high school in the southwest sector of Winnipeg.

The government is demonstrating a lack of respect for the students and families of Whyte Ridge, Lindenwoods, Linden Ridge and Richmond West by refusing to provide adequate access to education within the community.

The Fort Whyte constituency is the only constituency in the province that does not have a public high school.

NDP constituencies in Winnipeg continue to receive capital funding for various school projects while critical overcrowding exists in schools in Lindenwoods, Whyte Ridge and Richmond West.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To request the provincial government to recognize the need for a public high school in the southwest region of Winnipeg.

To request the provincial government, in conjunction with the Public Schools Finance Board, to consider adequate funding to establish a high school in the southwest sector of Winnipeg.

Signed by Liz Bilton, Bill Bilton, Robin Chambers and many others.

Coverage of Insulin Pumps

Mrs. Mavis Taillieu (Morris): Mr. Speaker, I seek leave of the House to read the petition for the honourable Member for Lakeside (Mr. Eichler).

Mr. Speaker: Is there leave? *[Agreed]*

Mrs. Taillieu: Mr. Speaker, I wish to present the following petition to the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba.

These are the reasons for this petition:

Insulin pumps cost over \$6,500.

The cost of diabetes to the Manitoba government in 2005 will be approximately \$214.4 million. Each day 16 Manitobans are diagnosed with the disease compared to the national average of 11 new cases daily.

Good blood sugar control reduces or eliminates kidney failure by 50 percent, blindness by 76 percent, nerve damage by 60 percent, cardiac disease by 35 percent and even amputations.

Diabetes is an epidemic in our province and will become an unprecedented drain on our struggling health care system if we do not take action now.

The benefit of having an insulin pump is it allows the person living with this life-altering disease to obtain good sugar control and become a much healthier, complication-free individual.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To request the Premier (Mr. Doer) of Manitoba to consider covering the cost of insulin pumps that are prescribed by an endocrinologist or medical doctor under the Manitoba Health Insurance Plan.

Signed by K. Marcynuk, S. Cook, Alan Schick and many others.

* (13:40)

Crocus Investment Fund

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Inkster): To the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba.

The background to this petition is as follows:

The Manitoba Government was made aware of serious problems involving the Crocus Fund back in 2001.

As a direct result of the government ignoring the red flags back in 2001, over 33 000 Crocus investors lost over \$60 million.

Manitoba's provincial auditor stated "We believe the department was aware of the red flags at Crocus and failed to follow up on those in a timely way."

The relationship between some union leaders, the Premier (Mr. Doer) and the NDP seems to be the primary reason as for why the government ignored the red flags.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To request the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba to consider the need to seek clarification on why the government did not act on fixing the Crocus Fund back in 2001.

Signed by Robert de Groot, Aaron de Groot, Henry de Groot and many, many others.

Introduction of Guests

Mr. Speaker: Prior to Oral Questions, I would like to draw the attention of all honourable members to the public gallery where we have with us from Kildonan Area Home Schooling group 14 Kindergarten to Grades 7 and 10 students under the direction of Mrs. Karen Skelton. This group is located in the constituency of the honourable Minister of Energy, Science and Technology (Mr. Chomiak).

Also in the public gallery from Applied Linguistics Centre we have 17 adult English as a Second Language students under the direction of Ms. Allyn Manuel. This group is located in the constituency of the honourable Member for Minto (Mr. Swan).

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

ORAL QUESTIONS

Brand Manitoba Project Update

Mr. Glen Cummings (Deputy Leader of the Official Opposition): Nearly a year ago, Mr. Speaker, the Premier's (Mr. Doer) Economic Advisory Council image task group announced the launch of a Brand Manitoba Web site. Manitoba has many qualified companies that have been recognized internationally for their expertise in branding, and, yet, this government chose to give the contract to a

New York company. I wonder if the Premier would share the criteria with us.

Hon. Jim Rondeau (Minister of Industry, Economic Development and Mines): I am pleased to let the House know that this was an image committee. It was set up by the Premier's Economic Advisory Committee. What it was was prominent businesspeople thought that we needed to change our brand. We needed to change our brand from what happened in the nineties where the industry was down, the province was down, to be a new province, a province that has growth, a province that has a bright future of positive optimism. So the group of businessmen thought it was appropriate to change our image. This is something that we need to have, a new image, because we have a brighter, more optimistic, more growing province and we need to continue that, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Cummings: The minister's reference to a brighter future, I wonder how our \$20 billion debt fits in that view.

Mr. Speaker, this project was to be completed by July. The Web site clearly indicates that only one phase of the five projects has been completed. It is five months past the government's own deadline. Will the Premier advise the House of the status of the remaining phases?

Mr. Rondeau: Mr. Speaker, this process works with a number of businesspersons in the province. What we have is an image committee which is working to develop an image. It is in consultation, in partnership, with the business community. What we are working for is a new image that can be embraced by all Manitobans within the province and be an image that goes outside our province to show our advantages, show where we are headed. So it takes the energy, it takes a vibrancy, it takes the multicultural ethnic grouping. What we are trying to do is bring together all Manitobans to have a vibrant, open, positive image. This takes time. What we are doing is working with all groups of society, get an all-encompassing, all-embracing, positive image, not the images that the Conservatives in the past left us with.

* (13:45)

Mr. Cummings: Mr. Speaker, this is indeed important stuff. The minister wants to talk about what his objectives were. We would like to know how they are getting along. You spent half a million dollars of Manitoba taxpayer money. Will the

Premier (Mr. Doer) now tell this House what we have got for our money?

Mr. Rondeau: What we have for our money so far is some ideas that have gone forward from businesspeople in this province. What we have so far is an image committee that has come up with a number of ideas, and they are in dialogue with different groups in the province to show a positive, vibrant image, show what we are going to be in the future.

Again, if we look back to the past where we were a declining economy, where people were leaving the province, what we want to show is the growing, vibrant, optimistic province that we now have and what we are going to do; show us where we are heading in the future, not the bad, ill, gloom and doom from the past but the positive, optimistic, growing view of Manitoba today.

Brand Manitoba Project Update

Mr. Jack Reimer (Southdale): Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Industry has stated here that with the competitive edge they are trying to create through tourism, immigration and economic development with the announcement of the plan, in the process that we looked on in the Web page as was mentioned by the Deputy Leader here, the first phase of five phases is the only one that is completed. In the first phase, all they have said, the things they have surveyed and they have come to a conclusion with that Manitoba has big blue skies. It has friendly people. It has wide open spaces. It has beautiful natural environment and cold temperature.

Hon. Jim Rondeau (Minister of Industry, Economic Development and Mines): Actually, Mr. Speaker, the member opposite does talk about some of our advantages. We also have a clean air advantage. We also have the lowest hydro-electricity prices in North America. We also have an educated, talented workforce. We also have a growing economy. We have multiple, multiple advantages so it is hard to put all the wonderful advantages of the Manitoba citizens and the province of Manitoba in one small package, but what we are doing is working with businesspeople. We are trying to be inclusive about all the positive economic advantages in our province and we will continue.

I know it is hard to talk about all the optimism and all the growth and all the positive things going on in Manitoba in one image, but we are trying to do

that and bring everyone to the table to understand where we are going.

Mr. Reimer: We are talking about half a million dollars, a half million dollars that this minister is saying about the blue skies and the opportunities and everything. We know that. What they are supposed to come up with is a brand, an image, a new image, a new and exciting image for Manitoba. In fact, the Premier (Mr. Doer), at the time of the announcement, said, and I quote, "We have a lot of secrets in this province, and I think we have to do a better job of marketing." A lot of secrets, Mr. Speaker, a lot of secrets here in Manitoba. A half a million dollars worth of secrets. I want to know where that report is. I want to know what those secrets are.

Mr. Rondeau: I am pleased to let the member opposite know about some of the secrets. One is the lowest hydro-electric power in North America, if not the world. Number 2, we actually have abundant, good quality water. We have an educated workforce. We have wonderful post-secondary institutions that are working with industry to grow our economy. We have a growing economy. Under the former government we did not have a growing economy. Under our economy it has grown by \$10 billion. That is a huge increase.

We have more people coming. We have more immigration. We have a multicultural society. Now we know that. As a party, as a group, we understand the positive growth in Manitoba.

Mr. Reimer: Well, then, Mr. Speaker, we have heard it reported now, and it is recorded in Hansard, so that is the \$500,000 report. Five hundred thousand dollars to tell us that.

Mr. Speaker, the company that was hired out of New York also did branding for London, Edinburgh, Estonia, Johannesburg, Guatemala and Chile. Now, I ask the minister, here in Winnipeg, here in Manitoba, we have wonderful companies that can do this type of branding. In fact, Winnipeg was rebranded, I believe in 1970, pardon me, in 2000, for \$70,000.

* (13:50)

Why are we spending half a million dollars to a New York firm for the minister to stand up and tell us stuff we already know? Where is the new image? Where is this new branding that we have been waiting for that was supposed to be introduced, supposed to be tabled in July?

Mr. Rondeau: What this is is a process to develop a brand to show all the multibenefits of our province, and there are lots of benefits in our province. We are a growing economy. We have all these skills and abilities within our province. What happened was during the 1990s people started to look at all the out-migration. They looked at all the negative things that came across by the Conservative Party.

Under our party it is a growing economy. We have more people year after year. We have positive growth. We have positive benefits as far as our post-secondary institutions are expanding. Our economy is growing with more high-tech firms coming in. What we are doing is we are taking the time necessary to get an image where all groups within Manitoba can see it. Not just within our province, from outside our province and that is necessary, Mr. Speaker.

Justice System Bail Conditions

Mr. Kelvin Goertzen (Steinbach): Mr. Speaker, since the NDP has allowed in the Hells Angels, the Bandidos and the Mad Cowz, maybe the new brand will be, "Welcome to Manitoba, the gangs all here." We know today that the person charged in the killing of an innocent bystander in Winnipeg last month was on bail and had a warrant at the time of the murder because he breached the conditions of his bail.

Last month, the Minister of Justice (Mr. Mackintosh) acknowledged that he did not even know how many people had breached their probation or their bail, that he did not even bother to keep track. Today an innocent person is dead, Mr. Speaker.

Can the Minister of Justice tell Manitobans how it is that he does not know how many people have breached probation or bail? What will he do about it to get control?

Hon. Dave Chomiak (Minister of Energy, Science and Technology): Mr. Speaker, the word "gang" can have many connotations, but for Manitobans it means that the Justice Minister and this department have worked aggressively in this area. According to Stats Canada, less of Manitoba's remand jail population gets out on bail than in any other province. Sixty-five percent of Manitoba's jail population is in remand custody today, 65 percent. That is higher than any other proportion across the country.

Our Justice Minister is today in the North talking about the Young Offenders Act, as we speak, and has asked consistently that the Young Offenders Act, which has very permissive provisions with respect to release, be amended by the federal government responsible for that to deal with this matter, Mr. Speaker. We support our Minister of Justice in amending the Young Offenders Act in this regard.

Mr. Goertzen: The Minister of Justice is away selling us out on conditional sentencing, Mr. Speaker. An innocent man is dead, and the suspect in the murder broke his bail and a warrant was issued for his arrest. The police acknowledge they do not have the resources to act on those warrants, Mr. Speaker.

Last month we brought forward an integrated justice plan calling for electronic monitoring of people on bail and probation. We asked for more officers to be checking, and we put forward a plan to reform bail for gang members. How many more innocent Manitobans are going to have to die before the Minister of Justice takes action on this very, very serious issue, Mr. Speaker?

Mr. Chomiak: Mr. Speaker, I will make it clear to the member opposite that it is the Parliament of Canada and people like Vic Toews and Brian Pallister who make the Criminal Code to deal with the provisions of release under the Young Offenders Act. It is federal legislation.

Secondly, Mr. Speaker, I find it passing strange that members opposite who voted against an additional funding of 95 police officers would now stand up and say, "Hire more police officers." You cannot have it both ways. You cannot say, "Hire more police officers," then vote in this Legislature against the hiring of those officers. They have to put their votes where their mouth is.

* (13:55)

Gimli Hospital Emergency Room Services

Mrs. Heather Stefanson (Tuxedo): Mr. Speaker, as if the health care crisis in rural Manitoba was not already bad enough, we learned over the weekend that the brand new hospital that recently opened its ER doors in Gimli has now been closed. Millions of dollars spent on building a building only to have it sit empty, leaving thousands of people in the surrounding area void of access to emergency services.

Will the Minister of Health explain why millions of dollars were spent on a fancy new building when he did not have an appropriate plan to keep it fully operational?

Hon. Tim Sale (Minister of Health): First of all, Mr. Speaker, the Gimli hospital is not closed. It has not been closed and it is not going to be closed. The emergency room is being supported by the local physician who is also the vice-president of medicine for IRHA. We are in the process of recruiting locums to continue that service. We have no intention of seeing the emergency room services in Gimli reduced or in any way shut down.

Mr. Speaker, over the weekend there was a grand total in three days of 32 people who went to the emergency department over a 72-hour period. This is not exactly an overworked emergency room, but it is very important that those services be continued and maintained, and they are being maintained. They are being continued. Patients are being seen and triaged as required.

Mrs. Stefanson: Millions of dollars spent on a new building only to have it close. This is unbelievable, Mr. Speaker. Patients unable to access emergency room services in Gimli are being referred to Arborg. In September, three doctors left the hospital in Arborg leaving them short-staffed and unable to accept emergency patients in their own area at the time.

How does the minister expect staff in Arborg to be able to deal with the added strain of patients from Gimli and the surrounding areas?

Mr. Sale: Mr. Speaker, it is very important that the member not use incorrect information. The Gimli hospital is open. The Gimli hospital will stay open. Patients are not being referred to Arborg. If there is a requirement for referral, they are going to Selkirk, not Arborg 25 minutes away. There is physician coverage at the present time. We are recruiting locums. There is a triage nurse seeing everyone who comes into the emergency. The member ought not to put incorrect information on the record on any important issue such as this.

Wuskwatim Dam Environmental Information Availability

Mrs. Bonnie Mitchelson (River East): Band members from Nelson House are afraid that they will not have all the facts before being required to vote on the Wuskwatim dam project. What is this government's plan and time frame for ensuring that

all environmental licences are approved and all information, including details on the side agreements, is available for band members before they are required to vote on the Wuskwatim dam project?

