

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

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(Hansard)

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MANITOBA LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
Thirty-Ninth Legislature

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Tuesday, November 27, 2007

The House met at 1:30 p.m.

PRAYER

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

Bill 5—The Witness Security Act

Hon. Dave Chomiak (Minister of Justice and Attorney General): Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the Minister of Family Services and Housing (Mr. Mackintosh), that Bill 5, The Witness Security Act; Loi sur la sécurité des témoins, be now read a first time.

Motion presented.

Mr. Chomiak: Mr. Speaker, this bill establishes a program to provide services to witnesses and others who may be at risk because of witnesses' involvement in certain criminal prosecutions and will entail an assessment panel responsible for determining whether a person should be admitted to the program, the range of services to be provided to the person, security rate agreements identifying the obligation of the program and persons admitted to it, and deals with confidential treatment of information of a person admitted to the program and makes it an offence for anyone providing services on the program to disclose the entity or location of a person in the program or to reveal other information that might endanger a person in the program, and is part of our ongoing campaign and bills and legislation against crime and organized crime in particular.

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

**Bill 203—The Liquor Control Amendment Act
(Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder Prevention)**

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Inkster): Mr. Speaker, I would move, seconded by the Member for River Heights (Mr. Gerrard), that Bill 203, The Liquor Control Amendment Act (Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder Prevention), be now read a first time.

Motion presented.

Mr. Lamoureux: Yes, Mr. Speaker, the essence of this bill, if it was to pass, would ensure that alcoholic beverages in bottles would have proper labelling to educate awareness on the issue of fetal alcohol

spectrum disorder. The government's talked about doing this. I know the federal New Democratic Party is in support of this. I would hope that the government would get behind this particular bill and put those labels and also ensure that there are signs in liquor establishments.

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

Bill 6—The Securities Amendment Act

Hon. Greg Selinger (Minister of Finance): I move, seconded by the Minister of Justice (Mr. Chomiak), that Bill 6, The Securities Amendment Act; Loi modifiant la Loi sur les valeurs mobilières, be now read a first time.

Motion presented.

Mr. Selinger: Yes, Mr. Speaker, this bill continues the ongoing efforts of over nine of the 10 provinces to continue to harmonize securities regulation in Canada. It will standardize the categories of registration. It will clarify a variety of terms related to investment funds, and will offer increased consumer protection with respect to the statutory duties of registrants to act in good faith and in their clients' interests.

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

**Bill 216—The Personal Information Protection
and Identity Theft Prevention Act**

Mrs. Mavis Taillieu (Morris): I move, seconded by the Member for Minnedosa (Mrs. Rowat), that Bill 216, The Personal Information Protection and Identity Theft Prevention Act; Loi sur la protection des renseignements personnels et la prévention du vol d'identité, be now read a first time.

Motion presented.

Mrs. Taillieu: This bill governs the collection, use and disclosure of personal information by organizations in the private sector. It also establishes a duty for those organizations to notify individuals who may be affected when the personal information of the organization that has been collected has been lost, stolen or compromised. This bill will go a long way to prevention of identity theft, an

ever-increasing crime in today's technologically advanced society.

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

Bill 204—The Milk Prices Review Amendment Act

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Inkster): Mr. Speaker, I would move, seconded by the Member for River Heights (Mr. Gerrard), that Bill 204, The Milk Prices Review Amendment Act, be now read for a first time.

Motion presented.

Mr. Lamoureux: Yes, Mr. Speaker, put simply, this bill would acknowledge that we need to set a price for milk across the province. Ultimately, if we could set a fixed price for a bottle of beer, we should be able to set a price for a litre of milk for all Manitobans, whether they live in Thompson, Churchill or Winnipeg. Thank you.

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

Bill 205—The Elections Amendment and Elections Finances Amendment Act

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Inkster): Mr. Speaker, I would move, seconded by the Member for River Heights (Mr. Gerrard), that Bill 205, The Elections Amendment and Elections Finances Amendment Act, be now read a first time.

Motion presented.

Mr. Lamoureux: Mr. Speaker, as we know, Elections Manitoba conducts a number of reviews at different times during the year. This bill, if passed, would ensure that there is a reporting mechanism that, in fact, we would receive written reports from Elections Manitoba as to what's happening with investigations on an annual basis. Thank you.

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

* (13:40)

PETITIONS

Dividing of Trans-Canada Highway

Mrs. Mavis Taillieu (Morris): I wish to present the following petition to the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba.

These are the reasons for this petition:

The seven-kilometre stretch of the Trans-Canada Highway passing through Headingley is an extremely busy stretch of road, averaging 18,000 vehicles daily.

This section of the Trans-Canada Highway is one of the few remaining stretches of undivided highway in Manitoba, and it has seen more than 100 accidents in the last two years, some of them fatal.

Manitoba's Assistant Deputy Minister of Infrastructure and Transportation told a Winnipeg radio station on October 16, 2007, that when it comes to highways projects the provincial government has a flexible response program, and we have a couple of opportunities to advance these projects in our five-year plan.

In the interests of protecting motorist safety, it is critical that the dividing of the Trans-Canada Highway in Headingley is completed as soon as possible.

We petition the Legislative Assembly as follows:

To request the Minister of Infrastructure and Transportation (Mr. Lemieux) to consider making the completion of the dividing of the Trans-Canada Highway in Headingley in 2008 an urgent provincial government priority.

To request the Minister of Infrastructure and Transportation to consider evaluating whether any other steps can be taken to improve motorist safety while the dividing of the Trans-Canada Highway in Headingley is being completed.

This is signed by Fern Nielson, Ed Czuczvara, Pauline Czuczvara and many, many others, Mr. Speaker.

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

Personal Care Homes—Virden

Mr. Larry Maguire (Arthur-Virden): Mr. Speaker, I wish to present the following petition and these are the reasons for this petition:

Manitoba's provincial government has a responsibility to provide quality long-term care for qualifying Manitobans.

Personal care homes in the town of Virden currently have a significant number of empty beds that cannot be filled because of a critical nursing shortage in these facilities.

In 2006, a municipally formed retention committee was promised that the Virden nursing shortage would be resolved by the fall of 2006.

Virtually all personal care homes in south-western Manitoba are full, yet as of early October '07, the nursing shortage in Virden is so severe that more than one-quarter of the beds in the Westman Nursing Home are sitting empty.

Seniors, many of whom are war veterans, are therefore being transported to other communities for care. These communities are often a long distance from Virden and family members are forced to travel for more than two hours round trip to visit their loved ones, creating significant financial and emotional hardship for these families.

Those seniors that have been moved out of Virden have not received assurance that they will be moved back to Virden when these beds become available.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To request the Minister of Health (Ms. Oswald) to consider taking serious action to fill the nursing vacancies at personal care homes in the town of Virden and to consider reopening the beds that have been closed as the result of this nursing shortage.

To urge the Minister of Health to consider prioritizing the needs of those seniors that have been moved out of their community by committing to move those individuals back into Virden as soon as the beds become available.

Mr. Speaker, this petition has been signed by Pat Waller, Larry Logan, G. McWhirter, Doug Draper and many, many others.

Retired Teachers' Cost of Living Adjustment

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

These are the reasons for this petition:

Since 1977, Manitoba teachers have made contributions to the Teachers' Retirement Allowances Fund Pension Adjustment Account,

PAA, to finance a Cost of Living Adjustment, COLA, to their base pension once they retire.

Despite this significant funding, 11,000 retired teachers and 15,000 active teachers currently find themselves facing the future with little hope of a meaningful COLA.

For 2007, a COLA of only 0.63 percent was paid to retired teachers.

The COLA paid in recent years has eroded the purchasing power of teachers' pension dollars.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To urge the provincial government to consider adequate funding for the PAA on a long-term basis to ensure that the current retired teachers, as well as all future retirees, receive a fair COLA.

Signed by Barb Lobb, Bonnie Brown, Patrick Connolly and many, many, many other Manitobans.

Waverley West—New School Construction

Mr. Hugh McFadyen (Leader of the Official Opposition): Mr. Speaker, I wish to present the following petition to the Legislative Assembly.

These are the reasons for this petition:

The government has taken upon itself to develop Waverley West, a suburb that will eventually be the size of Brandon, without any funding for new schools in this part of Winnipeg. This will ultimately put a strain on other schools in the Pembina Trails School Division.

With the realignment of catchment areas, caused by this lack of funding, families will be required to move their children from one school to another.

Disruption for children attending southwest Winnipeg schools could be harmful for their education and present a difficult and unnecessary change for these children and their families.

We petition the Manitoba Legislative Assembly as follows:

To urge the Minister of Education (Mr. Bjornson) and the Premier (Mr. Doer) to consider setting aside land and funds to construct new schools to accommodate the needs of the new provincial government development of Waverley West to allow kids attending schools in the southwest area of Winnipeg to remain in existing schools located closer to home.

Signed by Karen Hamaberg, Lois Herd, Cyndi Stephens and many, many others.

Introduction of Guests

Mr. Speaker: Prior to Oral Questions, I'd like to draw the attention of honourable members to the public gallery where we have with us Warren Graydon who is the son of the honourable Member for Emerson (Mr. Graydon) and his wife, Dr. Venessa Graydon.

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

I'd also like to draw the attention of honourable members to the public gallery where we have with us today Concerned Parents from Fort Whyte who are the guests of the honourable Leader of the Official Opposition (Mr. McFadyen).

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

Also in the public gallery we have from East Selkirk Middle School 60 grade 6 students under the direction of Deanna Cameron. This school is located in the constituency of the honourable Member for Selkirk (Mr. Dewar).

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

ORAL QUESTIONS

Request for New High School Southwest Winnipeg

Mr. Hugh McFadyen (Leader of the Official Opposition): Mr. Speaker, parents in southwest Winnipeg, just a few weeks ago, were notified by the Pembina Trails School Board of impending plans to transfer children out of existing schools and into another school as a result of anticipated increases in school populations created by the provincial government's Waverley West development.

There are over 100 families in southwest Winnipeg that are going to be impacted by this change. Because of the redrawing of the catchment areas, children will be transferred from existing schools where they're receiving an excellent education, schools such as St. Avila, École Crane and the Viscount learning centre, into another school with which they are not familiar and another school which the parents would prefer to not have their children attend.

Given the anxiety that has arisen as a result of this intention on the part of the school board, given the time lines involved when they're talking about making a decision this coming spring which will begin to come into effect in September of 2008, will the Minister of Education (Mr. Bjornson) indicate for the House today what concrete plans, and not just platitudes but concrete plans to address these pressures are being put in place, how much money has been committed, which schools will be built to avert this major disruption, the education of children in southwest Winnipeg in advance of the start of the 2008 school year?

* (13:50)

Hon. Gary Doer (Premier): Mr. Speaker, I would point out to the Leader of the Opposition that there are a number of issues dealing with school issues decided or proposed by school divisions all across this province. There are schools in rural Manitoba that there's a very difficult time in terms of enrolment versus the distance that students have to go in terms of transportation that is of a concern of this government. There are many children, we feel, that are in a situation that if a school division proceeds with a recommendation, they may have to travel on a bus or other vehicles for long distances for long periods of time. That's a concern to the Minister of Education and to the government.

There are also proposals from school divisions. In fact, right in the middle of last May, there were proposals from school divisions to close different schools and have other children moving from one school to another. This is not unique as a proposal in only southwest Winnipeg. There are issues of building a school in, for example, northeast Winnipeg. Building a new high school that members opposite have lobbied for a number of years, notwithstanding the fact that they didn't build a high school when the Pritchard Farm Road development and other areas in that had massive, massive housing increases without any planning for schools.

Mr. Speaker, we believe that all of those issues are legitimate, not just the issues in southwest Winnipeg. The issues in southeast Winnipeg, in the centre of Winnipeg, in northeast Winnipeg, in northwest Winnipeg, in west Winnipeg and all across Manitoba are important. So for the member opposite to only look at one quadrant of the city of Winnipeg, I think, is unfortunate.

Mr. Speaker, we said that we are committed to, and we will follow through with—Housing developments in the Waverley West area of the city of Winnipeg, will include a new high school. We will rely on the independent advice from the Public Schools Finance Board which is set up now like the Water Services commission. It doesn't have people that are appointed by the party of the day but rather through Order-in-Council, but rather deputy ministers as we have with the Water Services Board, so that we can make the appropriate capital decisions not only that are important for the government and the people of Manitoba, but that are also important in terms of the timing.

It's not a question of whether we're building a school in southwest Winnipeg, a high school, but it's a question of when.

Mr. McFadyen: I'm pleased to see that the Premier is interested in the issue and the fact that he is now running the Department of Education as well. I appreciate the fact that he is prepared to take responsibility for what's going on throughout the province, Mr. Speaker.

We acknowledge that there are challenges throughout the province of Manitoba. In some areas we have underpopulated schools, in others areas, overpopulated schools. The fact is, though, that notwithstanding the fact that we can agree with some of what the Premier has said, the reality is that the problems created in southwest Winnipeg are arising because of a development under the control of, the direct control of the Premier and his government, being Waverley West. It's a NDP provincial government development in southwest Winnipeg. It's been on the books for years. All the problems that it's creating were foreseeable. They were able to deal with them and plan for them.

I think what people are having a difficult time understanding, Mr. Speaker, is that when the government feels they can afford to throw away more than a billion dollars on an extra long power line, when they feel that they can afford to throw away more than \$3 million on a branding campaign that isn't working, when they feel that they can throw away more than \$50 million because of the forced unionization of the floodway, when they feel that they can transfer \$15 million out of Waverley West to be put into a fund to be administered by the Premier, then I think people might have an expectation that there might be some planning that they could take a very small fraction of the amount

that they're wasting on these various other NDP boondoggles and apply that small fraction to schools in southwest Winnipeg and, indeed, to schools in other parts of the province, not just schools within school divisions that are run by the former campaign manager to the Premier, but schools—*[interjection]* Well, that's the school division that gets the new schools.

The fact is that Manitobans are looking for fairness. People in south Winnipeg have paid their taxes. They're looking for fairness. They're looking for planning.

Why won't the Minister of Education (Mr. Bjornson), why won't the Premier come—

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Mr. McFadyen: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Of the hundreds of millions of dollars they're throwing away in a variety of other areas at a time when their revenue is growing at \$600 million a year, why not take a small fraction of that and avoid the crisis and the dislocation that they're about to create in southwest Winnipeg?

Mr. Doer: Again, Mr. Speaker, you could—

Mr. Speaker: Order. I want to remind guests in the gallery that there's to be no participation, and that includes applauding. The honourable First Minister has the floor.

Mr. Doer: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Again, we are all lobbied by various groups and parents across the province legitimately motivated for the best interests of their children. I, in my area—it's northeast Winnipeg—have been called to many meetings to interfere, to build a school where, quote, my daughter goes to in the River East School Division, the River East high school. We have been very careful to not participate in those kinds of activities.

I would point out that even though we hold more seats than the members opposite, if he wants to talk politics, I understand that our capital investments have been 50 percent in terms of schools, in, quote, ridings we hold, and 50 percent we didn't. I didn't even know the number until I asked for it, Mr. Speaker, cause I thought the member opposite would go ahead and take cheap shots on this issue. Of course, that's what he did.

Mr. Speaker, there is money in our capital plan. There is money in our capital plan for a school in

southwest Winnipeg. We will allow the advice from people like the secretary of Treasury Board, the Deputy Minister of Education, non-partisan civil servants. I might point out, by the way, it was 75 percent in government ridings and 25 percent in non-government ridings when the member opposite was chief of staff, if he wants to go down that cheap-shot road.

But, Mr. Speaker, having said that, there is money. There will be money for that school. We will make sure that we've used non-partisan civil servants, including the secretary of the Treasury Board, to give us the best advice to balance off the issues, legitimate issues that parents have in southwest Winnipeg and the taxpayers which we also are responsible for across the whole province.

We will use a non-partisan balanced approach and, Mr. Speaker, we were not going to get stampeded based on local pressure in any part of the city. We didn't in northeast Winnipeg and we won't in southwest Winnipeg.

Request for Attendance at Public Meeting

Mr. Hugh McFadyen (Leader of the Official Opposition): Mr. Speaker, we would just comment to respond to some of what the Premier has said about the fact that his new-found interest in protecting taxpayers that he's made reference to in his answer is, I think, hard to swallow for all of those Manitobans who are paying record levels of taxes to see that money thrown away by the hundreds of millions of dollars on the power line, millions of dollars on the Brandon campaign, \$50 million on the forced unionization of the floodway, all of which is wasted at a time when the Province's debt is going up, even though revenues are going up by \$600 million a year.

We would simply argue that with some alignment of this government's priorities with the priorities of Manitobans, they can find the money to deal with the issues in south Winnipeg, in north Winnipeg, in rural Manitoba, all of which are different issues, Mr. Speaker, some of which call for different approaches. But in the rapidly expanding southern part of the city which is expanding because of a development led by, managed by, initiated by, controlled by this NDP government, you would think that they would have enough foresight to deal with the issues, the impacts that development is going to have.

When parents are getting messages from school boards that their children who have been attending the same school since they began, since kindergarten, a very successful French immersion school program which has met the needs of those children, when they are being told that as soon as this coming fall, 2008, their kids are going to be removed from that school, hundreds of families moved to a different school, I think they deserve better answers than what they are getting in the House today, Mr. Speaker.

I would just ask that the Minister of Education (Mr. Bjornson) would take the opportunity, because he's refused today, to have a meeting with these parents, face to face, without pre-scripted questions, allowing people to ask questions and respond to comments that were not part of the pre-agreed and dictated script from the Minister of Education, meetings that were established at parent councils before these issues came to light, before parents had an opportunity to raise these issues.

Will he agree today in the House to meet with parents, hear their concerns, because I think if he listens carefully, he'll have a different view than what is being expressed today in the House.

* (14:00)

Hon. Gary Doer (Premier): Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Education has agreed to meet with the organizers. I believe the date is December 11, if I'm not mistaken. That is already established.

The issue of land allocation, that is always part of planning in our government. It wasn't when they did the unfettered development in the Capital Region, in East St. Paul, Mr. Speaker.

I know that's the old rules. Land allocation for schools and school planning is part of our planning process, and it's not just for southwest Winnipeg, it's for all of Manitoba. We are the government for all of Manitoba, not just the one quadrant of the city of Winnipeg. You have to have the same policies.

I would point out in terms of taxation, the member opposite wants to talk about taxation, the school taxes in southwest Winnipeg went up 68 percent when he was chief of staff and other members were in government, according to Stats Canada, Mr. Speaker. One of the reasons why inflation was lower in Manitoba than other provinces was that the education tax portion went down a percent and a half, the only province in Canada where education taxes went down, in Manitoba,

because of the investments in the property tax or education tax credit. I could go on about the fact that Manitoba's downloading is uploading in terms of other jurisdictions.

But, Mr. Speaker, we will use the same policies in southwest Winnipeg as we use in northeast Winnipeg, as we use in Riding Mountain National Park. We will not be bullied by the member opposite with false information in this Chamber.

Winnipeg's Sewer System Provincial Funding for Upgrade

Mrs. Bonnie Mitchelson (River East): Last week, we asked some very serious questions and received flippant responses and no answers when we asked about the city of Winnipeg's sewer and water system.

Why is this NDP government forcing the City to spend \$500 million on nitrogen removal when, according to scientific evidence, this isn't necessary?

Hon. Gary Doer (Premier): Mr. Speaker, there was just a report on municipal funding in Canada, on all municipal funding in Canada, and Manitoba was one of the only provinces, in fact, the only province identified as not downloading but uploading responsibilities and taking on items like welfare or social assistance. We were ranked in terms of unconditional funding as No. 1 in Canada. We were ranked in terms of share of property taxes, in terms of total revenue, as one of the least reliant on property taxes in Canada.

That's quite a big reversal from when the member opposite, now that she feigns indignation, when she raised, as part of a Cabinet, raised education taxes in our quadrant of the city by some 68 percent through funding cuts to municipalities. We have pledged, unlike again the member opposite when she was in Cabinet, we have pledged one-third of the requirement of the Clean Environment Commission.

Mrs. Mitchelson: And, again, no answers from this government on a very serious question.

Mr. Speaker, the NDP government hasn't put a penny into fixing or upgrading the combined sewer system in the city of Winnipeg which spews raw sewage into the rivers on a regular basis. When will they take the issue seriously and commit to their one-third share of funding to fix the problem?

Hon. Greg Selinger (Minister of Finance): Mr. Speaker, I think it's important to note that Manitoba is the only government that shares corporate tax revenues, personal income tax revenues. It shares gas tax. It shares VLT revenues and it shares casino revenues with the City of Winnipeg. All of those revenues are available to the City to invest in their priorities. They've been getting transfers from the provincial government for over 30 years, well over a billion dollars in transfer payments from the government of Manitoba through successive governments, both on the opposite side of the House and this side of the House, and they have to just make one decision. What is their priority? They can put that money to water and sewer treatment at any time in the last 30 years. The Clean Environment Commission came along and said make it a priority, and then we found another \$200 million to ensure it was implemented.

Mrs. Mitchelson: Well, thank you very much, but the government's own Clean Environment Commission mandated a third, a third, a third funding to cleaning up the sewer system specifically, and there was no answer to that question when I asked, Mr. Speaker. It's regrettable that this government continues to reject scientific evidence and is forcing the City of Winnipeg, at a cost of \$500 million, money that could be spent on fixing the combined sewer system that is spewing raw sewage into our rivers and into our lakes.

When will they stop this NDP tax increase, use common sense and scientific evidence, and commit to their share of funding as mandated by the Clean Environment Commission to fixing our sewer system?

Mr. Doer: Well, Mr. Speaker, the Clean Environment Commission ordered the former government to do it shortly after the exemption was removed in '88 when the member opposite was in Cabinet. So she can feign indignation all she wants, but we know the hypocrisy of her position.

Secondly, the City has a plan on the two treatment plants and the one treatment plant they completed. We're over 50 percent on one treatment plant. We're a third pledged on the two treatment plants where there's a specific plan.

We have said, generically and generally, we are committed to the one-third funding, and I'm sure when we're elected past 2014 into 2017 you will see

our government step to the plate and be one-third funding on that plan as well.