Hon. Dave Chomiak (Minister of Energy, Science and Technology): Mr. Speaker, I think it is unfortunate that the opposition is opposed to hydro development in this province, and we are very proud of the fact that we are going to provide opportunities both for Manitobans and people in northern Manitoba to use the natural resources that we have to our advantage.

With respect to the question that was alluded to, because there are a number of sidebars with respect to that question, full information is being provided between the proponents and the band members. I believe they have already voted on the overall project twice as well as the fact that the matter has gone before the Clean Environment Commission with extensive information provided to the public at that time, and when there is a vote that takes place between four band members they will be entitled to that opportunity to vote with respect to the proposed agreements.

Independent Legal Opinion

Mrs. Bonnie Mitchelson (River East): Thank you, Mr. Speaker, but there are band members in Nelson House who are extremely concerned about the process that this government is pushing without full information in order for them to make an informed decision and vote. I want to ask the minister: Will there be an opportunity for NCN band members to have an independent legal opinion provided to them before asking them to vote on this important project in their community, on this project development agreement? Will they have independent legal advice afforded to them?

* (14:00)

Hon. Dave Chomiak (Minister of Energy, Science and Technology): Mr. Speaker, there has already been a process of referendums that has been undertaken by the community with respect to this particular project. It has had full public hearings with respect to the CEC commission. We are trying to develop hydro in partnership with First Nations communities, unlike the community of Grand Rapids that I visited recently with the Premier (Mr. Doer), where 500 square miles was flooded without any participation—

An Honourable Member: That was the last Tory dam.

Mr. Chomiak: That was the last Tory dam, Mr. Speaker, in 1965, without participation of the communities. We want to do it differently, with their participation, with their advice. We want to include them as partners, not shutting them out of the process as happened under the lean Tory years or even preceding Liberal governments. We want them part of the process.

Mrs. Mitchelson: Mr. Speaker, my question is very simple. All it requires, instead of talking around in circles and saying nothing, is a straight answer. Will members of Nelson House have the ability to have an independent legal opinion provided to them before they are asked by this government to sign any agreement? Yes or no?

Mr. Chomiak: Mr. Speaker, the people in that community are conducting their own decision making on their own as they should as an entity that has a democratic process. They are entitled to their own decisions. Groups are entitled to their own decisions, not to be told by members outside of the group to make decisions about who is the leader or who has involvement in particular projects. They are entitled. There have been CEC commission hearings. There have been two referendums. There will be a referendum held with respect to all of the members of the community. The information will be provided and we will respect the process followed by that community, not in a paternalistic factor but in partnership with them.

Maclean's University Report Manitoba's Universities

Mrs. Leanne Rowat (Minnedosa): Once again, *Maclean's* magazine has placed the University of Manitoba dead last in its ranking of national doctoral universities, and this year Brandon University has dropped two places in undergraduate university rankings. Mr. Speaker, this NDP government is obviously failing Manitoba students.

My question is to the Minister of Advanced Education. What message does the minister believe the *Maclean's* report is sending to the students, the parents and the universities within our province?

Hon. Diane McGifford (Minister of Advanced Education and Training): I know whenever there is anything slightly negative about any of our provincial universities the member opposite rises on her feet and asks this kind of negative question, so I

would like to give her some positive information today, Mr. Speaker. Perhaps she does not know that the University of Manitoba, for example, has the greatest number of Rhodes scholars in western Canada. I think that is something to be proud of. Perhaps she does not know that our nationally recognized ACCESS program, one which certainly was praised both by the former Governor General and her internationally recognized husband, recognized for his philosophy and history, maybe she does not know that this program has graduated—

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Mrs. Rowat: Parents, students and, actually, universities are wanting some assurances from this government that the programs that they are offering are the best possible and that they will help retain students within this province. The *Maclean's* ranking is an important tool for parents and students to assist them in making informed decisions on the comparative strengths of our universities. A Brandon University student recently said, "It would be nice to know you are going to a school that is accredited with a higher ranking."

Mr. Speaker, can the Minister of Advanced Education and Training indicate to the House why, after six years of being in government, this minister continues to allow our universities to fall in the *Maclean's* national ratings?

Ms. McGifford: Mr. Speaker, I do notice that the roofs have not been falling in since we formed government.

Mr. Speaker, I also wanted to assure the member evidence of quality in our education is the fact that our ACCESS programs have graduated more Aboriginal doctors, dentists, nurses, lawyers and engineers than any other university in Canada. I also want to assure the member that our enrolment, students are voting with their feet in Manitoba's university, a 33 percent increase certainly suggests to me students are pleased with the quality.

Crime and Criminals Prevention Strategy

Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights): Mr. Speaker, for six years, crime in Manitoba has gotten worse. There is no better measure of this than the constant demand for more policemen for it is only when crime is very, very bad, as it is now, that more and more policemen are needed. If this government were effective in making our streets safer, then fewer policemen would be needed.

I ask the Premier (Mr. Doer) when will the government bring forward a detailed plan to address the causes of crime, one based on science and what works elsewhere. When will the Premier start making our communities safer and reduce the need for policemen instead of having a situation where we are demanding more and more policemen?

Hon. Dave Chomiak (Minister of Energy, Science and Technology): Mr. Speaker, I agree, the complexity with respect to crime and the factors influencing crime are multifaceted and are not only characterized by the amount of police protection that one has or whether one has an extra security service. For example, I noted on the weekend a report detailing that Canada's prison population chided the federal government for not spending money with respect to people in prison who go out and reoffend with respect to mental illnesses and matters of that kind and said that the money was not being spent in the Canadian penitentiary system. So it is a multifaceted problem, and that is one of the reasons why the Minister of Justice (Mr. Mackintosh) for this province and all the provinces and the federal government are all getting together to talk about some of these issues and the multifaceted approach that must be taken in regard to crime—

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Mr. Gerrard: Mr. Speaker, day after day last week, I provided examples of initiatives that were critical to preventing crime, but day after day the government either was not listening or was not even attempting to address the causes of crime. In one example, as the Citizens for Mental Health have underlined, the number of people with mental disorders who are coming into conflict with the justice system is going up 10 percent a year, all because this government has done all too little to make sure that people with mental illness have appropriate care and treatment.

When will the Premier acknowledge that his policies have not addressed the causes of crime? When is the Premier going to present a real plan, a comprehensive plan, based on science and what works to address—

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Hon. Tim Sale (Minister of Health): I am very pleased to be part of a government that has taken the whole prevention issue extremely seriously. A prenatal allowance program, so that birth weights of children and the nurturing of children in the womb

and after birth is as strong as possible, has introduced the Triple P program that has been used around the world to strengthen the capacity of parents to both nurture and prevent some of the behaviours that the member speaks about.

I am pleased with the BabyFirst program, Mr. Speaker, that targets high-need parents. I am pleased with the STOP FAS programs that have allowed women who have had children with FAS to stop drinking, to use appropriate birth control and many of them are now parenting the very children that used to be in the child welfare system. They are looking after them now. I am very proud of our record in government as a prevention focus.

Children and Crime All-Party Task Force

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Inkster): In the province of Manitoba, we care for our children, at least we like to think that we care for our children. We have 10-year-olds, 11-year-olds, 12-year-olds that are taking crystal meth, all sorts of other drugs. Child prostitution is at huge numbers, Mr. Speaker. We saw a dozen plus children caught up in a prostitution ring.

* (14:10)

We have children that are stealing cars, and I think that it behooves us as legislators to do what we can to try to deal with this problem. Given that nothing has happened over the last six years, my challenge is to the Premier. Will the Premier agree to an all-party committee to deal with the issues of crime and our children so that we can come up with some solutions for the sake of our children?

Hon. Christine Melnick (Minister of Family Services and Housing): Mr. Speaker, I just attended a social services federal, provincial and territorial meeting, and I was very proud to say that Manitoba is one of few jurisdictions across Canada that has a child sexual exploitation strategy.

This strategy works with children; it works with communities. There are many different departments involved in this. This is not a quick fix, Mr. Speaker, and it takes a lot of commitment from all of our community members. We are working with our community members around getting children who are exploited sexually off the streets, helping them stay off the streets, helping them find employment and helping them complete education.

Child Care System Government Initiatives

Ms. Kerri Irvin-Ross (Fort Garry): Mr. Speaker, this government was proud to be the first to sign on to the national child care agreement and to be the only province with new monies flowing. Can the Minister of Family Services and Housing update the House on recent announcements about how those dollars will be used to continue to build our provincial child care system in accordance with our five-year plan?

Hon. Christine Melnick (Minister of Family Services and Housing): I thank the member from Fort Garry whom I was privileged to attend an announcement in her constituency this morning on capital funding. We have announced today that there is \$2.7 million in a capital funding plan for child care centres non-profit across this province. This is in addition to our announcement last week around the funding of 3168 spaces throughout the province and response has been good. The Minnedosa Community Child Care Co-operative Chairwoman, Karen McDonald, said, "We are actually in a good position now. We have a peace of mind."

The past president of the Manitoba Child Care Association said he was recently in Ottawa and was pleased to see—

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Manitoba Economy Employment Creation

Mr. Ron Schuler (Springfield): Since 2004, this Doer government has the second-worst job creation record in western Canada. At the same time, we find that almost three-quarters of net job growth is found in the public sector. When is this government going to deal with the contraction of private sector jobs? When are they going to take this issue seriously?

Mr. Speaker: The honourable Minister of Labour and Immigration. The honourable Minister of Industry, Economic Development and Mines.

Hon. Jim Rondeau (Minister of Industry, Economic Development and Mines): Mr. Speaker, I would appreciate to let the entire House know that we know the optimistic economic news from the province. Maybe the members opposite should pay attention and know the good news. First, in the last year, 9500 private sector jobs have been created in Manitoba. This is a 2.2 percent increase and is above

the national growth rate of 1.3 percent and is third best among all the provinces.

Since 1999, nearly four out of every five jobs created in Manitoba have been full-time jobs and 55 percent of these were in the private sector. Further, we now have a 4.4 percent unemployment rate, which is the second lowest in the country. The other thing I am proud of is that the youth unemployment rate was also 7.7 percent, a significant decrease from 9.9, and much lower than the members opposite, and it is the second lowest again after Alberta. We are doing well and we are going to continue to do good.

Mr. Schuler: Mr. Speaker, in the latest labour force statistics, that is the latest numbers out, we find that the Doer government has Canada's third-largest reduction in the labour force participation rate. When will this government take seriously the lack of private sector job creation? The stats speak for themselves. They do not mislead; this minister does.

Mr. Speaker: Order. I would advise members to pick and choose their words a little carefully.

Mr. Rondeau: Well, Mr. Speaker, the numbers from Statistics Canada, which is not a biased organization, have said that over the last five years, Manitoba's total employment has grown by an average of about 7200 jobs. This is more than 2.3 times that under the members opposite. If you want, over the last five years the full-time employment has grown by an average of 6280. That is a 165 percent improvement from the '89-99 period. And the other thing, three out of every four jobs that have been created since '99 have been full time, and the majority of jobs created since '99 have been in the private sector. Get your facts straight.

Lowlands National Park Public Consultations

Mr. David Fauruschou (Portage la Prairie): Mr. Speaker, in March 2004, the First Minister (Mr. Doer) signed a memorandum of understanding aimed at establishing a national park here in Manitoba in the northern Interlake region. He also promised that Manitobans would have a say about this process. It has been 19 months since this memorandum was signed and public consultations have not even started. I want to ask the Minister of Conservation why this government has so very little interest in hearing what the public has to say about the Manitoba Lowlands Park proposal.

Hon. Stan Struthers (Minister of Conservation): Again, I would encourage this member to jump on a

bandwagon and stick to it instead of back and forth like he has done on every other issue that he and I seem to deal with lately.

To begin with, Mr. Speaker, a number of the promises that were made when we signed that MOU had to do with working with the local First Nations and communities in the area. Now it might be okay for members opposite to forget about Manitobans who have to live and work by the decisions that we make here but we take that seriously. We are not going to make decisions without having the consent of local people and, furthermore, I would invite the member opposite to take a good close look at the number of parks in protected areas that we have created in this province starting no further than with the Manigotagan Provincial Park.

Mr. Faurschou: The member wants to talk about parks. We will get to parks because that is another abysmal track record of this government. After five years, Mr. Speaker, Parks Canada has attempted to negotiate with this government on establishing the Lowlands National Park project. They have closed their office in frustration and moved staff to other assignments.

I ask this government whether or not the closure of the office means that we have relinquished the \$30 million that the federal government had promised this province for this proposal.

Mr. Struthers: Mr. Speaker, I think it is quite humourous that the Member for Portage and some of his colleagues get all puffed up about five years. This started under his regime in the 1990s when they could not get the job done and now he is complaining about it. We have to be serious when we talk about parks. We have to be serious about including local people, including the views of people who live in the area, when we make decisions whether it is here or in Ottawa. For too many years people like the Tories got behind a closed door with a provincial map and started drawing boundaries with no regard for what that impact was on people locally. That process stopped when this government took on the process of including local people in decision making, listening to people, and not ignoring them like it was done when this lowlands park was first proposed.

Mr. Faurschou: Well, I want to thank the minister, first off, for recognizing that the good idea about the lowlands park came from this side of the House. The minister says—

Mr. Speaker: Order.

* (14:20)

Mr. Faurschou: Also, the only person that is sitting behind closed doors and drawing boundaries without the opportunity for public input from those persons within that line on the map. I think this minister wants to make jokes about it. But this is very important that persons have the opportunity to have input, not just from the minister's office, towards his proposal. I want to ask this minister whether he is still as committed as he was 19 months ago to making certain persons have the opportunity to have their say.

Mr. Struthers: Mr. Speaker, the member opposite can brag about having some kind of a good idea to make this park happen which, by the way, is so far from the truth that it can hardly be imagined. But then they had six years in which they could make the project happen and they did nothing. They did not sign an MOU. They did not sit down with the federal government and talk about the national park. They did not sit and talk to each or the chiefs in the area about this. They did not sit and talk to the mayor of Grand Rapids like I have done.