Livestock Industry Government Assistance

Mr. Ralph Eichler (Lakeside): Mr. Speaker, Statistics Canada reported recently that hog receipts are down sharply and cattle exports are still 40 percent below the pre-BSE peak. This reinforces what we've been saying to the minister for a long time, that the livestock sector is in serious trouble.

Mr. Speaker, will the Minister of Agriculture today finally commit to a strategy to help our hog and cattle producers weather this crisis? The time is real. Stop the rhetoric. Give us the plan, Madam Minister.

Hon. Rosann Wowchuk (Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Initiatives): Mr. Speaker, I'll tell the member opposite, he's a little bit late. I've already met with the pork industry. The pork industry has come up with what they want. Their targeted cash advance is in place. I've met with the cattle producers, and I've asked the cattle producers to make application for a targeted cash advance.

Mr. Speaker, as we are negotiating a new Agriculture Policy Framework, suggestions that the industry is making as to how we can better flow money through the program are all being considered so that we can, indeed, make those improvements so farmers can get more money from the program.

Mr. Eichler: Mr. Speaker, this minister does not know what she's talking about. We have asked for the plan over and over again. A meeting does not table a plan. There is a difference, Madam Minister.

We have 1,100 farm families involved in raising cattle and hogs in this province but the government is turning their back on their concerns. The minister was quoted recently in meetings saying that if producers are having problems with high feed costs, they should think about getting out of the industry.

Is this the best strategy this minister has to offer livestock producers, is get out of the industry? Shame on her.

Ms. Wowchuk: Mr. Speaker, the member opposite is being a bit misleading with his comments.

Mr. Speaker, the member opposite wants to see a plan laid out. I would tell him to read about the various programs that are there. I've told him what the programs are. I've told him that the pork

producers have come to us and have made suggestions, and we are acting on the suggestions of the industry.

Mr. Speaker, I will act on the suggestions of the industry any time before I will act on the suggestions of this member.

Mr. Eichler: This minister just doesn't get it, Mr. Speaker. Last week we asked the Minister of Agriculture about the BSE recovery loans. We didn't get a straight answer there either. Some cattle producers are having problems paying back these loans. They are still recovering from BSE at the same time being hit by high prices, high in prices, low prices about their product and rising interest costs.

Mr. Speaker, I ask the Minister of Agriculture again: Is the provincial government looking at making changes to the BSE recovery loan program?

* (14:10)

Ms. Wowchuk: Mr. Speaker, we on this side of the House recognize that there are many groups that are suffering because of the high Canadian dollar, and we know that our livestock industry is suffering because of high input costs.

I've indicated to the member and, as I said, I've talked to the people in the cattle industry. If there are people that are having difficulty with their loans, then this will be negotiated on a one-on-one basis. There are many producers who have been able to pay off their loans. There are those who have been able to defer their loans, turn them into a long-term loan, Mr. Speaker. There are the options there. I would say to the member if he has somebody specific that's having difficulty we should—

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Trade Agreements Government's Record

Mr. Larry Maguire (Arthur-Virden): Mr. Speaker, the Member for Concordia (Mr. Doer) loves to talk about the '90s, and one of the member's more memorable comments is from March of 1992 when he said, and I quote, let the record show that we were opposed to the free trade agreement with the United States.

The short-sightedness of this position has been well-established. Canada's trade partnership with the United States has been hugely successful. Canadian trade with the U.S. has grown from \$192 billion in

'89 to over \$500 billion in '06, and has resulted in thousands of jobs for Manitobans.

Mr. Speaker, can the Minister of Competitiveness, Training and Trade explain why his government is still resisting trade agreements?

Hon. Jim Rondeau (Minister of Competitiveness, Training and Trade): I'd like the member opposite to realize that the First Minister (Mr. Doer) has been leading as far as the trade file to break down trade barriers within Canada. We actually are one of the provinces that are leading in growth of trade.

I'll let the member know that I met with the ambassador from Germany this morning. Our trade with Germany has gone up multiple percent. Our trade with other jurisdictions has gone up multiple times, and we are growing as a trading province. In fact, about 76 percent of what we produce and our services are exported, and we're continuing to export more services, more manufactured goods, and I'm proud of our record, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Maguire: Mr. Speaker, tomorrow the Manitoba Chambers of Commerce will host a round table, and it'll focus on reducing barriers through inter-provincial trade. The C.D. Howe Institute has reported that interprovincial trade barriers are a drag on Canadian productivity and send an embarrassing message to international investors.

Mr. Speaker, this NDP government has steadfastly refused to join on to the Trade, Investment and Labour Mobility Agreement with Alberta and B.C. Why is this NDP government, when are they going to work to reduce barriers to interprovincial trade, or are they just afraid to compete?

Hon. Gary Doer (Premier): I'll be at the meeting tomorrow morning. I wonder if the members opposite have studied the platform of the Saskatchewan Party, in terms of their position on TILMA.

Mr. Maguire: Mr. Speaker, we're dealing with issues from Manitoba.

B.C.'s real gross domestic product is estimated to grow by 4.8 billion and create up to 78,000 jobs as a result of joining TILMA. In Manitoba, the results are that we've lost almost 40,000 people in this province since 1999. In the Manitoba Chartered Accountants recent check-up report they confirmed that Manitobans who are leaving Manitoba in droves for Alberta, B.C. and Ontario are Manitoba's educated

young people. If we're going to keep our young people in Manitoba, we need to strengthen our economy on our competitive position. This means reducing trade barriers and actually competing.

Mr. Speaker, why has this NDP government failed to enter into an agreement with our western neighbours that is expected to result in billions of dollars in economic benefits and keep or create thousands of jobs for Manitobans?

Mr. Doer: For the second straight year in a row, Manitoba has doubled the national average in labour productivity. In fact, Mr. Speaker, Stats Canada—Manitoba and Alberta recorded the strongest gains in productivity in terms of the national average. In fact, it led all provinces in terms of productivity performance in Manitoba.

Again, Mr. Speaker, the province to our immediate west has views on TILMA that the member opposite obviously isn't aware of. He perhaps should do his homework.

Secondly, Mr. Speaker, Québec and Ontario also signed an agreement yesterday dealing with trade, but referenced the requirement for an internal trade agreement all across Canada. Manitoba trades north, south, east and west, and we're going to have an agreement with all jurisdictions.

Rural Health Care Emergency Room Closures

Mr. Cliff Cullen (Turtle Mountain): Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Health continues to compromise patient safety, particularly in rural Manitoba where 14 emergency rooms are closed indefinitely. Now another ER has been added to the list. Rock Lake Hospital is now without emergency services into the new year and residents have been warned to expect further closures. This is crisis management at its worst.

Mr. Speaker, how many more times will we have to get up in this House and ask the Minister of Health to do her job and restore rural emergency health care?

Hon. Theresa Oswald (Minister of Health): Mr. Speaker, certainly we have spoken with members opposite concerning health human resources in rural Manitoba, and we have said many times that of course this is a challenge, not only nationally but internationally.

That's why we're committed to ensure that not only are we raising our complement of doctors,

you know, from the ground up here in Manitoba, by increasing the number of seats in our medical school. That's the same medical school that members opposite decided would be a good penny-pinching exercise when they slashed the seats by 15 back in the '90s. We restored that back up to 85. We've gone to 100 seats. We're committed to go to 110 seats. That's one way that we're working to build our complement of doctors and we're seeing the fruits of our labour. We know we have 235 more doctors today than in the '90s.

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Mr. Cullen: Well, Mr. Speaker, Manitobans had enough rhetoric from this government. In fact, many more rural communities are afraid that their hospital will be the next on this NDP's closure list. Clearly, the Minister of Health has no real plan to restore rural health care. If she had one, we would have heard about it in the Throne Speech this week.

Can the minister explain why rural emergency rooms are not a priority for this government?

Ms. Oswald: Well, Mr. Speaker, once again I'll say to the member opposite that we know that nurse and doctor recruitment is a challenge in rural Manitoba, and we're working very diligently to ensure that we build that complement. The member opposite is citing priorities and rural Manitoba. I want to remind the member opposite that during the election campaign, arguably a time when they would be putting their best foot forward for Manitobans, they only got outside of Winnipeg once for a health announcement and that was to Portage la Prairie.

Maybe the member opposite could reflect to the people of Rock Lake and others about what their platform was there: Didn't want to mention a doctor, didn't want to bring one here, didn't want to educate one more nurse, Mr. Speaker, and could barely make it out of Winnipeg for a health-care announcement.

Mr. Cullen: Well, Mr. Speaker, the rhetoric goes on and on, but the fact remains that there were 15 emergency rooms closed in Manitoba. In fact, Manitobans are so sick and tired of the rhetoric, over 50 municipal corporations in western Manitoba have banded together to ask the minister for a plan to go forward. These community leaders are willing to work with the minister.

Will the minister share with them some kind of a plan for the future for rural health care?

Ms. Oswald: Mr. Speaker, the member opposite is correct in suggesting that we are having meetings with rural municipalities to talk about the challenges. We're listening to doctors, we're listening to nurses and we're bringing doctors back to rural Manitoba. We have more work to do, there's no question about that, but we are working with our rural communities to bring diagnostics outside of the perimeter of Winnipeg, something that members opposite never considered.

We were happy to be in Morden-Winkler just last week, opening the MRI, bringing those diagnostics to people of that region. We were happy, Mr. Speaker, today, to be announcing dialysis in rural and northern—that's northern—communities and we're going to continue to keep on working. We've got more work to do, but we're committed to do it.

Where was their platform, Mr. Speaker?

* (14:20)

Medical Rehabilitation Program Russell

Mr. Leonard Derkach (Russell): Mr. Speaker, this government's treatment of rural Manitobans is almost cynical. Programs are announced, never implemented; programs implemented for one year, then cut; promises made, never kept; emergency rooms closed.

Approximately five years ago, this government announced a rehab program for the community of Russell where people who had had strokes, heart attacks, knee surgeries, hip surgeries were allowed to rehabilitate into a normal life. One year after that program was launched, it was abruptly cut. Money was taken out of that community, staff were laid off and the program no longer exists.

I want to ask the minister whether she has any intention of reinstating this program since there are hundreds of people who are waiting for this kind of service who are hundreds of miles away from major centres.

Hon. Theresa Oswald (Minister of Health): Well, again, Mr. Speaker, I want to ensure to the member opposite that we're working diligently not only to bring health human resources out to rural Manitoba and to northern Manitoba—which is a challenge. It's a challenge in Canada and it's a challenge internationally. We know that we have to be very aggressive on recruitment and retention of our doctors and of our nurses.

One thing I can say to the member opposite about what's not going to reinstate programs is by cutting our spaces at medical school, by firing a thousand nurses and driving over 500 more of them out of the profession. That's not exactly a step in the right direction.

Investing in diagnostics in rural Manitoba, building the spaces in our medical school and recruiting doctors, that would be the direction forward.

Dialysis Unit Installation Russell

Mr. Leonard Derkach (Russell): Well, Mr. Speaker, rural Manitobans will certainly be interested in hearing that answer.

Mr. Speaker, in 1990, the Conservative government announced its intention to install a dialysis unit in Russell. In 2000, the minister—*[interjection]* 1999. I'm sorry.