Mr. Speaker, we keep working on this—

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Provincial Parks Report Availability

Mr. Kelvin Goertzen (Steinbach): Earlier this spring I asked the Minister of Conservation to table a \$50,000 taxpayer-paid-for report on the operation of the parks in Manitoba. At that time, in the spring, he told me that he had just received the report and he would take a little bit of time to read it over. Now I understand that the Minister of Conservation might be a slow study, but certainly people in Manitoba deserve to see the contents of that report. They paid for it. I ask the Minister of Conservation to table that report today, Mr. Speaker.

Hon. Stan Struthers (Minister of Conservation): It may be slower than what my friend from Steinbach likes, but we are going to get there, Mr. Speaker.

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Mr. Struthers: Our friends across the way have one answer and one answer only anytime we talk about anything in this House and that is privatize, privatize, privatize. I am not going to allow their ideology to

look at our parks in such a way that is detrimental to Manitoba families and to tourism and to people coming in from other parts of the country. We are working hard to make our parks even better than they are, and we are going to continue to work hard to make these parks as accessible as we can for all Manitoba families.

Mr. Speaker: Time for Oral Questions has expired.

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Speaker: Point of order?

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

Veterans Week

Mr. Gerard Jennissen (Flin Flon): Mr. Speaker, the year 2005 was designated as the Year of the Veteran. Today is the fourth day of Veterans' Week 2005. Commemorative activities are being held all across Canada this week. The theme is: Honouring Veterans by Teaching Youth. I was privileged to attend the Legion dinner in honour of veterans last Saturday in Flin Flon and heard the inspirational words of the guest speaker at that event, the Honourable Linda Haverstock, Lieutenant-Governor of Saskatchewan, who pointed out that Dutch children are much more aware than some Canadian children regarding the heroic sacrifices made by our Canadian troops in the Netherlands.

So that we will not forget and that our children will not forget, Manitoba has worked diligently to keep alive the remembrance of the important contributions made by our veterans.

As a tribute to veterans, to give you just a few examples out of many, Manitoba Education, Citizenship and Youth is involved in distributing a compact disc entitled *Remember*, and an accompanying teaching guide which allows teachers to use music as a creative teaching tool around the importance of Remembrance Day.

From April 11 until the end of May this year many Manitobans signed the veterans *Book of Thanks* at the Legislative Building. This book is now showcased at the International Peace Gardens.

The Premier (Mr. Doer) released a second edition of *A Place of Honour: Manitoba's War Dead Commemorated in its Geography*. On November 4, the Year of the Vet licence plates were announced. As well, PTH 8 which runs from Winnipeg to the Interlake had been renamed Veterans Memorial Highway. The signs along this highway will feature

both the Canadian flag and the poppy. Additionally, PR 457, the low road to Shilo, has been renamed Veterans Way.

Mr. Speaker, I was born in the Netherlands. Along with all Dutch Canadians and all my former countrymen in Holland, we shall never forget what Canadian veterans have done for us. In fact, we treasure the memory of each of the 5706 Canadians who died in the struggle to liberate the Netherlands, and that struggle was only a small part of that total struggle. Therefore, let us reflect during this important week how much we owe to those courageous men and women who gave so much in order that we can continue to live in the land of freedom and plenty.

Lion Dance Festival

Mrs. Mavis Taillieu (Morris): Mr. Speaker, recently I had the pleasure of attending the first ever Manitoba World Invitational Lion Dance Festival at the University of Winnipeg, the battle of the lion kings. It was also the first world international lion dance competition in mainland North America. It was hugely successful with a sold-out crowd, including the Lieutenant-Governor of Manitoba.

I would like to forward my congratulations to the board of directors and the planning committee who worked extremely hard to bring this enriching cultural event to Winnipeg and Manitoba. What better place than here. We are so proud of our multicultural mosaic. I would also like to recognize the efforts of Mr. Ty Tran, whose vision for the dragon and lion dance festival never wavered and thus resulted in bringing people together to learn about and celebrate lion dancing and to showcase our city of Winnipeg in the province of Manitoba.

Lion dance requires great skill, agility and strength, and the young team from Winnipeg demonstrated their eagerness to become competitors on the world's stage. I would like to take this opportunity to say what a wonderful event this was to watch the dancers from all over the world as they performed daring feats.

My thanks go out to all involved in staging this event. I would highly recommend and support for its continuance in the future. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Fort Garry Skate Park Consultations

Ms. Kerri Irvin-Ross (Fort Garry): Mr. Speaker, August 10, 2005, served as an important day for the youth of Fort Garry. On that day, I helped host a

consultation at the Fort Garry Community Club on the proposed construction of a new skate park in the area.

I would like to begin by thanking the North Fort Garry Youth Action Centre and all of its staff and members. Their partnership in helping promote the consultation beforehand and ensuring that youth were properly represented at the meeting was essential in making it a success. In attendance were approximately 75 people, mostly youth, who all provided critical feedback about the design of the skate park. The consultation was organized by the Fort Garry Skate Park committee of which I am proud to say I am a member. This community meeting was held in response to youth voicing their need for a safe and accessible place to skateboard in the Fort Garry area.

During the consultation, the design sub-committee presented their skate park model. This committee, made up primarily of youth, gave those in attendance a chance to examine and fill out a questionnaire about the proposed model. Youth provided the constructive feedback necessary to build the best park possible. In addition, SK8, a local skateboarding business, conducted a skateboarding demonstration that was enjoyed by both skateboarders and spectators.

Mr. Speaker, the success of this consultation meeting would not have been possible without the commitment and hard work of the youth in our community. I commend their efforts. Thank you.

Citizenship Ceremony

Mr. Peter Dyck (Pembina): Mr. Speaker, I rise today to share with members news of a citizenship ceremony that recently took place in the city of Winkler. I attended a ceremony and watched as Manitoba gained 57 new citizens from all over the world. This incidentally was a program that was started and initiated by the previous government by introducing the Nominee Program.

Some were refugees from war-torn countries seeking peace, acceptance and a better life. Others were seeking new opportunities and a good place to raise their children which they will certainly find in the constituency of Pembina. What they all had in common was a sense of great pride. I was able to meet each of the new Canadians and all were extremely proud and happy to become citizens of this great province and country.

* (14:30)

I would also like to recognize a constituent of mine, Ms. Betty Peters of Morden, who received a citation of citizenship at the ceremony. One of only 19 awarded in Canada, she received the citation of citizenship for always giving or going above and beyond her role as a school liaison worker to help new immigrant families adjust to life in Canada.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to ask all members to join me in congratulating Betty Peters and welcoming all 57 new citizens whom we are privileged to have join us.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

Hip and Knee Replacement Surgeries

Mr. Jim Maloway (Elmwood): Mr. Speaker, I rise today to share with the members of this Chamber exciting news of our government's new joint-replacement strategy and development of the innovative centre of excellence for orthopedic surgery at Concordia Hospital. With this strategy and the help of hardworking and innovative health care professionals we expect to perform 1200 more procedures over the next three years, thus dramatically reducing wait times for hip and knee replacement surgery.

Last week, Mr. Speaker, our government announced an initial investment of \$13.5 million and several key initiatives to address lengthy wait times for hip and knee replacement surgery. This investment and these initiatives are part of our recently announced \$155-million wait-time reduction strategy.

Mr. Speaker, our government recognizes that, when it comes to reducing wait times, new funding is only one part of the solution. We need to find better ways to manage the resources that are currently available. For this reason, I would like to commend the Winnipeg Regional Health Authority, the Concordia General Hospital and its foundation for developing a hip and knee replacement program that is among the best in Canada.

The centre of excellence for orthopedic surgery at Concordia Hospital brings together the top medical professionals and latest medical technologies. Many exciting developments are underway at this new centre including a partnership with the University of Manitoba to bring further orthopedic surgical expertise, the construction of two new state-of-the-art operating theatres, the transition to a three-room operating room model allowing surgeons to do as many as two to three procedures

per slate with a goal to eventually doing four per slate and advancements in equipment and technology including computer-guided joint-replacement equipment and audiovisual equipment for training and quality assurance purposes.

Mr. Speaker, I congratulate Concordia General Hospital for its new centre of excellence for orthopedic surgery. I thank the many health care professionals throughout the province who with the support of our government continue to do great work providing quality care and shorter wait times.

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

Mr. Speaker: Resume debate on the proposed motion of the honourable Member for The Maples (Mr. Aglugub), and the proposed motion of the honourable Leader of the Official Opposition (Mr. Murray) in amendment thereto, standing in the name of the honourable Member for Elmwood (Mr. Maloway), who has five minutes remaining.

An Honourable Member: He is done.

Mr. Speaker: The honourable Member for Elmwood has concluded your comments? Okay.

Mrs. Myrna Driedger (Charleswood): Mr. Speaker, I am very pleased to have this opportunity to rise and address this Throne Speech and the amendment to the Throne Speech. I certainly want to acknowledge the support that I get from the people of Charleswood. I am very honoured and privileged to represent that area of the province and the city, and I am grateful for their confidence in me as their elected representative to the Legislature.

Mr. Speaker, I am very committed to my constituents. I spend a lot of time talking to them, and I listen very carefully to what they have to say. I do my best to represent them here in the Legislature.

Mr. Speaker, I would also like to welcome you back to the House and to thank you very much for the fairness that you bring to this Chamber in terms of all of the comments you make to us and for the fairness with which you treat all of us. I just want to say that we certainly appreciate that.

To the table officers, welcome back, and to our new pages, it is a pleasure to have you here. I hope this is a great experience for you because it is a

wonderful opportunity for young people to come in and do this democratic process in the works. We certainly know that democracy is important in everything that we do in the legislative process.

Mr. Speaker, the one thing that has come through with this Throne Speech from the NDP, although there are a lot of pages to it, the one thing that certainly stood out when it was being read was that the expectations that this government is putting forward are very low compared to the potential of this province. While in the earlier years of their government, they were always out there talking about everything they were going to do and how they were going to make everything perfect. Now, all of a sudden, they are lowering expectations and saying, "Well, we are not perfect, but we are trying hard."

You hear that over and over again, Mr. Speaker. What they are trying to do as they move forward through the years with their government is to try to lower expectations of the public, but I think the public deserves a lot better from these members of the NDP.

Mr. Speaker, during that Throne Speech, I looked around and I was quite surprised at the lack of interest being shown by the NDP members in the Legislature. I was really surprised at the way they sat there, uninterested, looking down. They certainly were not engaged at all in what should have been an incredibly exciting time for them. When we were in government, I remember we used to be excited about our throne speeches, and when we stood to talk about our throne speeches, we celebrated the good things that were happening. Instead, what we see with this government is a lot of, I do not know, disinterest it seems, lethargy about what is happening and not a lot of trumpeting of their successes. But I guess when you do not have a lot of successes it is very difficult for them to actually stand up there and have very much to say.

It was a long speech, but there were glaring gaps in that speech, and that is not surprising because they set their bar at mediocrity. They want to play it safe. It is very, very easy to play it safe, not go very far because then you do not have to be judged on anything but mediocrity. What a shame for the people of this province to have to deal with the mediocrity that this government presents. Manitoba deserves to have a lot more than that.

With the mediocrity there is more rhetoric than action from this government. They dropped the ball on a lot of issues. We have seen it in education. We

have seen it in health care. In fact, the comment today from the Minister of Health (Mr. Sale) on the closure of the Gimli ER is probably the most appalling comment, or one of the most appalling comments I have ever heard in this Chamber. That was, "Well, if there are only 30 people coming into the Gimli ER over so many hours, then maybe it doesn't have to be open."

I have never heard anything as bizarre as that by a Minister of Health. Those 30 people could be people having an MI. It could be a life and death situation. A Minister of Health making a comment like that is absolutely despicable as far as I am concerned. That just shows what kind of an attitude this government has on rural Manitoba because they would never say that about any city ER, but it is okay to say it about our rural citizens. Mr. Speaker, I am appalled at what that minister has said.

Mr. Speaker, in the area of education, the member that represents Gimli, who we have not seen fighting too hard for that Gimli ER, has dragged his feet on a lot of issues. Until the issues are brought forward in this House, there does not seem to be a lot happening by him on his own initiative.

So, definitely, Mr. Speaker, what we are going to see from this government is a legacy of mediocrity, and that is pretty shameful for a government that is rolling in money, spending it at a speed far faster than it is coming in.

When have we ever heard of a grand plan or a vision from this Doer government? When has this Premier (Mr. Doer) inspired his government to reach for and strive for all the possibilities that are before this province, to capitalize on the spirit of the people of this province? This province has a spirit unlike a lot of other provinces. Somebody told me the other day that the people in this province know how to live. I thought, you know something, Mr. Speaker, they know how to engage in issues; they do know how to really live in this province. It is because we have an incredible spirit that comes from the people of Manitoba.

* (14:40)

So I question this government why they do not put forward an agenda to move us towards being a have-province. At a time when Manitoba is crying out for strong leadership and a strong vision for this province, the people of this province in this Throne Speech were denied that. I think I have said it every year, Mr. Speaker, when I stood to address the

Throne Speech. I have said it every year in this House. Where is the strategy to grow the economy, to make this province competitive, to create an environment that is going to attract new business, keep current business here, and create jobs? Where are their sensible solutions to the problems facing Manitoba? Why is this government not encouraging progress and opportunity instead of hindering it?

Mr. Speaker, when we look at the situation that is most critical to Manitoba, it is becoming more and more clear that it is in the area of finance in this province. We certainly wanted to see the complete elimination of education taxes on residential property and farmland, and we actually thought that there would have been some mention of that in the Throne Speech, something that would kick-start some activity in Manitoba, and I was surprised. I truly did think that they were going to put something in there, and they failed to provide that tax relief that Manitobans are demanding. Anything short of a total elimination of this tax is absolutely unacceptable. We wanted to see tax cuts that would ensure that we are no longer the highest-taxed province in Canada but, unfortunately, this Throne Speech did fail to do that. At a time, as I mentioned earlier, of unprecedented revenue, either from federal government transfers or even own-source 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.