In 2000, the Minister of Health reconfirmed that announcement. Mr. Speaker, in *Hansard* in 2004, the Minister of Health said that he would immediately move to install a dialysis unit in Russell. It is now 2007 and in the Throne Speech this year the Premier (Mr. Doer) announced the installation of a dialysis unit in Russell. Today the minister made an announcement that they would install a dialysis unit in Russell.

Can the minister tell me when this unit will be installed?

Hon. Theresa Oswald (Minister of Health): Mr. Speaker, I think the member opposite was confusing the promise that they made to build the Brandon hospital in 1990. I'm not sure—or whichever.

In any event, I can say to the member opposite that we have made a commitment to improving not only dialysis services but renal health education here in Manitoba. We've made commitments to improve diagnostics in rural Manitoba. We've made commitments to rebuild or renovate hospitals in rural Manitoba. We've made those commitments and those commitments are coming forward. We know that we have already got new or renovated hospitals in Brandon, Swan River, Thompson, The Pas, Beausejour, Pinawa, Gimli, Morden, Winkler, Ste. Anne, Steinbach and Shoal Lake.

We know that we have CT scanners in Brandon, Steinbach, Thompson, The Pas, Selkirk, Morden, Winkler and Portage la Prairie. We know—

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Mr. Derkach: Mr. Speaker, this minister's answer is absurd to say the least. I asked her a very specific question. This was a commitment that was made in 1999, reconfirmed in 2000, then 2004. In 2007, it was in the Throne Speech. The minister today put out a press release indicating that a dialysis unit will be installed in Russell.

I simply want to know whether she can tell Manitobans and people in Russell when this service will be made available to them.

Ms. Oswald: As I said before, it was our government that said we were going to build a hospital in Brandon and that hospital is built. It is our government that said that we would bring an MRI outside of Winnipeg to Brandon and it's there. It's our government that said that we would bring an MRI to Boundary Trails, that bastion of New Democratic voting, and it's there, Mr. Speaker.

I can say again that we committed today to not only bring that dialysis to Russell but also to the Peguis First Nation, to Norway House, to Berens River and to expand here in Winnipeg at the Health Sciences Centre.

You know what? Our record compared to theirs: It's going to be done.

Hecla Island Causeway Impact on Lake Winnipeg

Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights): Mr.—

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Speaker: Order. The honourable Member for River Heights has the floor.

Mr. Gerrard: Mr. Speaker, there's been a lot of concern raised about the long-term impact of the Hecla Island causeway which was built in 1970-71. In the time since then, there have been observations which show a dramatic decrease in wildlife in the Grassy Narrows area, specifically, in mink, muskrat, ducks, geese and in jackfish. There's been evidence of increased erosion in some nearby areas of Lake Winnipeg, and there's a decreased ability of the marshes in the Grassy Narrows area to filter algal blooms from the lake.

I ask the Premier (Mr. Doer) what action he has undertaken, or is going to undertake, to determine the long-term impact of the Hecla Island causeway on Lake Winnipeg.

Hon. Christine Melnick (Minister of Water Stewardship): Well, Mr. Speaker, as Manitobans know, we take the state of Lake Winnipeg very seriously. We are investing in research. This year, alone, we are investing over \$10 million in research on the lake. For the first time ever, we have joint research being done by the federal government, by the provincial government, by NGOs. Certainly, we're looking at all aspects of the lake.

I think it's very important that we look at not only nutrient loading but the flows of the waters. This is, in fact, what we're doing. We are relying on scientists. We are relying on their research, and we will continue to work with them because it's with real pure science that we will find out how to best deal with all of the conditions around Lake Winnipeg.

Mr. Gerrard: Mr. Speaker, it's good to hear that the minister is concerned about the health of Lake Winnipeg. I would ask, specifically, of the minister whether she can provide the information about the terms of reference of the study on the Hecla Island causeway. Can she tell us whether this has been funded or going to be funded and by how much? When will the report on the Hecla Island causeway and its impact be available? When will the minister be able to answer, specifically, about the study of the impact on the Hecla Island causeway on Lake Winnipeg?

Ms. Melnick: Well, again, Mr. Speaker, we are investing heavily in science and research.

This, of course, is in direct opposition to when the member was in the federal Cabinet when they cut, in the Department of Environment, 1,400 staff, 229 million between '95 and '97. The Member for River Heights said these cuts were tough but fair. I'll be very happy to provide this wording to the Member for River Heights, and I wonder how long it is before we will see his own record on his blog.

Bill 203

Request for Government Support

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Inkster): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Premier (Mr. Doer). I would ask if the Premier would join myself and the federal New Democrats in promoting a wonderful initiative.

Today I introduced Bill 203, The Liquor Control Amendment Act. In that bill, it would mandate that there would be warning labels put onto bottles, something which Judy Wasylycia-Leis I know is supportive of. I look to the Premier of this province

and acknowledge the positive impact that that could have if we were to pass that legislation.

Does the Premier support putting warning labels on liquor bottles in order to better educate the public in regard to fetal alcohol syndrome? Does the Premier support it?

Hon. Kerri Irvin-Ross (Minister of Healthy Living): Fetal alcohol syndrome disorder has been a priority for our government since we took office. We have been involved in a number of initiatives. Since when we took office, the increase has been over 1,400 percent to investments around research, prevention, education and intervention.

Last spring we introduced a \$7.5-million initiative which is going to deal with FASD. A major portion of that is around prevention. We're working with our community partners. We're working with the Manitoba Liquor Commission to develop initiatives that ensure that people are getting the information that is necessary to prevent FASD. It's a priority for us. It's a priority for all Manitobans. Thank you.

Mr. Speaker: Time for Oral Questions has expired.

* (14:30)

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

Ernie Siwak

Mrs. Mavis Taillieu (Morris): Mr. Speaker, it's with great sadness that I rise today to speak about Ernie Siwak, who passed away on August 11 of 2007, a few days after his 60th birthday.

Ernie was a friend and an adviser. Shortly after I was nominated in the Morris constituency, he came to me and offered his support and his advice. I welcomed that and we had many conversations about politics thereafter.

Ernie was involved in politics for many years, and as his eulogy said, he bled Tory blue. He got involved in the late '70s in civic politics, then with the provincial Conservatives and the leadership review of the early '80s. He was a supporter of Premier Gary Filmon. He helped in the St. James area, as well as helping Myrna Driedger in Charleswood when she was elected. Ernie spent many days and nights in backroom politics, which he loved.

Ernie also had other loves, and I quote from his obituary: "A lover of fishing, talking with friends, spending time with family." Ernie was never short on

ideas and loved to help solve any problems anybody brought to him. From his young days in Angusville to his passing in Winnipeg, he always loved to work. Whether it was selling cars or trailers, coaching National Ringette or running construction sites, Ernie was a true leader. He was always able to see the big picture.

I want to express condolences on behalf of the Progressive Conservative caucus and party to his wife Bev, his children Erin, Morgan and Michael, his mother Anne, all who I know miss him very much.

We will also miss Ernie as a friend, adviser and a member of our community.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Guru Nanak

Mr. Mohinder Saran (The Maples): Mr. Speaker, I rise before the House today to recognize the importance of Guru Nanak, the founder of Sikhism, whose birthday was celebrated by Sikhs throughout the world on November 24. Guru Nanak was born to a simple Hindu family in 1469 in the western Punjab village of Talwandi.

He spent the majority of his life travelling 26,000 miles on foot for 24 years, spreading his message and revolutionizing society as a whole, specifically Indian society. Guru Nanak challenged social norms about the equality of humanity, teaching welfare unto all, without any distinction of caste, creed, religion or gender.

Through his work as a spiritual leader, Guru Nanak also advocated for the equality of all human beings. While much of his society looked down on the poor, he demonstrated that all members of a society, whether rich or poor, were equal. He taught against the exploitation of the poor by the wealthy, stating that amassing wealth by unfair means is futile, as money and worldly goods do not accompany a person when he or she dies. Guru Nanak also advocated religious tolerance, campaigned for the defence of the innocent, and promoted the equality of men and women, teaching that women must be accorded respect.

Mr. Speaker, the example set by Guru Nanak is one that we can all learn from still today. Even at this very moment, as I say these words, violence and intolerance are destroying lives of innocent people throughout our world. In these turbulent times, I

believe we still have much to learn from what Guru Nanak taught. Thank you.

Southwest Sabres

Mrs. Leanne Rowat (Minnedosa): Within sports, it's a commonly held fact that it's more difficult to defend a championship than to win it for the first time. I would like to congratulate the Southwest Sabres on their successful defence of their position as Rural Manitoba Football League champions.

The Sabres headed into this year's championship with an impressive regular season record but were facing a difficult opponent in the undefeated Neelin Spartans. The final game opened with the Sabres taking advantage of the coin toss and scoring on an early rush. The Spartans would fight back to tie the game, but Garth Strath would complete a mammoth 40-yard pass to secure the lead for the Sabres to enter the second half.

During the final half of the game, with the season in the balance, the intensity reached a fever pitch with aggressive physical play on both sides. Despite a decided size advantage for the Spartans, the speed and tenacity of the Sabres would emerge as the decisive factor. Completing several more passing plays mixed with strong defensive play was the Sabres' recipe for a 50-29 victory in the final match. In the end, despite the Spartans' perfect record entering the final, even their coach conceded the Sabres were the best team on the day.

The victory in the final game capped another successful season for the Sabres, marking their second consecutive high school football championship. While it may be premature to consider the Sabres as a dynasty within high school football, their success over the past two years has been the result of strong leadership, dedication, great coaching and not to mention some highly skilled players.

To the players, we are so proud of you and wish you the best in all of your future endeavours, whether in sports, education and life. Again, congratulations to all of the players, coaches, parents and volunteers who helped the Southwest Sabres in successfully defending their title this season. Thank you.

Wellington School

Mr. Andrew Swan (Minto): Mr. Speaker, it's always my pleasure to tell this Legislature about the great things happening at Wellington School in Minto.

Wellington School is the recipient of a grant in the amount of \$150,000 from the Indigo Love of Reading Fund for the purchase of new books and learning materials over the next three years. The program is targeted at elementary schools, where it will have the most significant impact and 10 new schools are chosen every year to receive the funds. Wellington School was one of 30 schools in the country and is now the third school in Manitoba to benefit from this grant.

The Literacy Committee at Wellington School worked hard to receive the grant, building on a literacy plan established in 2003 demonstrating how the additional funds would encourage students' literacy and love of reading. As part of the plan, every student will have the opportunity to visit Chapters bookstore at Polo Park and select a book for themselves. The school library's collection will be greatly enhanced with new multicultural, ESL and social studies books that connect the new curriculum.

I was honoured to join students, staff, parents and guests for the official kick-off of the Love of Reading program on November 16. It was an exciting afternoon in the gym decorated with balloons and posters showing books the students had read and enjoyed. After the speeches, Juno-winning children's entertainer, Al Simmons, entertained children and adults alike with his inventive musical comedy.

I'd like to congratulate Principal Angeline Ramkissoon, her staff, and the Literacy Committee who were instrumental in making this happen. I would also like to offer sincere thanks to the Indigo Love of Reading Fund for its valuable investment in this excellent community school. Thank you.

Hecla Island Causeway

Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights): Mr. Speaker, I'd like to talk briefly about the Hecla Island causeway and to commend Halli Jonasson for his contributions to understanding the impact of the Hecla Island causeway on Lake Winnipeg, particularly the region around Hecla Island and near there.

Over the time since the Hecla Island causeway was built, as a result of the observations that have been made, it's very clear that there have been major changes in water flow through the Grassy Narrows area, that there've been dramatic decreases in wildlife in the Grassy Narrows marshes: mink, muskrat, in ducks, geese and in jackfish, that there are areas

where there've been specific problems with erosion and some of these date to the period around 1970 when the Hecla Island causeway was constructed.

We know also from observations that there were times when the marshes acted as an important filter to remove algal blooms. It is sad today that the Minister for Water Stewardship (Ms. Melnick) will not commit to a clear, long-term impact study with the terms of reference, with a date when the report will be due and with specific funding to ensure the report is completed. We will have to wait for further developments, but clearly this study is going to be badly needed, and it's needed as soon as possible because of the condition of Lake Winnipeg and the concerns many have, not only over algal blooms but over erosion and the health of the lake.

ORDERS OF THE DAY GOVERNMENT BUSINESS

THRONE SPEECH (Fifth Day of Debate)

Mr. Speaker: Resume debate on the proposed motion of the honourable Member for Rossmere (Ms. Braun) that the following address be presented to His Honour the Lieutenant-Governor.

We, the members of the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba, thank Your Honour for the gracious speech addressed to us at this Second Session of the Thirty-Ninth Legislature of Manitoba, and the proposed motion of the honourable Leader of the Official Opposition (Mr. McFadyen) in amendment thereto, and the proposed motion of the honourable Member for River Heights (Mr. Gerrard) in amendment thereto, standing in the name of the honourable Member for Arthur-Virden, who has 20 minutes remaining.

Mr. Larry Maguire (Arthur-Virden): Mr. Speaker, it's my privilege to continue with where we were in the Legislature yesterday afternoon. At the end of the day, I was commenting in regard to the Throne Speech that other provinces are contributing greatly to the Manitoba equalization payments, and I have just a comment on that as well.

There are some very pertinent numbers in Manitoba that I'd just like to refer to, and one of those is that in 2000, or since 2000, Manitoba's total transfers—that's equalization payments in health and social transfers—have increased \$1.3 billion since 2000. That is a 64 percent increase and, Mr. Speaker, 36 percent of Manitoba's total revenue in '07-08,

being \$3.4 billion of a \$9.3-billion budget, will come from those transfers from Ottawa as well.

* (14:40)

Just to put that into perspective, Mr. Speaker, and how dependent we are on the federal government compared to our neighbours to the west, in Saskatchewan, our equalization payments alone are \$1,547 per person, and in Saskatchewan it's \$228. This is what I was referring to yesterday, when I spoke about Mr. MacKinnon's comments, that I heard spoken at the Frontier Centre a few short weeks ago, where he said: How long does the government think they can get away with spending taxpayers' dollars originating in have provinces, those being Alberta, B.C., Saskatchewan and Ontario, never mind Manitobans' tax dollars, when these other provinces are having difficulties in their own provinces in infrastructure and areas?

How long does he think that the equalization program is going to continue to be a windfall for Manitoba and have-not provinces when these other provinces are creating tens of billions of dollars to the transfer payments in Canada? I think that that's something that the government has to take into consideration and, certainly, the Minister of Finance (Mr. Selinger) before he makes his announcements next spring in the budget.

Mr. Speaker, I want to, as well, make comments in regard to the agricultural circumstances in this province. The minister's comments yesterday clearly indicate that there is a lot more that can be done in regard to supporting and helping our industries. There's a lot of opportunity in rural Manitoba that I referred to, and the ethanol issue was only one. We've got an ethanol fund being developed in the new bill that was just passed in the last, before the Throne Speech, and we need to make sure that those dollars are spent wisely in the economy of Manitoba in developing those support of businesses in rural Manitoba that could be developed and not just dribbled away into the operating budget for balancing the books of this government.

Ms. Bonnie Korzeniowski, Deputy Speaker, in the Chair

Madam Deputy Speaker, I'd just like to refer quickly as well to the fact that in this Throne Speech I am quite worried that the government is going to move away from balanced budget legislation. In the comments that they put in the Throne Speech, I

believe that there is no excuse in Manitoba for not balancing the operating accounts of this government at any given time. Certainly, the government saw fit to include the Crown corporations in the generally accepted accounting practices, and we feel strongly that, while those Crown corporations were always balanced under a PC government in Manitoba when Mr. Filmon was in charge and Mr. Eric Stefanson was our Finance Minister, with those Crown corporations being balanced, there was never a concern that they wouldn't be. It's only under an NDP government that funds have been taken out of those Crown corporations to operate the government in the manner that they've been doing, and that is at a time when we've received record transfer payments from our neighbouring provinces through the federal government.

There are many opportunities in alternative energy, whether it's wind energy, the biofuels or ethanol, Madam Speaker, or biodiesel, and I'm afraid that this government has let that ball fall as well. We are seeing lack of development in regard to wind energy. There are 300 megawatts of proposals out there of a thousand that they want to bring in, and yet those tenders have been closed for some time. We've seen no response from the government in regard to how those private investment dollars will be allowed to come into the province of Manitoba.

I'm very worried about the expansion of the ethanol industry in Manitoba and being lost by this government, the opportunities in those areas. They continue to talk about biodiesel projects that we haven't been able to see. Madam Deputy Speaker, there are no results on that. There is a very good group in the southwest part of Manitoba working on biodiesel development as well, and there's also a group called Clean Country Resources looking at an ethanol project of some magnitude in southwest Manitoba that this government has managed to stall for—well, it took them a year to determine that they couldn't use the energy source that they wanted to. If they'd have been on the ball, they could have done that overnight, virtually telling them if it was truly a government plan that they wanted to work on. These people that are private investors in Manitoba wanted to come in to develop this process in Manitoba, and yet this government dragged its feet in regard to answering them. Now a whole new business plan has had to be developed and come forward. It may, in fact, stall this project even longer and I'm very worried about that.

Madam Deputy Speaker, I just want to make a comment as well on the potential of the hog industry in Manitoba.

I know that the Minister of Agriculture (Ms. Wowchuk) referred to a project yesterday as Manitoba going green and growing. I would concur that all of us want to see a clean-up of facilities in Manitoba that may not be as environmentally friendly as others or as they should be, but here's an opportunity in Manitoba with the largest industry that we have, being the hog sector in our agriculture economy, where, instead of going green and growing, some of the minister's regulations and rules that they've put in place are causing this industry to just be going, Madam Deputy Speaker.

They have gone green themselves as an industry. They know their responsibility, but it's not green and growing; it's green and going and this has caused things like rules and regulations like the hog moratorium. We, as the industry, concurred that the Clean Environment Commission would have an opportunity to come forward and people make presentations to it. Those were done last June.

So where are the results of the Clean Environment Commission hearing? We thought there was going to be a report tabled in September. Certainly, the final report was supposed to be out by December. Now we're hearing that it may not, in fact, be until spring. How long can you kill confidence in this province in an industry that's the largest sector of our agricultural economy? Many, many, many rural and urban jobs and farms depend on the ability to continue with some degree of certainty as to what they're making capital investments in.

So, Madam Deputy Speaker, while this government's objective has always been to—they give lip service to keeping the family farm in place, I would say that the rules and regulations that this government has put in place are causing the corporate farms that they supposedly have given lip service to detesting. I find that completely unacceptable in our agricultural economy in Manitoba today.

I cannot close without saying a few words about the hydro line in Manitoba. The power line in Manitoba could save 40 megawatts of lost energy, dissipated energy from line loss. It could be 400 kilometres shorter and still do the same job than what the Premier (Mr. Doer) is promoting. I'm quite sure that many of his backbenchers are worried about the

fact that they're spending a half a billion dollars extra that doesn't need to be spent. They know how those dollars could be spent in their ridings, as you do, Madam Deputy Speaker. We certainly do on this side of the House as well. How much more responsible you could be with an extra half a billion just from the construction costs of an extra line that won't be able to get, I would daresay, not be able to get an opportunity to pass environmental hearings that would allow it to go through the Riding Mountain National Park in Manitoba anyway. So I just want to say that, with the over a billion dollars in losses in that particular project alone, that doesn't need to be. It's like the Member for River East (Mrs. Mitchelson) talking about the half a billion dollars that could be saved out of a \$1.8-billion project here, just in regard to the realignment of the cleaning up of Lake Winnipeg in regard to a particular direction in regard to the utilizing the process of cleaning up the phosphorus first in Manitoba out of the lake and moving forward with some of those areas.

Madam Deputy Speaker, I just want to close by saying that there are concerns in my constituency around a number of these areas. There are concerns about where the funds could go on the hydro lines. There are also issues around Clean Country Resources in the community of Hartney and the whole surrounding area. There's just a dire need for more nurses in the Virden area, in the personal care homes that I've talked about in repetitions in the House daily. Deloraine's CancerCare clinic needs to get going and needs to be, is being developed, but there are concerns about who will be there and whether the government will back the type of people needed to run it and operate it. Melita, of course, has got concerns about its hospital in regard to the diagnostic equipment that it's going to need as well. I had the opportunity of touring the hospital with their mayor, Bob Walker, and others that took me through the facilities a week and a half ago, and very aware of the fact that even if the digital imagery equipment will be utilized and put in place in Melita, as opposed to, I believe I said dialysis equipment, and it's certainly not. It's the diagnostics and imagery. The hospital needs to be upgraded in regard to that, and the doctors that are there have been very forthright in coming forward and working very hard and diligently in that area.

* (14:50)

The Peace Garden is also an area, Madam Deputy Speaker, of concern, and this government can do much more in regard to moving forward in

that area, although I would concur that we need to work with the federal government as well. That's without mentioning the highway systems that are needed, the waterfication of municipalities that are ongoing and need to continue to have support and are of concern.

Madam Deputy Speaker, I will close by saying that I feel that the differences between our government and that of the government of the day are that—if I could use a phrase that I heard at a presentation last night in this city—the NDP government of today is—their view is an outcome to have equality of outcomes, whereas the vision and view of a Progressive Conservative government is to have and provide an equality of opportunity. That's what this Province lacks right now is the vision to put government stimulus in place to provide an equality of opportunity in this province.

So, with those comments, Madam Deputy Speaker, I will look forward to closing and look forward to the issues that may come forward by this government as it moves in toward preparation for its spring budget, and look forward to those events.

Mr. Drew Caldwell (Brandon East): It is an honour to stand today in the Manitoba Legislature to put a few words on the record in support of the Throne Speech.

First of all, however, I wish to thank the citizens of Brandon East for again returning me as their representative in the recent provincial election. I'm very proud to represent Brandon East, a constituency my family has called home for three generations, and very proud of the community activism for which my home constituency of Brandon East is so broadly known.

Madam Deputy Speaker, the Throne Speech delivered on November 20, 2007, continues the Doer NDP government's record of investment in Brandon. As the *Brandon Sun* noted in a front-page headline on November 21, and I quote: Wheat City cashes in on Throne Speech. Specifically, the *Sun* noted that investment in Brandon was a central element in the speech.