I really have to wonder, and sometimes talking to members of the NDP, you have to wonder where they think wealth is generated, where provinces get their money to fund social programs, where we get the money to address our education system or health care or domestic violence or day care. Do they think it grows off trees, that all they have to do is put a few ladders up there and climb up and pluck these dollars? Where do they think this wealth is generated that they can, in fact, have the money we need for these valued social programs? It does not just grow on trees and it is quite disturbing to hear this government not have the appropriate responses to how we can manage these issues in Manitoba.

Mr. Speaker, there was nothing in this Throne Speech to show that this government is making any economic growth and job creation priorities. In fact, it provided no long-term economic vision. Manitoba has one of the lowest average weekly wages in Canada, and we have ranked ninth out of 10 provinces in job growth over the past two years.

Mr. Speaker, there is an awful lot of chirping from some of these NDP backbenchers, and I know that it is their job here in the Chamber, that they are put here. They are told to sit here, and their job is to make a lot of noise and try to distract from the real issues. But I will tell you something. It is not going to work because we are very focussed. We see the vulnerabilities of this government, and we are going to be bringing them to the public's attention.

Mr. Speaker, this government is mortgaging the future of our kids. I have two young children, and the one thing that makes me madder is when we have a government that does not do the right things for our kids in this province. As a mother of two young adults, I am very offended that this government is not doing everything that they should be doing in order to make this a better place, so my kids' future is not mortgaged, and that my kids have a good province and a safe province to live in. This government is dropping the ball on all of those issues, and I will tell you, as a mother, that makes me very, very angry.

Mr. Speaker, this Throne Speech failed to even mention the provincial debt, which is at the highest level in the history of Manitoba, \$20 billion. They are always yelling it is wrong, it is wrong. Well, it is not wrong. If you look at the total debt in this province, it is at an all-time high. But why should anybody but be surprised? We have an NDP government in place and that is the best thing they know how to do, is to spend money. Since 1999, this government has operated with little accountability or fiscal responsibility, so we are facing a growing debt, a million and a half dollars a day. As we stand here today, the debt in this province has increased by \$1.5 million. Well, the cost of servicing this debt this year is going to be \$767 million. How many floodways can we build with that kind of money? Maybe we could have some of these high schools that we need in this province built. Maybe we could have doctors and nurses in this province with this kind of money that is going towards the debt. Maybe the hospital in Gimli and the ER would not be closed if this government did not have this debt and make all these interest payments on this, and they cannot afford to keep ERs in rural Manitoba open.

Then, Mr. Speaker, on top of all of that, we have the Minister of Finance (Mr. Selinger) and others on that side of the House that are running around talking about the fact that they have sound fiscal management. Well, when you hear the NDP talking about sound fiscal management, when they are in

such financial trouble, then it, really, even makes you wonder more what is their understanding about how to handle finances.

Mr. Speaker, the NDP was on track to post a deficit last year, had it not been for the massive infusion of federal government cash that landed on its lap. Their windfall allowed them to go wildly over budget and there was absolutely no sound fiscal management involved at all. They received \$472 million more from Ottawa last year than it was expecting, according to the public accounts recently released. But most of that came in an increase in equalization payments, \$267 million, and a higher-than-expected Canada Health and Social Transfer, up \$188 million from what was budgeted. Add to that higher gambling profits, \$41 million, and higher-than-expected corporate income taxes, \$61 million, the NDP was swimming in taxpayer dough, and the question that everybody out there is asking is what are they doing with this money. How can we have a debt increasing like it is when the NDP has had more money than we can ever imagine?

Then they take the money that came for improving health care and stick it into the Fiscal Stabilization Fund to make it look like there is more money in that fund. But that is earmarked money for health care, and that should have been put in a separate trust account. That should not have been buried in there to try to paint a false picture of what that rainy day fund is made up of, because some of that, a lot of it, is designated money for health care. But in their usual fashion, with smoke and mirrors, they are trying to portray a very, very different picture than what is actually occurring under their watch.

Mr. Speaker, the soaring transfer payments from Ottawa and their healthy gambling profits are not the only reason why this government is sitting on a big surplus. They took in \$301 million more in taxes last year, income taxes, sales taxes, corporate taxes, you name it. Part of the reason that they have increasing tax revenue coming in is that they have been quietly jacking up taxes over the years, and it is a little bit here and a little bit there and it keeps adding up. It does not get a lot of media attention because the Doer government's strategy is to spread it out among many different types of taxes but when you look at the overall numbers, their tax windfall is definitely staggering.

It was interesting, Mr. Speaker, in the *Brandon Sun*, one of the columns indicated that our Finance

Minister and his NDP government should win a Nobel Prize in economics for the new system of shifting wealth they have created in Manitoba. They go on to say that, while most governments pay for public services by taking a small percentage of people's incomes, company sales and other transactions, the NDP has concocted a way to pay the bills that includes taking a larger chunk of people's money, then taking what is left when they sell them booze and let them play blackjack. They go on to say that, even with all that money coming back to them, New Democrats still have to go out and borrow an extra \$2.7 billion to fund basic services, leaving a debt that our children will one day have to pay.

* (14:50)

Mr. Speaker, this certainly does not speak well for a province that needs to be doing better. Then, when we have organizations and agencies out there that try to hold the government to account for what they are doing with their finances, the minister or the Premier (Mr. Doer) of this province takes a shot at them publicly, an embarrassing, humiliating shot at the Manitoba Chamber of Commerce and called them a vacuous team of water bugs that just skim across the surface.

The Premier of the province said that and called that of people involved with the Manitoba Chamber of Commerce. What an insult. When the wealth of the province is generated by small business, where our Chambers of Commerce are fighting hard to fight for their businesses that help to build this province and you get a Premier that runs around insulting people in this province that build the wealth, provide the jobs, take this province to where it should be because this Premier cannot do it, and he calls them a vacuous team of water bugs that just skim across the surface. Not very statesmanlike for a Premier of the province to not recognize something better than all of that in this province.

Mr. Speaker, a number of people have spoken about the job numbers in Manitoba being a dark omen, and it certainly is troubling when you see that three quarters of the province's new jobs are funded by the taxpayer because they are public jobs. It means that the economy is being artificially boosted by this government. In other words, a shrinking proportion of private-sector employees are funding with their tax dollars a growing proportion of public sector workers.

Mr. Speaker, if this trend continues, overly taxed Manitobans will not be able to sustain this burgeoning public service, but that seems to be whatever happens when you have NDP governments that come in, build public service, drain the taxpayers of needed resources. Then they lose government and a Conservative government has to come in and clean their mess.

Mr. Speaker, that happens all the time. Even the Winnipeg Chamber of Commerce says that Manitoba cannot expect to attract and retain skilled workers unless income taxes and wages become more competitive against other provinces. According to Dave Angus, the CEO of the Chamber, "We are asking for a more competitive tax framework that is tied to economic growth. Our tax framework is not positioned to attract people, business and investment." That is coming from third parties out there who are working so hard to try to attract business to this province.

The Canada West Foundation, a study that was released this year also indicated—and it is something that I have a huge concern for, that is, the number of at-risk gamblers—and when we look at where the government is generating a lot of its wealth, it is through gambling revenues, and those numbers are going up. The Canada West Foundation is now saying that Manitoba has approximately 60 348 problem or at-risk gamblers. That number accounts for 9.4 percent of the adult population.

Mr. Speaker, that is a huge, huge concern to me and it should be to this government, because when they were in opposition, they ramped up their noise about the advertising for gambling in this province. They were dead set against it. They come into government and now they have done nothing but continue to ramp up advertising for gambling in this province. The result of it now is that we are seeing a growing number of at-risk gamblers in the province. The two are probably very, very linked, and I would ask the government to take some time and have a really good look at what they can do, because it is the people that can least afford to be losing money through gambling that are the ones that are losing it.

Mr. Speaker, there are some other concerns in Manitoba. When we look at the federal sponsorship scandal that is taking centre stage in Ottawa right now, there are certainly a number of scandals going on right here in this province. Despite the fact that this Premier's (Mr. Doer) assertion is that he acts as the ethics commissioner for his NDP government,

we certainly have to be questioning the way taxpayers' dollars are being used by this government.

One of the things that came to light recently, Mr. Speaker, is what the NDP have been doing in accepting union donations that have been bundled by unions and coming to the NDP. Supposedly, it is against the law for unions to make monetary contributions to political parties. Yet for five years the unions have been collecting money from workers, bundling it and presenting it to the NDP government, and the NDP government has accepted it.

There were numerous times, well, not numerous, a number of times where a corporate cheque had been written to me, and I had to take it back and ask for that cheque for a dinner ticket to come from an individual, not a corporation. I did that on several occasions because I knew that I would have been breaking the law to accept that money. Mr. Speaker, I do not understand why this government would be going down the road of collecting money that should not have been coming to them. That was illegal to accept the money. It was illegal to accept the money and yet this NDP government did it.

Mr. Speaker, the other scandal that certainly is of concern here in Manitoba is that 33 000 Manitobans have lost more than \$60 million in the Crocus Fund scandal. We have asked, and I will not belabour this today, but we have asked this government on numerous occasions to call for a public inquiry into this so we could get to the bottom of it. There is a scandal there, and this government has a responsibility to this province to do something about it. I do not know why this Premier of this province does not have, seeing as he is the ethics commissioner, why he does not have, I guess, the courage, as Paul Martin did, to go forward and to call a public inquiry and to clear the air on a very, very important issue to 30 000 Manitobans.

I have been a long-time champion of creating a better health care system in this province, and as a nurse I have seen a number of areas where we could make positive changes. Mr. Speaker, unfortunately, the Doer government is too caught up in a socialist ideology and commitment to its union-leader friends. This is always going to get in the way of making the kind of improvements we need to see in health care in Manitoba.

They have ramped up spending so much that it will not be sustainable and probably has already reached the point of not being sustainable. Yet they

continue to throw money at it without really trying to find ways to significantly improve it. They are just anxious to grab any money that comes from the federal government. They are anxious to take all that money and make commitments that, by the end of this year, they are going to have their benchmark waiting times put in place. Mr. Speaker, now we are trying to see them trying to weasel out of that commitment. They will take the money; they will make their commitments. Then, when it is time to perform and time to come forward with what they see as their solutions and what would make things better for patients in Manitoba who are on waiting lists, they start to weasel out of the commitment they made.

Mr. Speaker, there are so many areas that I do have some concerns in, and I have mentioned some of them in education. I am very, very concerned, and I did not hear anything in the Throne Speech about improving the quality of education for students in Manitoba. With some of the recent reviews that have gone on in terms of marks, comparing Canadian students, Manitoba students and students from elsewhere in the world, some of the marks in Manitoba are dropping and they are dropping in some significant areas and science was one of them. Yet this Minister of Education (Mr. Bjornson) has run around saying, "Yes, but we have a good music program." I think this government does not get it that, in order to compete in a global economy, science is so significant to what we need to have. He should not have belittled the marks in science because that is what is going to make our kids competitive. While I greatly value a number of programs, and I think music in the schools is great, drama is good, phys ed is good, I am a big supporter of all of that because it does create all-rounded students, but for the minister to be not paying more attention to what we need to do to get our marks up here in Manitoba and to be able to ensure that our kids can compete, I think he is putting them at a disadvantage.

* (15:00)

He dropped the ball also in a very significant area and that was in the Seven Oaks School Division. That, really, in itself is a scandal. There were a lot of red flags there. It was red flags like there were in Crocus, and this government also did not address that issue.

Our Justice critic has been eloquent, Mr. Speaker, in addressing the recent homicides in

Winnipeg. When we all heard of the young man's death as a bystander of a gang war, that had to have been one of the most disturbing and sad things, I think, that I have seen in a very long time. I am so disappointed that this government is not addressing that issue much more aggressively. I find it so disturbing to see headlines like Winnipeg is homicide capital, Killerpeg, once again. Those are disturbing, disturbing headlines in this province and then we see them re-branding themselves. Well, maybe they need to fix their problems first before they can re-brand themselves as a province that is open for business.

Mr. Speaker, it was a very, very disappointing speech, and I certainly support and would ask that this government support the amendments that have been put forward because this government has really hit the snooze button when it came to doing what is needed to improve the province of Manitoba. The people of this province deserve a lot better and they are not getting it from an NDP government. Thank you.

Hon. Peter Bjornson (Minister of Education, Citizenship and Youth): I am very pleased to stand in the House today to put my comments on the record regarding the main motion. At this time, I would also like to say hello to you, Mr. Speaker. It is great to be back in the House and I extend greetings as well to our two pages today. We have Monica De Castro and, of course, Chad Jacobson, a student at Gimli High School. I am very pleased to see them here today. As pages, you are going to have a wonderful experience here in the Legislature.

Mr. Speaker, the previous speaker, the member from Charleswood, said that there was no excitement about the Throne Speech and it was interesting to hear her take on body language. Well, I will try not to contain myself so much next time around because I, for one, as are all members on this side of the House, am very excited about what was in the Throne Speech. We are very pleased to be bringing forward the Throne Speech this time.

What I would like to talk about in the Throne Speech, we talked about the preparing for emergencies, Mr. Speaker, and the actions of this government this year being very proactive to address some very serious concerns in the municipalities in the south basin of Manitoba. It was a clear, proactive approach to averting disaster, and yet the Tory press release said with the expansion of the floodway, we are expecting to see an increased water flow into the

south basin of Lake Winnipeg and that this could lead to flooding of those properties if the Premier does not increase their flood protection. Flood protection should have been considered, he says. It is clear that the Tories do not have an understanding of this issue. I have lived by the lake all my life, and when you have 300 000 cubic metres of water per second coming into the lake, and 160 000 cubic metres of water per second leaving the lake, it has nothing to do with expanding the floodway. That water is going to come into the south basin either way.

Now, we were very proactive with an \$8-million commitment to dikes and flood protection and the citizens of Gimli, along with a number of people who rose to the occasion to help from various schools in Winnipeg, put in a lot of volunteer time. In fact, I was joined by my colleague from Wolseley, and the Premier himself was down filling some sandbags. There was a lot of effort to bring forward all the protective measures necessary to avoid what could have been a very, very bad situation with the waters being at 30-year levels, and with the 1-in-10 windstorm, it was a perfect storm, and it could have been quite a disaster, Mr. Speaker, so we were very proactive in our approach to dealing with that.