I would again like to quote the newspaper: Brandon will receive four additional firefighters, a specialized anti-gang Crown attorney and a completed eastern access route in addition to funding for recreational facilities in downtown renewal, the provincial government announced yesterday in its Throne Speech. Manitoba's second-largest city was

mentioned unusually often compared to past Throne Speeches, which outlined the government's agenda for the upcoming legislative session. The Province pledged financial support for the city in numerous areas, including a plan to double its current funding for recreational facilities and support the construction of new rec centres, more money to pay for four more Brandon firefighters, a new Crown attorney dedicated to handling gang-related crimes and start-up cash for the Renaissance Brandon downtown development corporation.

In the November 21st editorial, the *Sun* continued its commentary on the Throne Speech by noting that, and I quote: Overall, this is a pretty difficult speech for Brandon residents to be critical of. Today, as we debate the Throne Speech, Madam Deputy Speaker, it is worth noting that Brandon has received an unprecedented level of provincial investment since the election of the Doer NDP government. We have built the Brandon Regional Health Centre, installed western Manitoba's first MRI unit in that world-class health facility and established CancerCare Manitoba in our region. We have further committed to a linear accelerator for cancer patients, enhanced the Westman Lab and built the downtown Health Access Centre.

Madam Deputy Speaker, we have also invested in affordable housing, developing over 750 units since our election. We've invested in neighbourhood renewal through funding the Brandon Neighbourhood Renewal Corporation and community projects as diverse as building playgrounds, supporting business storefront renewal and developing city parks. We have invested in public school infrastructure and school programs. We have built the health studies building at Brandon University.

Most significantly, in the single largest investment in post-secondary education ever made outside of the provincial capital, we have committed to the historic development of ACC on Brandon's North Hill, utilizing the finest collection of heritage architecture in Manitoba to develop what will become the most outstanding college campus in Canada. This investment, Madam Deputy Speaker, perhaps more than any other, will attract generations of young people to our community and offer them high-skill, high-wage training opportunities right in Brandon. Indeed, ACC at BMHC has the potential to transform Brandon into a national centre for post-secondary education.

Infrastructure renewal has also been a priority of the Doer NDP government since our election. Today, as I speak, the \$17-million construction of the 18th Street twin bridges over the Assiniboine River is under way. This past summer saw the repaving of Richmond Avenue, 1st Street and 18th Street. This coming construction season will see the construction of our work on the eastern access route, which will complete a project first proposed by my predecessor, Len Evans. This project was first proposed by an NDP government and will be completed by an NDP government.

Of course, it is also a fact that no government in the history of our province has provided more tax relief than the Doer NDP. We have eliminated the provincial education property tax and have provided relief in every single tax category since our election. This past week we announced that Manitoba's minimum wage will increase to \$8.50 an hour, effective April 1.

Finally, Madam Deputy Speaker, I would be remiss if I did not put on the record that members opposite, members of the Conservative Party of Manitoba, as well as the two independent members of the Liberal Party, have voted against every single one of these initiatives. They voted against the construction of the Brandon Regional Health Centre; they voted against the construction of the twin bridges over the Assiniboine River; and they voted against the development of ACC at BMHC. The Conservative members opposite voted against every single tax cut proposed by the Doer government. They voted against the raise in the minimum wage and they voted against the construction of affordable housing in Brandon. With consistency, the Conservative Party of Manitoba has voted against Brandon.

With this fact in mind, I would urge the Conservative members opposite to join with me and the Doer government in supporting the November 2007 Throne Speech. I would urge them to support Brandon, and I would urge them to heed the advice given by the *Brandon Sun* in their commentary on the Throne Speech, to heed that advice and support a Throne Speech where the Wheat City cashes in. Thank you very much, Madam Deputy Speaker.

Mr. Ralph Eichler (Lakeside): I would like to put a few comments on the record in regard to the Throne Speech in the fall of '07. First of all, I'd like to welcome the pages. I know that it's going to be a very rewarding experience. I know that I've had a

number of pages from my area over the time that I was here. We certainly know that it's a very rewarding experience for them.

We certainly appreciate the table staff as well for all the work and advice that they give us in the time of crisis and the time of good guidance and the time of motions, and so on. We certainly appreciate their advice. I know the first year of my career as an MLA, I spoke on a bill twice, or at least attempted to speak on a bill twice. I thought we were in the third reading. We were still, in fact, in the second reading. So I know they keep very good records and keep us accountable. So we're certainly pleased with the work that they do and commend them for that.

* (15:00)

Also, I want to thank the people of Lakeside. I know the Deputy Speaker's mom lives in my area. She's just a wonderful person, and we're certainly glad to have her as one of my great fans. I do appreciate her very, very much. I know that the people of Lakeside are a very interesting bunch. We have a diversity in Lakeside that is probably very unique in the rest of the province, where we have so much to fall back on as far as fishing and agriculture. Being so diverse with the agriculture, and the hog and the grain in agriculture plays a huge part there, but we also have the other industries, as I say, the fishing as well. The tourism is starting to see significant growth as well. We're certainly pleased about that. It's the treasure that just hasn't been developed yet on that side of the province, but we certainly see the leaps and bounds about to take place over the next generation or two.

Now, to the Throne Speech. I want to remind the government how we are so disappointed on this side of the House in regard to the Throne Speech and the lack of real substance in regard to agriculture. I know the KAP was here yesterday and made a presentation on what KAP does with their organization within the province of Manitoba. The lack of agriculture was very disappointing from their view in their aspect. In fact, I know that one of the questions that Robert McLean, the vice-president of KAP, put on the record and that was on the taxation for the buildings that they had asked to have removed. There was no mention of that in the Throne Speech. However, the minister did talk about increasing from 65 percent to 70 percent the rebate on agriculture taxes, but the method which they're using in order to rebate that program is still flawed.

I know we did a freedom of information on this particular issue. We've put on the record before that it's \$1.5 million that it's cost the province of Manitoba to refund that money back to the producers. What they just simply need to do, and we've tried to illustrate for the government a different way of doing that, it's a very simple calculation of the amount of tax that's rebated that would go straight to the other departments, either through a transfer or the issue of a cheque. That's what it would do. It would be a cost of a dollar or even less if it was a transfer from one branch to the other.

I know the president of Manitoba Cattle Producers had talked about the lack of interest that was shown on the government's part in regard to the cattle industry and the high input costs that have been effected there. The Department of Agriculture has a huge responsibility on their hands. I know today the Minister of Agriculture spoke for the record that she's been meeting with these producers, for the hog and the cattle producers, and yet we're asking for those payments, how they're going to be paid out so that they can go to their financial institutes and make necessary applications in order to make sure that they are, in fact, going to be able to receive that money in a timely manner.

I know the federal government has put some \$600 million in the new APF program. The Province of Manitoba has suggested they're going to put \$95 million into the new APF programs, but the method of payment is certainly not clear.

I know the aspect as far as country-of-origin labelling that is going to be coming into effect next year. I know the Minister of Agriculture and myself have been meeting with the U.S. counterparts on the U.S. farm bill. We know that, in fact, is part of the mandate. It's been talked about for a number of years in respect to when this actually will come into effect. But, if it does, we need to be ready as a province; we need to be ready as a country in Canada. This is going to have huge and significant impacts on how we do our business in Manitoba and in Canada. We have to be ready that we are, in fact, able to concentrate on the markets that we want to try and get into.

I've been talking to a number of packers here and in the United States that are gearing up in order to produce just Canadian products, but we have to get that product into the United States. We'll be charged a discounted price on our livestock that's going to be

processed there because it will be saying that it's grown and raised in Manitoba, in Canada, yet it'll be processed in yet another country. We're trying to do the branding, trying to do the labelling.

We feel on this side of the House that, if we look at other options such as interprovincial meat trade, allowing that product to flow back and forth from one province to the other—in fact, our Member for Arthur-Virden (Mr. Maguire) brought that question in today in regard to TILMA, and we feel that that's one way that we can move forward in regard to addressing some of the issues with respect to COOL.

I know that the processing industry, as far as the beef is concerned, in Alberta they do most of our processing. The rest, the majority of it is Ontario and a small plant in the east, and they're struggling. They're losing anywhere from \$80 to \$90 a head on the beef, and they're losing anywhere from \$40 to \$50 a head on the hog industry. In order to sustain that, they're going to have to weather out the highs and lows and make sure that they, in fact, are going to be there when we need them and when it comes to the new COOL country-of-origin labelling that we're going to be seeing come about possibly in September of 2008. We certainly would encourage and ask that the government be ready, make sure that we look at the plans that are going to be available to us and our producers in order to make sure we're sustainable in the long run.

Also, in the Throne Speech, the government didn't talk about the moratorium on the hog industry, when that, in fact, would be lifted. The Minister of Agriculture (Ms. Wowchuk), in fact, did state that the Pork Congress last spring, I believe it was February, that, in fact, the moratorium would be lifted by December. Well, we've only got a few days left and the CEC report is still not in, but we do know that it's going to have a huge impact on how livestock is done, how livestock is run in this province, and we certainly believe that the moratorium should be lifted.

In fact, if there's ever a time that we need to be looking at new innovative ways, doing innovative barns, this is the time to be doing it, not when the prices are high. We need to do it when they're low in order to ensure that these new state-of-the-art facilities will, in fact, be ready to go when that peak does rise.

We know there are going to be some casualties. We know there's going to be that with every industry, whether it's the livestock industry, the grain

industry, whether it be any type of manufacturing, that we have to be ready for those in order then to do through the competition, the free enterprise system. But, having said that, without the moratorium being lifted, we know that, in fact, some of these new barns, in order to be as competitive as they possibly can in the new marketplace, we're certainly going to need to have those tools available to our producers.

I did mention briefly about the high input cost and the cost of the interest on the BSE loans and the cattle industry with the profits there, it just not being enough, and I certainly know that, in fact, the cash advance program that was put forward through the CAIS program has been flawed. There have been \$2.5 million that have been applied for—that was actually as of a week ago—and some \$63,000 that have been paid out. So we know that \$63,000 is not going to go near far enough in order to make sure that our producers can, in fact, sustain this lull that's in their sector.

We know that the hog producers also have been trying to access that same cash advance, and it's based on margin. We have a declining margin. You can't access those dollars, so it's certainly full of flaws that we need to try and address and try and work with. So we've encouraged the Minister of Agriculture to look at the new programs that are, in fact, being brought forward. There are four different programs that are being proposed and make sure that those are, indeed, predictable; indeed, they are bankable, so that our producers can go to the financial institutes and make those necessary arrangements, that they will, in fact, have money for next year's programs that they're going to be able to access and take advantage of.

These programs are supposed to be in a time of need and, unfortunately, when the CAIS program was drawn up, we neglected to include the livestock sector to the level that we needed to. So that's a program that definitely needs to have a look at. We've asked the minister to do that. I know the federal government has asked the provinces to agree to the new changes that have been proposed through the APF program, and we certainly would encourage the government to look at that.

I know the BSE recovery loans—I asked that question last week and again today in regard to what the government has in plans with respect to the interest charged on those loans. We've seen four tough years in the livestock industry as far as the cattle are concerned, and it's been declining slowly,

slowly. One of these days, the producer's just going to not be able to sustain that. We'll see an exodus of those producers and those cattle out of the province of Manitoba, and they'll be gone forever.

* (15:10)

It's a little harder to get into the cattle business than it is into any other business because of the time lines of which it takes to produce those animals, a lot more in freight, a lot more in cost and a lot more overhead as far as it comes to facilities to handle those particular animals.

Also, we talked about the TB testing. Last week we saw changes in the USDA requirements as far as replacement heifers that are going to be going south. Those heifers that are going in for a feedlot will not now have to be tested unless they're going into specific states that do require it. But, as far as the USDA, they have now recognized the fact that Manitoba is, in fact, TB-free. But the testing for those livestock animals that are going down as breeding stock still have to be tested, and we certainly hope that they can sustain that. Most of the breeding stock that does go south are purebred animals, dairy animals, those type of animals that where they can certainly build into the margin a little bit of those costs.

We do want to make sure that, in fact, Manitoba stays TB-free. The producers in the Riding Mountain area have been taking the brunt of that, and we feel there's a mustering fee that needs to be put forward for those producers that they will recoup some of those costs. In fact, we have to ensure that those producers are not the ones that are going to be holding the only costs that are involved there, because, in fact, they're testing for all the province, not just for TB for the U.S. side, as well. So that's a significant issue that we need to be addressing.

We also talked about the effects of cattle going across the border and enough officers—in fact, borders that recognize the fact that we do need to increase the handling facilities, the testing that needs to go forward in order to get these cattle through in a timely fashion. In fact, we know that the number of crossings that are there aren't enough. We understand there are some 63 loads of cattle a day that are going across the border. If you do the math on that, that's not going to get the cattle across in time to handle the border crossings that we need, to certainly see that, in fact, do make sure that we get those cattle across in a timely manner.

So we also have asked the minister in regard to the Young Farmer Rebate program. This was announced quite some time ago. In fact, it hasn't been put into place. The deadline is coming very close again, and we're waiting for the minister to re-announce this. The maximum has now gone from, I believe, \$50,000 to \$150,000, and we certainly need to make sure that that money does, in fact, flow to those young farmers. We have a large number of farmers—in fact, 50 percent of our farmers over the next 10 years are going to be retiring. So the next generation of farmers is going to make sure they're there to take over and succeed on some of these farms that are going to, indeed, be retiring over the next 10 to 15 years, the succession plan, in fact, that would be there in order to sustain that important sector of our economy within the province of Manitoba.

We did talk briefly before about the new APF programs. There are four programs and the Growing Forward program that's been brought forward by the federal government and discussed by the Agriculture ministers. We are not sure of the details on those that haven't been worked out. The Minister of Agriculture (Ms. Wowchuk) has not, in fact, tabled this for us. I know that she said she's met with the different farm organizations, but if they are flawed, we need to make sure that those, in fact, are ready and discussed properly so that when our producers do, in fact, go to the bankers, that they are indeed predictable, and they are, in fact, bankable as well.

I know the Manure Management program that came out just a couple of weeks ago and also the regulations with respect to water certainly have not been tabled yet. We have to make sure that there's going to be money set aside for those producers in order to make sure that these regulations can, in fact, be sustained within that industry. The manure management, I know some of the qualifications that came through that they were asking to be tabled in that report certainly are flawed as well. I know I've had not one complaint since being the Agriculture critic for the past three and a half years about the disposal of manure. I'm somewhat surprised that, in fact, the management report called for further regulations, further investigation into that particular area.

We talk about the importance of growing rural Manitoba. We look at the farms; they're getting bigger and bigger, and they're just pushing the smaller producers out. There are certainly not going

to be enough of these young producers. In fact, that's the backbone; we know that's the backbone of all industries. We have a large number of small businesses within Manitoba. We have a large number of small producers, but in order for them to be able to be sustainable, they're going to have to make sure they are, in fact, profitable. Whenever we do that, we have to make sure that when these regulations are coming forward, that we do have enough money put in place that they can, in fact, adhere by those regulations.

When we talk about wind energy within the province of Manitoba, they brought that forward a couple of years ago. In fact, my friend Denis Rocan from St. Leon area, the first wind farm that was brought forward at that time. There have been a number—I believe there are 29 proposals that are sitting on the table, waiting for the government's decision in order to decide which ones are going to be going next, in fact, if and when they will be going next.

I know that the use of agricultural land is also very important. We need to make sure that we do these projects on land that's marginal basis rather than high-value land. I know the marginal land certainly makes more sense to me on this particular issue because, in fact, it does increase the tax base for municipalities. It increases the income for those producers that have very marginal land and very high input costs. The municipalities that do collect dollars off this revenue are also very important. In fact, we have a proposal in St. Laurent—just one of them in my area—that's been brought forward. There are half a dozen. I know with the assessment just in St. Laurent, wind farm proposal would almost double their assessment just in that particular municipality. So significant impact, significant economy for our smaller communities, and that's another way of growing rural Manitoba.

I know the government looked at legislation back in 2003 and told us that we had to move very quickly on this initiative on biofuels and ethanol, and yet we've seen no growth in that area. They talk about Minnedosa and they talk about five other plants that they've brought forward, but it's nothing sustainable that's of any magnitude. We look at what Saskatchewan has done in the time lines that they've been under as well in that same short time period. They have tripled and doubled their production both in biofuels and in ethanol and certainly have left Manitoba back once again.

We talk about rural Manitoba in order to grow our rural economy. We have to have sound infrastructure. I know the number of smaller communities that have to have that infrastructure in place in order for them to be able to attract new businesses, in order for them to be able to have the infrastructure in place, the sewer, the water, the hockey rinks, the curling rinks, all those initiatives that make a community strong and vibrant, Madam Deputy Speaker.

I think that one of the other things we have to look at is the biodiesel. It has probably the most significant impact within the province of Manitoba, as far as making it grow and prosper. I think that one of the issues that we're not seeing there is the government has been putting up road blocks rather than encouraging more biofuel growth within the province of Manitoba. Certainly, we've met with a number of those people that want to invest in Manitoba, but yet they have not had the development plans approved by the government in order to get that project—in fact, any of those projects up and running of any sizable nature.

We also feel we need more broadband Internet service within rural communities. That's also a very important issue. We need to make sure that we can't ignore either. I certainly feel that a number of those issues that we've been talking about as far as encouraging outside the capital region—in fact, those that are within the other communities have to be looked at in order for them to be sustainable. I know our grocery stores use Internet ordering. They have a number of programs that they use. In fact, I know in my own personal issue, as far as business is concerned, I was fortunate enough to have Internet service within my business. We tied in with a number of our suppliers in order to make sure that we were, in fact, very competitive. That's something we need to look at for a number of our communities in order to ensure they are on the same level playing field.

*(15:20)

I do want to talk about, also, the lack of input as far as the seniors are concerned. I know my seniors within the communities of Teulon, Stonewall, Lorette, Lundar and others have those services in place for our seniors, the homes in which they're able to stay in their own communities. We have a community in Lakeside that has been underbedded for a number of years. In fact, we've been asking time and time again for the government to move

forward on these particular issues for our seniors in those areas. It's very difficult for them. A number of those elderly people, in fact a number of them in rural Manitoba, a lot of them don't have licences, both husband and wife, so it's very stressful for them to be uprooted and taken out of their community.

I also wanted to just make reference to the hydro projects referred to as the daffy hydro detour and the money that's been proposed to be spent there. If we just look at what that money could do for the province of Manitoba. In fact, the government's talked about how much money it's going to make and it's going to be a win-win. But the part they're missing is that the money, if you don't spend it all you just get it back that much quicker. Rather than have a 20-year mortgage or 100-year mortgage or 150-year mortgage, if you cut those costs, that will make money be back to be able to spend on our schools, spent on our infrastructure, spent on our communities, which make our place a better place to live for both our children and our grandchildren.

In closing, I just want to make sure that the government understands that we, in fact, cannot support the Throne Speech. We brought forward those reasons in an amendment to the Throne Speech. In fact, we'll be looking forward to the vote on that in the next couple of days. So, with that, Madam Deputy Speaker—I see my light's flashing—we certainly want to thank the House for this opportunity and the people of Lakeside for being able to put these few comments on the record.

Mr. Bidhu Jha (Radisson): I rise to put a few words on the record about the Throne Speech read by our Lieutenant-Governor on November 20, 2007.

This is the beginning of my fifth year as a member of this Legislature and this great institution where we all gather to debate and make laws, rules and regulations for making our society better and keep our responsibilities to our constituents. This Chamber offers us opportunities to bring forth new ideas to create new acts so that our society keeps improving the quality of life of our citizens.

Madam Deputy Speaker, I thank the people of Radisson who gave me their support once again with a much larger margin than in 2003. I am humbled by their trust and confidence in me.

Let me share with some of you my personal experience as a member of the great community, Radisson. In a way, Radisson is a modern constituency representing our Canadian values.

Canada, our country I call God's country on this earth, is unique. So is my constituency, Radisson. It's a bilingual constituency with French and English as dominant spoken languages. Windsor Park is home to many French Canadians who have extended their full support to me, and I thank them from all my heart.

Having said that, Madam Deputy Speaker, Radisson is also the home of people from diverse ethnicity, different religions, languages and cultures. Radisson constituents include people from countries such as the U.K., France, Germany, Russia, Ukraine, Czechoslovakia, Poland, Ireland, many European countries, China, India, Philippines, Pakistan and many Asian and African nations. In fact, I would say that we are truly a small global village here in our city of Winnipeg. I am proud to be part of this great community called Radisson.

Let me also share with you altogether a different experience and a feeling which has some basis of truth, but I would say this is based on old conservative thinking, which I'm not surprised, Madam Deputy Speaker. I remember, just after being elected in 2003, a lot of my friends from the U.S. and overseas congratulated me and asked me a typical question as to the ethnicity of my constituency. Indo-Canadian media in Canada, as we left from India, interviewed me, and the first question was, what is the percentage of my voters who are of colour and ethnicity? As sociological phenomena I kind of expected this kind of question.

I answered and said, no, Radisson is not a predominantly ethnic and minority constituency, and that Indo-Canadians in Radisson represent hardly 3 percent of demographic counts. Madam Deputy Speaker, I said, no, my friends, it was not an ethnic issue that got me elected. Yes, my friends, Radisson elected me as a New Democrat. Yes, I belong to a party, to a movement where separating and dividing of communities does not exist, where we work together as part of a large family, as one race, human race. My colleague from The Maples made that statement in the support of this resolution that it is over 300 years back when Guru Gobind Singh Ji made a statement: The human race is the only race, and we are all the same.

Madam Deputy Speaker, I belong to the party of Tommy Douglas, whose strong message is still my personal religious reading. A poster developed, by the way, by the Member for Brandon East (Mr. Caldwell) hangs on my doors, on our doors, I should

say, which reads very clearly: Courage, my friends. It is not too late to build a better world.

I believe to see this slogan is to see the mantra of my personal commitment in energy, and this is the motivation that keeps me going, a party whose ideals are based on social justice and equality system, a party who believes in our universal health-care systems, a party who believes in equal opportunities for all where exploitations of the weak by the mighty is not permitted, where discrimination of people on race, religion and creed and personal wealth is not accepted, where we treat all human beings with the same degree of dignity that we treat our own selves.