I also take exception to the comments made in the House today about the so-called closure of the emergency services at Gimli hospital. As the Minister of Health (Mr. Sale) has said, the emergency services are available. It is not being closed, and it is insulting to the people of the Interlake Regional Health Authority who are working to ensure that service is not compromised in the situation, Mr. Speaker. We are committed to ensure that it is not and that the citizens of Gimli are going to be well served by our health care system.

Now, in the limited time that I have, I would like to talk about education as my portfolio here, and some of the things that I heard from members opposite which I found quite disturbing. In my experience as minister, I have observed that there are two things that define the members opposite with respect to education. Essentially, it is a one-trick pony. That is, it is always about financing; it is always about taxes. That is the one-trick pony that members opposite bring into this House with anything meaningful on education.

The second thing that defines members opposite is essentially a three-ring circus when it comes to consultation because we have some members saying,

"Oh, make sure you talk to the teachers," other members saying, "It's a waste of time to talk to anybody about this issue," and other members of the party opposite saying, "Disregard everything that everyone said in consultation and do what we say." So it has been very interesting to watch this dynamic with the members opposite with respect to education issues.

What I have heard so far in throne speeches from members opposite is they keep saying, "Oh, you mention 1999 17 times in the Throne Speech." Well, maybe I could talk a little bit about history and refresh members opposite. My critic just said how, as a mother, she is absolutely, oh, very, very angry that we do not do the right things for their children. Well, let us talk about the right things that have been done for the children since 1999. But members opposite also were lamenting the fact that we did not talk about anything prior to 1999, so we will talk about 1995.

In 1995, Mr. Speaker, January 16, the announcement for education and training and the government support to public schools would be unchanged from the 1994-95 level. A zero percent announcement followed two years of announced reductions of minus 2 percent and minus 2.6 percent for a total reduction of \$34 million. Now, I cannot see how members opposite can possibly say that that was right for children. 1995 was the year that 243 teachers, a record number of teachers, were given a pink slip; 243 teachers in May of 1995. Now, obviously, that cannot be right for children because we are seeing an increase in class sizes, and we are seeing a lack of commitment by the members opposite to fund the education system.

If you go back to that time frame you also have all the reduced work week legislation when members opposite gave school boards the authority to lock teachers out of the classroom. Many school divisions did that. Why did they do that? To save money. Why would they be forced to save money? Because you had announcements that saw a net decrease of \$34 million, Mr. Speaker. Why would they lock out teachers when teachers needed to be involved in professional development, when teachers needed to be engaged in professional dialogue with other teachers and when teachers needed administrative time for all the things that they were trying to get accomplished in the schools? Because they were being grossly underfunded by members opposite. At the same time they put a cap on taxation.

We talk about school safety. In 1993 when I was a member of the Evergreen Teachers' Association, the Manitoba Teachers' Society was saying to members opposite, "We need to do something about safety issues in the school." Yet they chose to do nothing, Mr. Speaker. They chose to do nothing. The member from Charleswood stands up in the House and has to say, "Well, we have to do what's right for kids." It is really interesting that that would come from a Tory opposition when what they were doing in the 1990s to our school divisions was absolutely appalling, a complete abandonment of the public school system, nothing short of that.

So, yes, I guess if you want to talk about prior to 1999, we could talk about it, but I think, Mr. Speaker, that the truth hurts. As a teacher, I was absolutely appalled by what was happening to our school system. I think it is no coincidence that there are currently almost a dozen teachers on these benches of the government of Manitoba because of what was happening to our school system and how our public school system had been abandoned.

* (15:10)

Now, since 1999, since 1999, if we address the one-trick-pony issue of the property taxes, our record is very clear, Mr. Speaker. In the 1990s there is a trend. Property taxes kept going up, 68 percent; property values remained static. Since that time, since 1999, property taxes are relatively flat, property values have gone up, and that is because of the good work that we have been doing as a government, recognizing the need for change. That need for change has included a commitment to eliminate one of the two property taxes that are on housing right now with respect to education support levies, and we are committed to eliminate the provincial Education Support Levy.

We recognized the need to increase the property tax credit, which we have done, from \$250 to \$325 in 1999 and up to \$400 in the year 2000, crediting over \$179 million to homeowners. As the so-called champions of the farm community, it was our government that, in 2002, decreased the portioning on farmland that resulted in \$7 million in annual savings from farmers with respect to education taxes and, of course, the farmland school tax rebate. Our commitment has been very clear, and we have exceeded what we originally promised we would do in that regard.

So let us look at that one-trick pony on taxes. It is very clear. In five years, the net contribution of members opposite, the net contribution after cutting the contributions to education system and one token increase, the net contribution to the entire education system in the province of Manitoba was \$1.6 million in five years. Our contribution as a government since we have been in office since 1999 is \$129.8 million. We could not run one of the programs, we could not run one of our new initiatives, with \$1.6 million in one year never mind over five years. It is absolutely appalling how the members opposite completely abandoned the public school system.

Now, Mr. Speaker, it is rather curious, because they talk about how we need to fund more and we need to fund more, and it has been identified in the House that Monday, Wednesday, Friday, is spend, spend, spend; Tuesday, Thursday is cut taxes, cut taxes, cut taxes. I hear many people ask about building new schools. Well, certainly that is a good problem to have, that we have growth in this province, and we do need to build new schools. When you are firing 243 teachers and people are leaving the province in record numbers in the 1990s, you did not need to build schools, I guess, because it was reflected in their announcements. Prior to 1999, we had announcements of \$18.3 million for capital. That was a couple of the announcements from members opposite when we had over 700 schools that were—you know, roofs were leaking, boilers needed to be replaced. We have inherited a serious infrastructure deficit that we have been trying to address. So funding under the previous administration, \$172 million; funding under our administration, \$333 million. You have to ask who is the government that is committed to seeing improved infrastructure in the province of Manitoba. That would be this government.

You know, we were able to do this in our balanced budget legislation, Mr. Speaker. We were able to do this. The member from Radisson, the member from Burrows, they both referenced in their speeches a report from Ottawa that says: "New Democrats Most Fiscally Responsible, Federal Government Report, February 23, 2005. The New Democratic Party governments have the best fiscal track record among all parties, balancing the books more than twice as often as Liberal governments." It is in the report. This is a government that is committed to being fiscally responsible and providing the services and the infrastructure that

Manitobans want, and this is what we have been doing and we have been doing it successfully.

Mr. Conrad Santos, Deputy Speaker, in the Chair

Now, again, one of the issues that was raised by the members opposite, one of the issues that was raised by the member from Charleswood, Mr. Deputy Speaker, was marks, towards the end of the speech. It was almost like it was an afterthought. As Education critic, maybe something should be said about education, perhaps. So the member from Charleswood talked about marks and how we were slipping, allegedly. Well, first of all, she also was a little dismissive of some comments that were made that were in an editorial, but, of course, there are a lot of things that were not included in that editorial that I had spoken about in light of some of the results in sciences.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, we have been doing a lot to improve the quality of education in this province, and we have been doing a lot to assess our students and their abilities. But the member from Charleswood does not understand this process because it is a formative, student-led, classroom-based assessment process that we are engaged in right now. It is assessment as learning, assessment for learning, and learning by assessment. That is what we have been doing with our new pilot project in the Grade 8 assessments.

It is not about marks. Yes, there is some merit to standardize tests, and we recognize that. That is why we continue to have standardized tests in Senior 4 in the English, and that is why we continue to have standardized tests in math. But we have a regimen of assessment that includes the Grade 3 assessment, the Grade 8 assessment, the PISA results that have shown that Manitoba consistently fairs very well.

What we are committed to on this side of the House is providing resources that create a very robust education system that meet the needs of our students, and, yes, we do have one of the best music programs, and I am proud of that fact. The member from Charleswood should be proud of the fact that we do have one of the best music programs because there is literature that supports the idea that learning through the arts draws out a lot of the cognitive abilities of students and enhances their ability to learn. So I was rather surprised that the member from Charleswood would be so dismissive of that.

Our job as a government, as a Department of Education, is to provide every student in Manitoba an opportunity to succeed, and we have to provide a school system that has as many opportunities presented to them to succeed. That is our commitment on this side of the House, and we are doing that by funding education at the rate of economic growth, by ensuring that we do not see days where 243 teachers are let go in one fell swoop with an omnibus pink slip because of the funding announcement. We are committed to funding our education system in a meaningful way so we can provide students with those opportunities.

Now, I have had the opportunity as minister, Mr. Deputy Speaker, to visit so many schools, and I hear a lot of good things from teachers. I ask for feedback from teachers on what we can be doing better. In fact, this morning I was at Archwood School, where they have a lot of multiple-age and multiple-class activities, mixed classes with a K to 3, 3 to 5, whatever the case might be, in whatever configuration, and they were saying how our department is doing exceptional work in providing the resource and the supports for students to succeed in that type of classroom setting. We have been recognized as leaders in the country with those types of initiatives on multigrade, multilevel opportunities for students.

Teachers are doing a great job. Teachers are very committed to the profession. We as a government are very committed to the education system.

So, when they talk about the Throne Speech 2005, I am very pleased to stand here on this side of the House, Mr. Deputy Speaker, and talk about, as I said, the proactive measures we took in preparing for emergencies; the initiatives that we have for building on our clean energy environment. We are the building party, not the mothball party; how we have been delivering better health care; how we have all kinds of programs in place to combat crime; how we have initiated a number of different projects preparing children and youth for the future, and that is a commitment that starts, as mentioned by the Minister of Health (Mr. Sale), in the womb with the prenatal benefit. That is commitment. With our Healthy Child Committee of Cabinet, with the early development indicators, with the triple-P Positive Parenting Program, with the Roots Empathy program to address issues around bullying and addressing empathy in young children, with our commitment to the Safe Schools, we are preparing our students academically; we are preparing them socially. We

have rewritten the curriculum in the social studies that talks about what it means to be a proactive, productive member of society working towards civics education through citizenship education.

* (15:20)

Modernizing our post-secondary education and training, Growing Rural Manitoba, the headlines speak for themselves, and the subheadings speak for themselves in Throne Speech 2005. As I said, recognizing that my time is running out, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I do visit a lot of schools, and I do not hear teachers say, "I long for the days of the Tory government when they were going to lock us out for 10 days." I do not hear teachers saying, "I long for the days when they were going to review our compensation through the Scurfield commission because they think that we are overpaid." I do not hear teachers saying, "I long for the days of minus 2.6 funding announcements." I do not hear teachers saying, "I long for the days when we were getting \$18.3 million in capital," when we are putting \$45 million every year into capital.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I do not hear that. I hear teachers all over Manitoba saying that the education system is on the right track. This government is committed to education, and I am very proud to be a part of this government and the 10 teachers that sit on this side of the House who are moving Manitoba forward.

With those comments, I, again, am very pleased to have had this opportunity, and it is a privilege and an honour to represent the citizens of Gimli. I look forward to the motion and moving forward on Throne Speech 2005. Thank you very much, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Mr. David Faurschou (Portage la Prairie): Mr. Deputy Speaker, I am very honoured to have the privilege to rise today and participate in the seventh Throne Speech of this current Government of Manitoba in representation of the constituency which has been my home my entire life. Portage la Prairie is an area of the province that I am so familiar with and so very proud to represent.

I would like to also begin my Throne Speech debate by acknowledging the new interns that we have working with us in the respective caucuses. I am pleased to say that I had the opportunity to work with the honourable Member for St. James (Ms. Korzeniowski) in the selection process for this year's group of young people within the Internship

Program. Every year that I have that chance to interview potential new candidates, I am overwhelmed with the talent, understanding and highly educated individuals who look to the Legislative Internship Program as an option that we have and can offer to graduates of post-secondary education in institutions.

I might just mention the individuals within the Internship Program for 2005-2006. They are Andrew Clark, Philip Gass, Lisa Hutniak, Jessica Kelly, Mark Rosner and Kathleen Ross, all of whom I congratulate for their success in achieving a position with the Manitoba Legislative Assembly Internship Program.

I also want to acknowledge the pages who are joining us for the Fourth Session of the Thirty-Eighth Legislature, and they are Daniel Winstanley, Nicholas Dupuis, Gillian Thornton, Alannah Hallas, Hemali Vyas, Chad Jacobson, Ryan Foyle and Monica De Castro. I do want to make mention that two of the individuals, Gillian Thornton as well as Ryan Foyle, are constituents of mine, and I am so pleased to see both serving the Legislative Assembly in the capacity of page. I would very much like to wish them well in their tenure here in the Chamber.

Now, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I have before me the Throne Speech that was presented to us a short week ago, and I do want to make some comment to the Chamber in that regard. They say that we in this province are preparing for the future, and a lot of activity is happening within our province, that this administration is one that is innovative and creative and also wants to follow through on the promises that they made.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I kind of chuckle at those types of statements because what they herald as new is basically following through on Conservative ideas. Heralded in the second page of the Throne Speech is about the Red River Floodway expansion. Well, I want to recognize that that idea of flood protection for Winnipeg came forward from a Conservative administration. I am very proud of Premier Duff Roblin and the government of the day that made this project a reality and has been used on numerous occasions, protecting property and life here in Winnipeg.

I also want to say that other projects that went along with flood protection here in the province of Manitoba are not even mentioned in this particular Throne Speech. The Shellmouth Dam that was created at the mouth of the Shell River as it enters

the Assiniboine is a vital component of flood protection to the city of Winnipeg and to all persons downstream of that structure, and it is not even mentioned.

There is a long-standing recognition that this was a structure that could be improved and that the need is for another structure downstream of this one on the Assiniboine that could very well act in the same capacity of flood protection as the Shellmouth Dam now does, but also to afford what that area of the province has been a beneficiary of, that being the body of water held within the Assiniboine River Valley that is now recognized as one of the pristine lakes, the Lake of the Prairies, for resort fishing here in the province of Manitoba.

I know a lot of my colleagues know where I am going with this discussion because I have raised the issue of the Holland No. 3 dam on one or two occasions prior to today in the Chamber, that this type of success story preventing the damage downstream from flooding as well as creating the tourism highlight could be afforded in southern Manitoba on the Assiniboine River near and about the Spruce Woods Provincial Park with the construction of the Holland No. 3 dam. I look to the government to continue to study but, more importantly, to move ahead towards seeing this project a reality.

Also I want to mention that the other and third component within the Duff Roblin strategy for flood protection for the city of Winnipeg was the Assiniboine River Diversion which is located within the constituency of Portage la Prairie. Again, no mention, but that particular structure and the channel were constructed in the late 1960s and early 1970s, which is more than 35 years ago now, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

This structure and channel are in dire need of reinvestment. The renovation of the channel and the improvements to the reservoir because of silting and debris are absolutely imperative. Last summer, we had a catastrophic failure on the west dike of the Assiniboine River Diversion. I will credit the government for its very quick response to repairs of that channel, and, thank goodness, that response was as quick as it was because we had unprecedented rainfall here. In fact, it has been more than 50 years and, in many cases, more than the statistical data will provide as far as rainfall during the growing period.

Many areas in and around Portage la Prairie received 30 inches of rainfall, where our normal is between 12 and 15 and, occasionally, up to 20, but 30 is virtually unheard of, which spawned significant flows of water in the Assiniboine River in the midsummer. Without the activation of the Assiniboine Diversion, and fortunately the repairs were complete at the time, it was able to divert flows that would have gone downstream to Winnipeg which could have and very well would have created significant disastrous effects on properties, because in the middle of summer we do not have the frost that holds the riverbanks. With the high volume of water, we would have seen significant soil erosion and riverbank slumping here in the city of Winnipeg, had not the large volumes of water flowed to Lake Manitoba via the diversion.

I also want to say that because of the rainfall there was a lot of runoff water east of Portage la Prairie that needed to have the river level lowered in order for those waters to be channelled into the river and away from producing lands, but, Mr. Deputy Speaker, it is vitally, vitally important that we prepare as we are starting to do, but not to lose sight that there are other projects that are just as important in the flood protection of Winnipeg than just the Red River Floodway.

On this point, I also want to raise at this time that statistically the two most important restrictions of life in southern Manitoba are flood and drought, two totally opposing situations. Too much water and not enough water. What we are seeing right at the present time from this current administration is that there is no preparation for flood, pardon me, for drought. Why is this government not preparing for what has been in our history the second most significant deterrent to living here in this southern part of Manitoba? That is why I have to fault this government, its narrow-mindedness, the narrow scope of the studies that this government asked to prepare in light of the expansion of the Red River Floodway. There was no consideration of upstream storage south of the border, north of the border, no consultation whatsoever with our neighbours to the south and also to the west. There is a lot of runoff waters that enters the Red River from the west as well as the east. I should not forget about the eastern flows that contribute to the Red River. There was no discussion, no opportunity for input from persons who know the waterways of Manitoba, those people who live along the channel flows. So I will leave the topic at the present time, but those are my gravest

concerns that we are not doing an adequate job of complete study before we invest hundreds of millions of dollars.

Now, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I want to move on to yet another section. That very next section, that is building Manitoba's clean energy advantage. The second paragraph in, might I mention how proud this government is of working with Manitoba Hydro and being able to have the opportunity to work with gas bills and to, well, let us just read: Current projection is for a rate increase of 10 percent, November 1, but they want to prevent and protect consumers from rate shock on their winter gas bills. I thank the Minister of Energy (Mr. Chomiak), I thank the Minister of Industry (Mr. Rondeau) for their applause on a Gary Filmon administration addition to Manitoba Hydro with the acquisition of Centra Gas. It is so pleasing to me to see that the current government acknowledges a great idea and is so proud of that. But, again, heralding, heralding another Conservative idea and an accomplishment, and that is just the next item within that.

Also, I want to move forward. Again, another program that is heralded here is how Manitoba Hydro's Power Smart program is leading the nation in energy conservation. Once again, the Minister of Industry is applauding another Conservative program initiated by the former minister of the Filmon administration. I am trying to find, and I am already on page 3 and I cannot see any NDP government initiative here. It is just heralding Conservative accomplishments. So, anyway, we will move on, and we will see what the next page has here.

Ah, we are on now to delivering better health care to Manitobans. We want to recognize that it is vitally important to see that Manitobans have ambulance services so that they can head on down the road because their hospitals are closing, they have reduced services. I want to mention that it is very interesting as to how the wording goes in so far as that there are 160 new ambulances. They do not go on to mention about the equipment that is so very important to make that ambulance functional. We will not mention that when the gurney that has been in that ambulance that is being retired is placed into the new ambulance so that when they pull it out the caster wheels fall off of it. We will not tell them that the oxygen regulators that are on the new ambulances are the same oxygen regulators that were on the ambulance that was just retired. So, Mr. Deputy Speaker, the selection of language of this is very, very, very interesting.

Also, we want to take a look at public-private initiatives here. I missed the public-private initiative that was heralded here in regard to wind energy, but I will go on to the public-private expansion and renovation of health care facilities. I will speak specifically to Portage la Prairie, which is mentioned twice on page 5, that this could not have happened without the Portage District General Hospital Foundation who gave generously towards this project, and that, in fact, the expansion to which the new CT scanner is housed was made possible with over \$1-million investment coming from those persons in the Central Plains area contributing to the foundation. So public and private monies working together, yet this government does not want to mention that type of relationship, although we will say that it is all—and you have to read between the lines in order to get the true story.

I also want to recognize the creative language here when it is stated 235 more doctors are registered in Manitoba. We want to ask the question as to whether they are practising or they are not practising because we in rural Manitoba are abundantly aware of the vacancies at many, many health care facilities throughout the province.

Then, moving along to page 6, combatting crime here in Manitoba. A lot is made of what this government is attempting to do, yet we have to look to the bottom line. We have to look to our citizens and ask them whether they feel safer in their homes, safer in the green areas of our province, safer on the streets. I ask the members opposite as to whether they have done so and what the answer might be. In my community, the answer is a resounding no. There are more and more events happening to make persons fearful, persons to look over their shoulders and fear, persons that are uncomfortable in many, many areas. That is distressing to me because we should pride ourselves.

* (15:40)

A lot is made of the strategies coming forward here, you know, as to how one can put bars on one's windows. That is a new government program: helping seniors to feel secure in their homes by putting up bars on their windows. How can we feel secure that we are going to be able to go out to our driveways and find our vehicles still there in the morning? Well, we have got another government program going on here; well, we will teach persons how to put the Club on; we will teach persons and help support immobilizers. What about putting the

people that are responsible for the car thefts in jail and keeping them there? The bottom line speaks for itself, and we are here in Winnipeg. We lead the nation in break-and-enters and car thefts and murders here in the nation of Canada.

Now we talk about education in the next section. We are heralded as to what this government is attempting to do on the education side of things. I only have to look at what is happening within our school system these days and how very hard pressed one is to educate young people here in our province. The government says that they are supporting programming where in fact programs are constricting on the basis that this government so inadequately funds education here in the province.

I will ask the minister a very specific question sometime. I have asked him in the hallway, but I will prep him once again for the question as to whether or not he is willing to support the capital funding of the consolidation of our two high schools in Portage la Prairie. That project is in need of substantial capital dollars in order to make the transition from two high schools to one and to offer the programming that is so necessary in today's challenging workforce. I see the minister is looking down. That means he does not want to perhaps hear what I have asked him, but I see know that he has acknowledged that he did hear me.

The dollars that are going towards education are not adequate. The taxpayers at the local levels have been asked to give a higher and higher percentage towards education. I will acknowledge, though, that the government has made baby steps towards taking the tax off food when they take education tax off farmland, although, with the surpluses that the government heralds that they do have, I cannot see why they cannot find the balance of the \$47 million, \$48 million that it requires them to take all of the school tax off agriculture-producing land here in Manitoba. I do not see any reaction from the government members on that because a tax on food is, in my estimation, not what Manitobans want to see.

I have to comment on the fiscally responsible quotation that was entered into Hansard just a few moments ago by the honourable Member for Gimli (Mr. Bjornson). It is so interesting that this government wants to say that they are fiscally responsible while adding close to \$3 billion, well, in fact, it is over \$3-billion worth of additional spending by 1.1 million Manitobans. That is a

phenomenal figure. Over \$3,000 additional spending annually in their tenure. They say they are balancing the books, and perhaps they are, perhaps they are. *[interjection]* If I have enough time, I will get to other good news on the Portage la Prairie front, but that is the type of new New Democratic Party accounting. If you cannot budget the books with the amount of money that you are already receiving from taxpayers, you just dig a little deeper in Manitoba taxpayers' pockets and haul out a little bit more because, right now, right now, we in Manitoba, before we earn a penny towards our own personal discretionary spending, it is June 23, June 23 before we have fulfilled our obligations as demanded by this government in taxes. June 23, the Canadian Taxpayers Federation has documented that, in the additional spending of this Province, and which is two days longer than it was in 2004—*[interjection]* The Minister of Industry (Mr. Rondeau) is saying that is wrong. I encourage him to go to the Web site and to challenge the Canadian Taxpayers Federation in their statement then, if he is wanting to do that.

I know my time is running short here, but I want to say that the government goes on to talk about revitalizing cities and talks very explicitly about how they have expanded programming in the city of Winnipeg and city of Brandon, city of Thompson. That is where it ends. Why have not the programs been extended to Portage la Prairie and other communities around the province? The government talks glowingly of the Neighbourhoods Alive! program and the Building Communities fund. Why is Portage la Prairie not eligible for those programs? I find it curious.

Also, too, there is made mention of the MTS Centre and how proud they are of that facility's construction. But why just Winnipeg? Why was the deal struck that exclusively favours Winnipeg? Why not make the same deal for persons that live in Thompson or Dauphin or The Pas or Portage la Prairie, Winkler? Why just a very special deal for Winnipeg? I look at the Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs (Mr. Smith) who hails from Brandon. I would suggest that he is rather disappointed that he does not have the same deal that Winnipeg has in regard to construction and financing of a facility like the MTS Centre.

I might just actually mention as well, my colleague from Lac du Bonnet recognized the MTS Centre in his comments, saying that we could have seven, seven MTS centres built each and every year

in lieu of the interest costs that this government has to pay each and every year on the debt that they have racked up; \$767 million paid last year as documented by our Auditor General. That could potentially have constructed seven centres like the MTS Centre in other locales here in the province of Manitoba. Instead, what do they do? They line the pockets of the Bay Street bankers, and they are proud of it. Look at the smiles across the way. Yes, sir, we would rather send Manitoba taxpayers' dollars in interest down to Bay Street than build facilities in and around Manitoba.

I see that also, too, as we move on to another section that they are very proud of: the immigration and immigration program here in Manitoba, the Nominee Program. Once again, heralding another Conservative innovation program. I wonder if they are going to be able to do what they say they are going to do. But that is for another day, I guess. They heralded again the increased minimum wage, but then I ask this government why those persons on minimum wage are still called upon by this NDP government to pay income tax. They say minimum wage earners are the working poor. They cannot make ends meet. Yet this government still has the hand in their pocket hauling out tax—

* (15:50)

An Honourable Member: A dollar at a time.

Mr. Faurschou: Why not? Why can the government not recognize that an increase in the tax exemption for minimum wage earners be brought forward in this year's budget?

Anyway, Mr. Speaker, I have just got started and I have to now sit down. But thank you very much for the opportunity to participate in the Throne Speech debate, and I want to compliment the government for continuing the many—*[interjection]* innovative programs started by the Conservative administration. Thank you.

Ms. Marilyn Brick (St. Norbert): Mr. Speaker, it is my pleasure to stand and speak to the seventh Speech from the Throne for our government. I am pleased first to start by welcoming you back as the Speaker of the House. This session, as many of us know, has already started to become lively and somewhat animated, and I hope that everything goes as amiably as possible for you in the Chamber and that you are

able to diplomatically and democratically intervene when necessary to allow the House to function successfully.

I would also like to welcome back the table officers that assist us every day in the performance of our duties. In the past, I have had the pleasure of chairing several different committees of the Legislature, and I want to thank the table officers for the admirable job they do in guiding our deliberations. They come to committee meetings with well-researched advice that considers every possible ruling that may be required. I want to thank them for the good work they have done in the past and for the assistance they will provide to all members in the future.

I would also like to welcome our new pages who will be with us throughout this session and I wish them every success. I congratulate them on being selected by their schools to serve in the Manitoba Legislature. They are to be commended for having achieved high marks in their classroom studies, thereby allowing them to be considered for the position of page.

I hope that they have an enjoyable experience during their time with us here and that they learn about the democratic process that we have here in the province of Manitoba. It is also my hope that they do not become too disillusioned by the type of debate they see taking place here and that when they leave their positions here politics is viewed as an admirable career worthy of their aspirations.

Mr. Speaker, I would also like to take this opportunity to welcome our new interns: Kathleen Ross, Philip Gass, Lisa Hutniak, Jessica Kelly, Andrew Clark and Mark Rosner, who are all university graduates and who have achieved honour and distinction in their academic pursuits. I would encourage all MLAs to include these individuals in the research and daily activities they undertake on behalf of their constituents. These interns are a welcome addition to the Legislature and will be of great assistance to all members of this House.

Mr. Speaker, before I proceed, I want to express my sincere appreciation to the constituents of St. Norbert, who have elected me as their representative. I would like to express my gratitude to them for giving me this great opportunity. It is a profound

honour for me to be elected to this House as the first member of our party to represent St. Norbert.

Mr. Speaker, as our world changes and our climate undergoes dramatic changes, it is important to Manitobans that we are part of the solution and not a part of the problem. Our government has realized the tremendous potential that Manitoba Hydro presents for our province, and we are committed to keeping this utility a public entity.

The residents of our province pay the third lowest rate among the provinces to heat their homes. The success of the Power Smart program provided through Manitoba Hydro has helped to improve the economic outlook for the utility by providing more power that can be sold at a profit to other regions of the country and south of the border.

Coinciding with the Speech from the Throne, our government announced that Manitoba and Ontario have signed an agreement that will see Manitoba transfer more than \$500 million in clean renewable hydro power to Ontario starting in 2006 through the Clean Energy Transfer Initiative. The agreement is the first phase of a larger 1500 to 3000 megawatt power sale that is currently under discussion by the two provinces.

The transfer of clean renewable energy to Ontario is one of the largest greenhouse gas reduction initiatives in Canada. It is equal to removing half a million vehicles from city streets. It is expected that the required upgrades to transmission lines will be completed by 2009 to allow up to 400 megawatts of energy to travel from Manitoba to Ontario annually.

Our new wind farm will help us to produce additional energy to be sold to Ontario or other similar purchasers. The 99 megawatt project located near St. Leon will make use of technology developed by Vestas Wind Systems. It will result in the installation of 63 wind turbine generators over two phases, and, on completion, generate enough power to serve approximately 35 000 homes or the total energy needs of Portage la Prairie and Morden combined.

Recently, Manitoba was the first province to partner with the federal government to support the one-tonne challenge through our Climate Change Community Challenge. As I mentioned, Mr. Speaker, Manitobans, and, in particular, young people are very concerned with the impact we are

having on our environment. Over the last six months, we have been impacted by rapidly rising oil and gas prices. Our Speech from the Throne introduces a Manitoba home heating strategy to protect Manitoba consumers from rate shocks on their gas bills and assists homeowners in making energy-saving upgrades. We will be changing legislation to ensure that homeowners are only impacted by one rate increase in the cost of home heating fuel in a season.

I was thrilled to see our government announce a new initiative to expand biodiesel fuel production. Biodiesel fuel is made from vegetable oil, animal fats and/or waste restaurant grease. Compared to petroleum diesel, pure biodiesel reduces greenhouse gases by up to 91 percent, sulphur dioxide by 100 percent and carbon dioxide by 50 percent. The two main components of the biodiesel expansion program are geared towards increasing production of this fuel in Manitoba. Effective immediately, the Province will no longer collect the 11.5 percent litre fuel tax on 100 percent pure biodiesel.

Approximately 850 million litres of diesel fuel is consumed in Manitoba each year, the majority of which is used in transportation and agriculture sectors. The Province and Natural Resources Canada will also work together to provide a \$1.5-million request for proposal support package to Manitoba biodiesel producers who wish to either increase production of biodiesel or start a new venture. The expansion of biodiesel fuel production is part of a larger energy strategy that includes the development of a new ethanol plant by Husky Oil in Minnedosa. This new plant will help us to attain our goal of having vehicles use a 10 percent blend of ethanol and gasoline, thereby reducing fuel emissions.

We have done a number of other things to protect the environment. We have put in place The Water Protection Act. We have created a whole new Department of Water Stewardship that focuses on the importance that water plays in our lives. It recognizes how serious water protection is and it ensures that issues such as the quality of water in Lake Winnipeg is treated with the urgency required. The formation of the Lake Winnipeg Stewardship Board chaired by former Mayor Barlow of Gimli will help to identify remedial actions that can be taken to reduce the nutrient load back to the pre-1970 levels.

Mr. Speaker, over the past year, we have not only worked to ensure the environment is receiving attention, but we have also focussed on the health of

young adults and children. I had the pleasure of serving as the vice-chair of the Healthy Kids, Healthy Futures Task Force last year. We travelled to many different schools and communities throughout the province to hear what Manitobans had to say about encouraging their children to eat healthy and exercise regularly. The recommendations of the task force were that government mandate the amount of time that students spend in health and physical education classes and that all schools have a nutrition policy in place. The first stage of this, through the implementation through the in-motion campaign, is a very positive step forward for the health of young adults and children.

* (16:00)

The Healthy Child Initiative is an example of a program that has been working very successfully as a community-driven initiative that allows area residents to identify the programs they would most like to see funded. The Fort Garry community network has assisted with funding to the following programs in the St. Norbert area: Ryerson Family Centre, the south Family Resource Centre, the Parc La Salle Parent-Tot Centre and le Centre de la jeune enfance de Saint-Norbert à École Noël-Ritchot. These programs have all proved to be hugely popular and well attended by children in the area.

Mr. Speaker, as a working mother, I know firsthand the importance of having affordable, quality day care for children. In my constituency, the Epiphany Day Care, Kings Park Day Care, Ryerson before and after school program, St. Norbert Children's Centre, Univillage Daycare, Kaleidoscope day care centre, Campus Day Care and Dalhousie Day Care, all provide excellent care for children.

Our government is committed to maintaining and improving the child care system. Last week we announced our intention to invest at least \$5.7 million for up to 3168 licensed spaces this year which will help to further improve the quality, affordability and accessibility of child care. In July the details of a \$14.4-million support package were announced with which \$11.5 million was set to increase wages and benefits for early childhood educators including those who care for children with disabilities. Mr. Speaker, I am proud to say that this brings the annual salary for day-care workers up to approximately \$27,000 to \$30,000 annually.

A fundamental part of our strategy includes increasing the fund for recruitment and training of more early childhood educators. We are spending

\$2.9 million on this initiative. The child-care community is thrilled to see that Manitoba is committed to spending all new federal funds on the child-care system.

Mr. Speaker, not only has our government focussed on the needs of young children, we have also increased our support to children in the K-to-12 school system. Since 1999, funding for students has increased by 18 percent. The upcoming changes to provide for appropriate educational programs for all students including special needs students has been well received by parents and students.

Mr. Speaker, over the last six years, we have maintained the expansion of school buildings and upgrades to equipment as a very important priority. Our government has invested \$333 million in school buildings since coming to office. This is in marked contrast to the Tories who invested less than half this amount in their last six years in office.

Mr. Speaker, I was thrilled to see that three students from my constituency benefited from our support to the school system by being chosen to attend the Canada-wide science fair in Vancouver, B.C. in May 2005. Nishant Balakrishnan from Acadia Junior High School and Zexi Wang and Lynda Kong, both from Fort Richmond Collegiate, all earned a trip to the national science fair. Their teachers deserve to be acknowledged for their ability to inspire and motivate these young budding scientists. They are to be congratulated for their success.

Mr. Speaker, our government wants to ensure that students' educational needs are looked after whether they are in kindergarten or in university. I was thrilled to be in attendance on September 23 at the opening of the first phase of the Engineering and Information Technology Complex. The new building provides state-of-the-art instruction facilities for students, including multimedia equipment and projectors, lighting that enhances a variety of different teaching styles, facilities for tutorial-based learning, shop and construction facilities for students to design prototypes and a comprehensive suite of research laboratories and facilities, as well as being totally accessible.

The computer science students are so excited to be leaving behind an old library space that could not house their computers without short-circuiting the power supply. They are now learning in a 21st

century facility in keeping with the types of new skills they will require in the future.

In October, Mr. Speaker, I was provided with a tour of the new Richardson Centre for Functional Food and Nutraceuticals located in Smartpark at the University of Manitoba. All I can say is, wow, what an amazing building. The building will house researchers as well as industrial partners who book into research labs on an as-needed basis. This type of opportunity will allow for the production of new foods and experimental additives that can be undertaken without a company having to build its own facilities. The \$25-million centre has its own kitchen and cafeteria to allow for the trial of new food products. It has three separate air-handling systems that exchange the air 22 times per hour.

Students from master's programs at the University of Manitoba will be provided with space at the centre when they are involved in research. These two new buildings as well as the Red River campus in downtown Winnipeg and the University of the North will provide many new learning possibilities for university students.

Along with our tuition cuts, university education has become more accessible and appealing to Manitobans. Mr. Speaker, enrolment in Manitoba colleges and universities has increased by over one third, the largest increase in Canada. We have seen an increased focus on research and on building facilities to house this research capacity. All of these factors taken together make university education more attractive to students.

Mr. Speaker, I want to talk about healthy living and the provision of accessible public amenities that encourage people to be physically active. I want to take a moment to talk about a very important project that reached completion this summer. On Friday, August 12, the Sentier Cloutier Trail was officially launched.

Construction of this walking trail took place in late August and by the middle of September, the trail was open for use by the public. This 2.5-kilometre four-season walking trail is totally wheelchair accessible making it a very significant addition to the neighbourhood. The trail connects St. Norbert to Fort Richmond along a busy street in a user-friendly fashion.

The trail provides many access points along Cloutier Drive, and it includes interpretative signage that provides historic and environmental information.

Sentier Cloutier Trail is the only section of the Trans Canada Trail in Winnipeg to be built from the ground up, and it is the result of three years of dedication and commitment by the Cloutier Drive Residents Association and supporting partners.

The Cloutier Drive Residents Association received assistance from many community groups like the St. Norbert Heritage Association, Group'Action St. Norbert and many other St. Norbert community organizations. One major group that provided invaluable assistance was Rivers West. This group works to promote tourism, economic development and environmental stewardship along the Red River.

This summer, the Canada-Manitoba Economic Partnership Agreement renewed Rivers West's funding agreement. The three-quarter-million-dollar investment allows for the group to expend a quarter of a million dollars annually for three years to develop recreation trails and tourist opportunities along the Red River. Through the provision of this grant, the Manitoba government is ensuring the success of other groups such as the Cloutier Drive Residents Association.

Mr. Speaker, I have been talking about our government's commitment to healthy living, but in addition to this we are also very committed to providing health care services to Manitobans. To ensure services for Manitobans, we have increased the number of doctors licensed to practise by introducing special programs for foreign-trained doctors.

We have increased the medical college spaces and provided special loan incentives for Manitoba graduates who will practise in Manitoba. Since 1999, the Province has been funding an additional 23 spaces to the University of Manitoba medical school. It takes up to seven years to graduate a doctor and we are just beginning to see the results of the expanded medical education and improved retention of our graduates. There are 235 more doctors registered in Manitoba today than there were in 1999.

Following this year's record graduation of 96 new doctors, we plan to introduce in the coming years a co-ordinated recruitment office and Web page that will be created to support the RHAs and communities in their recruitment effort, but that is not all.

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 for 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 ultrasounds have been replaced or installed, again doubling the tests performed. But we have seen that, as more machines are added, the demand for diagnostic service grows. Accordingly, Mr. Speaker, the government of Manitoba has recently announced that it will spend \$155 million additional dollars on reducing wait times and ensuring that Manitobans are provided with better care sooner.

* (16:10)

The Wait Times Reduction Strategy targets the five priorities identified by the First Ministers in their 10-year plan to strengthen health care: cancer, cardiac diagnostic imaging, joint replacement and sight restoration. In addition, Manitoba will target four other priority areas: children's dental surgeries, mental health programs, pain management and treatment for sleep disorders.

Mr. Speaker, as you can see, our government has been working hard to move ahead with the challenges that we face and working on the opportunities that we have seen. Thank you very much.

Mrs. Leanne Rowat (Minnedosa): Mr. Deputy Speaker, thank you for the opportunity to speak to the Throne Speech and the amendment shared by our party.

I have to begin by saying that this government again has demonstrated its disinterest in the issues facing many Manitobans and again recycling a lot of announcements with no action. Manitobans deserve hope for the future. Manitobans deserve a government that encourages progress and opportunity, not hinders it. Unfortunately, in this Throne Speech, we once again see many opportunities being missed and only recycled promises being shared with deceptive rhetoric. At a time of unprecedented revenue, why do Manitobans have to settle for broken promises and hidden agendas?

We wanted to see the complete elimination of the education property taxes on residential relief for Manitobans that Manitobans have been demanding. My own municipalities have worked hard at trying to

get this government's attention to this issue. My municipalities have shared resolutions of support on this with the government indicating the need for this and the need for this to happen to assist our agriculture sector and the communities that surround the agriculture sector. To assist our rural economy we are looking for leadership from this NDP government, not deceptive leadership. Does this government not listen to organizations such as the Keystone Agriculture Producers who have indicated over and over again that anything short of the total elimination of this tax is unacceptable?

Mr. Speaker, economic growth and job creation is something that this government has done little with. The town of Minnedosa and the Minnedosa ethanol expansion committee have worked tirelessly with the Husky organization, and together they have put together a clear and open commitment to the community in the expansion.

On their part, there were no hidden agendas. They have done what they need to do to ensure that the plant expansion will be accepted and will happen in the community. But where is the NDP government's support? Not sure, Mr. Speaker. Backroom negotiations, keeping the community hostage on the funding that they are willing to allow or to provide. At last count, there was \$300,000 for the \$3-million infrastructure project. Sounds like a missed opportunity for me to show that their commitment to their own provincial election promises. I encourage this government to go back to the table and to provide the community with the needed supports that they require. Part of my concern is that, through this Throne Speech, not a mention was made, no mention at all, on the mandate for the 10 percent blend of gasoline and when it will be kicked in.

The biodiesel production committee in Souris and Glenwood has been working very hard on their business plan for biodiesel production in the Westman area. This project will be a sustainable, viable community project, but I need this government to ensure that they are listening to this community. This community, this organization, needs this government to ensure that they are being listened to. The community needs to know that they are being listened to and that this government will not break its promise to support community-led initiatives in biofuel production.

This project will provide a market for locally produced crops. This project will provide an

alternative energy source for local residents and producers, and this project will create local jobs. But they need the government support.

Training and post-secondary education needs the right mix of skills and knowledge. As the critic for Advanced Education and Training, it appears at this time that the government has been neglecting the issues of skills and labour shortages across all sectors. My constituents in Minnedosa and others throughout the Westman region are waiting, patiently, I might add, for this government to announce the expansion and move of ACC to BMHC. To me the key issues are of quality and accessibility, and the college is waiting for this government to act.

In speaking with ACC, they are very excited, but cautious, and they would like to know how this announcement will play out. We have challenged this government on the issues that face the colleges, issues such as hosting classes in church basements. Talking to the colleges, there are extended wait lists for various trade programs, and this is of concern to them. So the sooner the government will act on its decision, Westman will be waiting and interested to see the outcome.

Mr. Speaker in the Chair

Manitobans deserve to know that they are getting value for their investment in education whether as taxpayers or as students paying tuition. The recent *Maclean's* magazine ranking of U of M dead last in placement with other doctoral universities and having Brandon University drop two places in the undergraduate university ranking sends a message. But what message does this government want to send to the students, parents and universities within our province?

Manitoba learning institutions, communities and other learning partners need to be a part of a comprehensive sustainable solution for planning and funding education, Mr. Speaker. The health and well-being of all Manitobans must be a priority of this NDP government. Health care priorities within our province should be built on best practices.

In Westman we are dealing with crises after crises and this government seems to ignore them. We are living through a serious pediatrician shortage, and it is my understanding that when a recent national conference was held in Vancouver no recruitment personnel from the local RHA was even onsite. This discouraged the pediatrician from

Brandon who attended the conference, and it gave him an indication that there was little support from this government on the issue of recruitment. This government has to address the issue of recruitment, and there has to be less lip service and more action.

This government has done little to address this issue of the challenges in rural Manitoba with the health care facilities. One issue that is facing rural Manitoba is the 25-plus doctors who are short within my region alone, Mr. Speaker. Having seen emergency and acute care services in these communities closed creates many red flags for the people who live in these communities, and this government seems to have no plan and no action in place to deal with it.

Mr. Speaker, in discussions with the Keystone Agriculture Producers, they are looking at this government for some leadership on alternative land use strategies. Another recycled Throne Speech announcement, another missed opportunity. I encourage this side, the government side, to be more proactive in dealing with the agriculture producers, especially with programs such as CAIS where we are seeing more and more families just frustrated and receiving no financial assistance from this government.

People are leaving their communities. They are leaving their farms. I recently received a letter from a gentleman who farms in around the Brandon area who actually is a recent immigrant to our country and actually is looking at getting out of the farming business and is actually experiencing major stress and may lose a good part of his investment in his farm. I think this government needs to be hearing more of these stories and looking at ways to address these issues instead of providing recycled announcements with no action, Mr. Speaker.

Approximately 70 percent of the jobs in the knowledge economy require some type of skills investment, and this government needs to be addressing those issues through post-secondary initiatives. I understand that Assiniboine Community College has several waiting lists for programs such as piping trades and other areas, and I think this government needs to be addressing those issues.

* (16:20)

Another issue in health care that I think this government needs to be looking at is the issue of offloading the cost of ambulance transfers onto the

backs of patients, Mr. Speaker. My office has been receiving several calls and several letters on this point. It is unfortunate that individuals who are on fixed incomes are being gouged with ambulance fees of \$3,000 to \$4,000 and not having any means or not being able to have the ear of the government on how to address this. I think it is unfair that a patient has to pay for an ambulance ride that is required only because this government did not do its job in the first place.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to speak a bit on the infrastructure issues in rural Manitoba. It is my belief that investing in Manitoba's infrastructure is imperative to our province's social and economic growth. Infrastructure provides the basis upon which individuals and communities connect with each other and I believe that the state of our infrastructure is comprising the health, safety and well-being of all Manitobans. I support the implementation of a broad strategy that would involve the rebuilding and reinvesting in Manitoba.

The questions I have are where are the precious federal gas-tax dollars, where is this government on taking a leadership role in accessing them, why can we not reach a deal with the federal government, what seems to be the roadblocks, what are the issues in that area.

Minnedosa constituency has several areas that require this government's attention and they are facing serious challenges with highway decay. Highway 10, an extremely busy roadway within my constituency, has seen an increase in accidents over the last while and some of them very serious, Mr. Speaker. This highway is a very important access road for business and, with the ethanol expansion, will be seeing a lot of big trucks, B-train trucks that will be coming through, and I worry for the safety of my constituents and visitors travelling through my constituency. The community of Forrest has indicated they have a serious crossing safety concern, especially with the increased traffic that will be coming through.

So I would like this government to pay attention to the safety of my communities and look at the issue of Forrest and that the opportunities that can be addressed by this government in providing a safety crossing. I have presented a petition in the House for Provincial Highway 340, Mr. Speaker, and this is an extremely important roadway for residents living along a roadway in my constituency. I believe this

government has to pay attention to the safety and accessibility of this roadway.

All Manitobans, Mr. Speaker, should feel safe in their communities and in their neighbourhoods. Unfortunately, we have been seeing a prevalence of drugs, youth gangs and organized crimes which have been creating a climate of fear within the province. Some questions I have that I believe that the government should be held accountable to are why are chronic repeat offenders put back on the street only to reoffend, why is the government reluctant to use technologies such as GPS to track the whereabouts of individuals who are on bail, why do not prosecutors and judges use the full weight of the law when dealing with pedophiles, drug dealers and murderers. If our judges and prosecutors do not speak for the victims, who will? It appears this government has lent a deaf ear to the issues facing families and communities when it comes to personal safety.

I think, Mr. Speaker, that people must learn to respect and have self-respect through the process. I cannot emphasize enough that we must ensure the growing problem of addictions, and it needs to be raised as a priority with this government. Aggressive strategies, and I am waiting for these, must be put into place that focus on the education, the prevention and treatment and policing for drugs. Community-based initiatives must be encouraged, and I look for the government to provide some leadership in this area. Too many families are struggling through challenges and need the supports, and they are finding that they are just not there for them. There seems to be no action taken by this government, and the NDP has not been able to take this issue seriously enough. I implore that they do.

Another issue that I believe that this government has to be held accountable to is the collapse of the Crocus Investment Fund, Mr. Speaker. Manitobans deserve a clear, transparent accounting of what went wrong and only a public inquiry will get to the bottom of what happened. Only an inquiry will restore public confidence in the vital venture capital process in Manitoba and if we do not do that, we will lose that opportunity to have investments in venture capital continue within our province, and that people will trust that opportunity or possibility.

Manitoba taxpayers, investors, deserve an explanation. Their provincial government was responsible for monitoring the fund on their behalf and they deserve to know how it was that red flags

were missed or ignored and why it went so terribly wrong. There are a multitude of participants who had a role to play in the Crocus debacle and each of those participants had a responsibility to look out for the interests of the unit holders and taxpayers.

A public inquiry will provide an opportunity for the fund management board of directors and others to provide government officials, including Mr. Selinger, the Minister of Finance, and others, to explain their role in the collapse of the Crocus Fund. Manitobans deserve to know what happened and only by knowing what went wrong will we be able to prevent it from happening again.

In closing, Mr. Speaker, I cannot support the Throne Speech. I encourage the other side of the House to support our amendments, and I encourage the NDP government to take action on their initiatives that they have recycled and provide some leadership and vision for this province.

Hon. Christine Melnick (Minister of Family Services and Housing): Mr. Speaker, I would very much like to speak in favour of the Speech to the Throne. We have had many successes in the last year around Family Services and Housing and I would like to outline some of those for you so that people can remember what it was before such progress was being made and how things have changed.

On April 29, I was very pleased to, with our Premier, sign the first national child-care agreement in the history of Canada. This, Mr. Speaker, was achieved through our work with our community, our child-care community, and it was a very exciting day for all of us indeed.

Our first announcement on the child-care deal dealt with the salaries and wages for early childhood educators. Mr. Speaker, on that day we announced that we would be bringing in some \$11.5 million to be directed specifically to wages. We recognize that early childhood educators are not babysitters, that they are professionals in their own right and must be respected and recognized as such.

Today in Manitoba, early childhood educators have an average salary of \$30,000, and this is compared with the cross-Canada average of some \$18,000. So our wages and benefits speak to our respect for early childhood educators. We know that they form one of the base pillars in our child-care system and along with early childhood educator wages also come, of course, stabilizing the system through funding spaces and creating new spaces.

Last week, I was very, very pleased to announce that we will be putting \$5.75 million into the stabilizing and the growth of our system, which will include an additional 3168 newly funded spaces throughout the province in Manitoba. Now, I talk about throughout the province of Manitoba, Mr. Speaker, because we know that Manitoba is more than Winnipeg, is more than the south and, certainly, includes the North.

In Winnipeg, I did announce last week some 3.3 million for funding in some 94 centres here in Manitoba, which would fully fund six—

* (16:30)

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

Do members wish to have the amendment read?

Some Honourable Members: No.

Mr. Speaker: Dispense?

An Honourable Member: Dispense.

THAT the Motion be amended by adding at the end of the sentence the following words:

But this House regrets

(a) *the government's failure to acknowledge the escalating debt of our province, now in excess of \$20 billion, and its failure to commit to a comprehensive debt reduction strategy; and*

(b) *the government's failure to stem its insatiable spending habit; and*

(c) *the government's failure to present a plan to address the fact that Manitoba is the highest taxed province throughout all of Canada; and*

(d) *the government's failure to commit to the complete elimination of all education tax off of residential property and farmland; and*

(e) *the government's failure to address the fact that since 1999 gangs have flourished in Manitoba, including the establishment of Hells Angels, Bandidos, Mad Cowz and African Mafia; and*

(f) *the government's failure to address the escalating levels of gang activity, violent crime and property crime, including the fact that Manitoba has been the scene of numerous biker related murders and*

attempted murders and the murder of an innocent bystander; and

(g) *the government's failure to implement the additional complement of police officers as promised in the 2005-2006 budget; and*

(h) *the government's failure to commit to not closing or converting rural hospitals; and*

(i) *the government's failure to address the doctor shortages, emergency room closures and downgraded health care services throughout rural Manitoba; and*

(j) *the government's failure to commit to addressing the doctor shortage in Brandon; and*

(k) *the government's failure to provide any meaningful and effective strategy to address growing wait lists throughout Manitoba; and*

(l) *the government's failure to consider, within a publicly funded, single-payer health care system, the development of public-private partnerships for the delivery of health care services; and*

(m) *the government's failure to have an effective plan in place to deal with the threat of a pandemic flu outbreak; and*

(n) *the government's failure to initiate a review of health care regionalization; and*

(o) *the government's failure to provide any strategy and support to Manitobans who are forced to travel by ambulance to access health care services not available in their communities and who are assessed enormous bills for these transfers; and*

(p) *the government's failure to develop a plan to address the crumbling infrastructure within the City of Winnipeg and throughout the Province of Manitoba; and*

(q) *the government's failure to support the desperate plight of agriculture producers, given the flood conditions and the inability to grow a crop during this current growing season; and*

(r) *the government's failure to move ahead in the development of slaughter capacity after two and a half years of the BSE crisis; and*

(s) *the government's failure to call an independent public inquiry into the Crocus Fund scandal, and*

(t) *the government's failure to address the Seven Oaks School Division scandal and its failure to*

admit to its mishandling of the Morris MacDonald School Division Adult Learning Program; and

(u) the government's failure to resolve the retired teacher's COLA issue; and

(v) the government's failure to develop a long-term economic strategy to address stagnant job growth and make Manitoba a "have" province; and

(w) the government's failure to develop a long-term strategy addressing the out-migration of our best and brightest; and

(x) the government's failure to commit to strengthening the role and function of the Public Accounts Committee; and

(y) the government's failure to implement a strategy for predictable, long term and sustainable funding for post-secondary education; and

(z) the government's failure to provide a strategy for the protection of clean water throughout the Province of Manitoba.

AND HAS THEREBY lost the trust and confidence of the people of Manitoba and this House.

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

Some Honourable Members: Agreed.

Some Honourable Members: No.

Voice Vote

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

Some Honourable Members: Yea.

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

Some Honourable Members: Nay.

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

Formal Vote

Mr. Leonard Derkach (Official Opposition House Leader): Yeas and Nays.

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

Division

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

Yea

Cullen, Cummings, Derkach, Driedger, Dyck, Eichler, Faurschou, Goertzen, Hawranik, Maguire, Mitchelson, Penner, Reimer, Rocan, Rowat, Schuler, Stefanson, Taillieu.

Nay

Aglugub, Allan, Altemeyer, Ashton, Bjornson, Brick, Caldwell, Chomiak, Dewar, Doer, Irvin-Ross, Jennissen, Korzeniowski, Lamoureux, Lathlin, Lemieux, Maloway, McGifford, Melnick, Nevakshonoff, Oswald, Reid, Robinson, Rondeau, Sale, Santos, Schellenberg, Selinger, Smith, Struthers, Swan, Wowchuk.

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

Mr. Speaker: I declare the amendment lost.

Point of Order

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

Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights): Sorry, Mr. Speaker, I was distracted for a moment. My intention was to vote against the motion.

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Speaker: Order. On the point of order raised, the honourable member does not have a point of order.

Point of Order

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

Mr. Glen Cummings (Ste. Rose): Yes, Mr. Speaker, I understand that you have ruled, but in the interests of fairness I was the one responsible for distracting the member. I know the rules and apparently I broke the rules. For that, I apologize.

Hon. Steve Ashton (Minister of Water Stewardship): Same point of order, Mr. Speaker. I took from the Member for River Heights' (Mr. Gerrard) point of order that he was actually rising to explain what had happened. I do think it does raise the question of what happens when members are seated in their place and do not vote. The normal

procedure in the House is that we do not have such a thing as an abstention or, dare I say, no offence, distraction. That is not an option, either. I do think it does beg the question in this particular case because certainly the tradition in this House, as is the case in most parliaments, is that members who are seated, unless they are paired, and I do recognize that that is a long-standing procedure, are indeed counted.

So, while I appreciate the Member for Ste. Rose's (Mr. Cummings) explanation on the point of distraction here, Mr. Speaker, I do think that we may wish to consider. My understanding is that the ruling was initially on the fact that it was really a matter of explanation. I certainly think that in the future we do not want to set the precedent of members not taking a position on a vote. I know that has been a long-standing tradition in this House.

Mr. Speaker: On the point of order raised by the honourable Member for Ste. Rose (Mr. Cummings), our Manitoba practice and, I guess, in all jurisdictions, if you are in your seat, you are required to vote. If you want to abstain, you move out of your seat.

But, on the point of order raised by the honourable Member for River Heights (Mr. Gerrard), he had clearly indicated to me that, if he had voted, he would have voted for nay. In order for him to vote, we would have unanimous consent of the House to have his—

* (16:40)

An Honourable Member: A recount?

Mr. Speaker: Well, a recount? To have a vote.

So it was to my satisfaction that, if he had voted, he would have voted nay.

So is there unanimous consent from the House to count his vote as a nay?

Some Honourable Members: Agreed.

Some Honourable Members: No.

Mr. Speaker: No? Okay, no. Then his vote will not be recorded.

So the honourable member does not have a point of order, but thanks for the explanation.

* * *

An Honourable Member: Five o'clock.

Mr. Speaker: Five o'clock? Is it the will of the House to call it five o'clock?

An Honourable Member: Agreed.

Mr. Speaker: Do I hear a no? Is it the will of the House to call it five o'clock?

Some Honourable Members: Agreed.

Mr. Speaker: Do I hear a no? Is it the will of the House to call it five o'clock? [Agreed]

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

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Monday, November 7, 2005

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