Yes, Madam Deputy Speaker, I am fortunate to be a member of this party, which I had values as a child when I was growing up, was taught similar values based on the philosophy of Hindu religion. I was taught in prayers every evening that my parents used to say, and those prayers read like this: Let God lead us from darkness to the light. Let all human beings be healthy and happy. Let all be in good spirits, and that all people of this world are part of a small family, because the philosophy looks at the universe and beyond the universe. So we have been very humble from childhood to understand this. But when you look at our own values in terms of our lives, health is an extremely important aspect of living. I take a huge satisfaction in this aspect when I look at the whole idea of universal health care, was inspired by the great leader called Tommy Douglas, who was declared the greatest Canadian by the majority of Canadians.

So, Madam Deputy Speaker, I talk about universal health care, the Canadian way, not American ways, where even today over 44 million citizens have no access to any health care. This is sad for humanity, where the world's largest, most powerful country spends trillions of dollars to make killing machines, yet their own citizens and millions are left in the cold without medical help. Shame on them. Shame on them.

No, no. Canadians and Manitobans don't need that kind of system. We need universal medical health care.

Yes, Radisson elected me because of our beliefs, our commitment on health care, education, environment, social justice and all of our policies which has made Manitoba a better place to live.

Madam Deputy Speaker, I know we have been discussing several issues the last few days, and I'm

really sorry to say how literally every move by the members opposite suggests just one thing: money. No doubt it is very important to have money and create wealth, but there has to be a purpose of creating of that wealth. I do not want a society where we do things which are only good for a few of us and really only short-lived. We don't see the future. That's not my personal thinking. I don't want to see the world left in darkness for our future generations. So it is critical for us as parents, grandparents, citizens, politicians, lawmakers to see how we leave the world behind, which is safe for human living with no sufferings of any kind.

* (15:30)

That leads us to the debate on the environment, Madam Deputy Speaker. This is crystal clear that there exist differences between the Conservatives and ourselves. Looking at Mr. Harper's position on Kyoto, it is obvious where he comes from and where we come from. I'm proud that our Premier (Mr. Doer) and Leader of Manitoba NDP made history by being recognized as the world leader on climate change strategy.

Ms. Marilyn Brick, Acting Speaker, in the Chair.

This was done not by, as they would classify as a left-wing party magazine, but, Madam Acting Speaker, this was done by the world's No. 1 business magazine called *BusinessWeek*, which recognized our Premier and our province on climate change to be one of the best in the world.

Now, let us talk about small business. Radisson is also the home of literally hundreds of small businesses which are the backbone of our economy, Manitoba's economy. We thrive on economic contributions by Manitoba's small-business community. I believe, Madam Acting Speaker, when members from the opposition benches jokingly comment that how can a businessman be on NDP benches, I laugh. Believe me, this is their ignorance by our wonderful friends. They do not understand that I have joined NDP because of the ideals of this party. I think there are hundreds of people much more successful than me, 10 times, or maybe 100 times wealthier than me, that they also support our party ideals because this is the ideal very close to our human heart. I can say with hopes that Manitoba might be coloured orange for the next 20 years, primarily because of our move toward the socialist responsibility and our commitments to improve the quality of life of all citizens.

I share with you this afternoon my experience of '99 election when I ran in Fort Whyte. Now, this is something very interesting for me to share. The constituency with the Leader of the Opposition (Mr. McFadyen) had been elected. By the way, I was a bit concerned about his victory when I was looking at the elections last time that a low-profile NDP member got very, very close to 3,000 or more than that votes. I was a little scared before I finally found out that the Leader of the Opposition had been declared elected.

Well, let me tell you, my friends, the Fort Whyte revolution that started in '99 when I was a candidate in that riding, which was written off, and I was dared by a lot of people, saying, while door knocking, how dare you put an NDP sign on my lawn? How dare you put an NDP sign on the boulevard? I must tell you, my friends here, that one afternoon when I was knocking on doors, I saw Mr. Loewen, who is now, by the way, fed up with this party and joined the Liberals. He was the candidate of the Conservatives at that time. We were walking and I saw him on the other side and I was this side. So I knocked on the door of the house. The gentleman was nice. He opened the door, recognized me because he had bought a work station from my company at one time, so he let me in. I went and he started talking. He was perhaps thinking that I was canvassing for Mr. Loewen. He then started asking me questions and I said, well, listen, I am an NDP candidate. He said, what? You're an NDP candidate? Get out. Then, he was furious. He was furious.

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Jha: Listen, my friend, you will be ashamed of your clapping after you hear the part of the story.

Then, I started saying [*inaudible*] and I was quiet. I said, no, sir. Sorry, it's your choice, but I'm an NDP candidate.

He said, you will do the following. You will drive businesses away from here. You will have enrolments at the universities and colleges down. You will harm; you will have no balanced budgets. You will destroy our economy. Now, here is what he said. Then he said: You will do everything that has been done by the Filmon and you will undo everything that—[*interjection*] Yes, we did. We undid lots of things which he did: destroyed medicare, fired nurses. We hired them back. We are rebuilding and we are making this province much better.

Now, he said, you are a small business owner. How do you support this party? By the way, the Member for Springfield (Mr. Schuler) should listen to this. I met this gentleman in one of the events. He came, shook hands with me, and he said, you were right. I said, sir, the small business tax, the second-lowest in Canada is right here in Manitoba, and by 2008, January, it will be the lowest in this country. The small business tax, I'm talking about. The small business tax.

So I think that this reflects the idea when people look at you and your ideals and then make you feel that you are not really a part of the economic development. I'm extremely pleased to see that our government not only has looked at the balanced approach of fixing health care by bringing doctors and nurses—and I have spoken so many times, my kids were thrown away from here; they left Manitoba, and I'm trying to bring them back. It's kind of late. But I also see immigrants coming in here in thousands. I see businesses prospering here. I see a lot of positive things going here. But I would like to share with all of my friends here that today's world is becoming very, very different. The technology and communications are making the world closer. So migration of the population from one country to another country may not happen that much. Having said that, we are still gaining more people through the nomination program that we have done.

But I think one of the things that we have developed is, our Premier spoke today on several times that we are doing trading. We are trading east, north, south, west. We are trading not only to America; we are trading in global, international trade. I am very pleased to again repeat that, in 2006, when I joined Premier Doer on a trade mission to India, it was one of the largest trade missions and a lot of success stories are coming out of that.

So we look at this kind of model, and we see why this government, which was supposed to be the fear of '99 in the minds of those that did think that we are—you guys are welfare promoters; you promote welfare; you hand out cheques. Absolutely, absolutely, opposed to that. We have delivered.

We have now inspired businesses, are really doing great. The Minister of Finance (Mr. Selinger) has said we have a credit rating by New York. It's not by a rural, small, little place somewhere that is unknown. Manitoba's rating is highest in the world-class institutions that are recognizing internationally,

are rating us to be a very, very safe place to invest. I would like to say that I am extremely proud to say one of the very, very large multibillion-dollar corporations from India has bought and invested in Manitoba. First time I was so happy to see a guy coming giving me a card. He says, I am representing that company, and I said, God, this is Crompton Greaves. Yes, we are now partners; we have acquired interest in a Manitoba company.

So we are becoming global. We are becoming international, which is very, very good for me to share with you, that why do we lead? I must say, we are calling investment heaven. Why do we think we should do that? Lowest energy costs and clean energy like hydro and wind power. Trained work force with very flexible and innovative institutions like Red River College. I had several discussions with the president of Red River College. He's a very smart man, a very visionary person. He told me that they can customize training programs in the institute if somebody wants to bring a business here. We have got that facility.

In 2008, we will have the lowest business tax in Canada. We also have people who come from other parts of the world to see the comfort of living. We have health care. We have a beautiful multicultural society where we speak over 100 languages in Manitoba; we are enjoying our festivals like Folklorama. To my friends in India, I invited them and I said, come and see a beautiful temple that has been built in Winnipeg, Dr. Raj Pandey Hindu Centre. We have a grand mosque for all my Muslim friends. We have a lot of gurdwaras for our Sikh friends. We have a lot of community churches and synagogues for our Christian and Jewish friends. We have a Buddhist church, which I have been fortunate to attend and participate in that function.

* (15:40)

We have a huge amount of social, community, religious comfort that is growing in Manitoba to make you a very comfortable living in this province. So people, investors, look at the safety of their investment and enjoyment of the quality of life. They will find it here.

On education, we have good education institutions. My colleague the Minister of Education (Mr. Bjornson) mentioned yesterday that Manitoba has the largest number of Rhodes Scholars, one of them also being my own son, and I have great pride that he became a Rhodes Scholar as a medical doctor. I think he was the first medical doctor in

Manitoba to get a Rhodes Scholarship, University of Manitoba graduate.

University of Winnipeg under Dr. Axworthy is doing extremely well. They're expanding. Red River College has grown to expand like we have talked about several times. I will not repeat it, that the endangered species are like cranes from high-rise buildings now are seen everywhere.

We are moving forward. We are going ahead in every direction that you would want to. We are not past in the sense that we are a small province. We are not Ontario, but our proportionate growth is far better. Our stable growth is far better. Our houses are getting now much higher prices. So Manitoba is becoming a province that I can bet that if this continues what we are doing it will be one of the best places in Canada to live.

Like the Minister of Justice (Mr. Chomiak) said, that a gentleman told him he can live either in California or Manitoba. I don't disagree with that kind of thinking. Yes, Manitoba has huge things to offer, and thanks to our party's ideals, thanks to our own thinking, we are moving forward. So I think that my election was based on the ideals, the values and the philosophy that we all as human beings enjoy.

In conclusion, Madam Acting Speaker, I'd like to mention a quotation from Mr. Woodrow Wilson. He said, I quote—*[interjection]* The Member for Springfield (Mr. Schuler) should perhaps give attention here. "A conservative is a man who . . . sits and thinks, mostly sits."

I say, Madam Acting Speaker, an NDPer is a person who does things; an NDPer is a person who is a doer, who looks ahead and moves forward, not back. Thank you.

Mr. Kelvin Goertzen (Steinbach): Well, thank you very much, Madam Acting Speaker. It's a pleasure to rise in the House today to respond to the Throne Speech of the government.

I first of all want to begin by recognizing the new pages who are joining us here for this session. I had the opportunity to meet and speak personally with some of them, always impressed by not only the academic credentials of those pages who come and join us here in the Legislature, but of course the personal fortitude of many of them and the individual stories that they have in this particular point of their young life. I know that I speak for all members when I say we look forward to getting to

know them more personally as this session unwinds and as we go into the new year.

Also, with my first opportunity to speak to the Throne Speech in a significant way, I'd also like to recognize the table officers who are back with us for this session. We've relied on their advice many times, certain past roles I've relied on their advice and continue to as a member of the Legislature, recognize also especially the re-election of Mr. Speaker who continues to do a good job. I think I speak for all members when I say he continues to have the confidence of this House and his managing of affairs here, which is not always an easy task of managing affairs here well.

I appreciated some of the comments from the Member for Radisson (Mr. Jha), certainly didn't agree with the vast majority of them. I noticed he decided to take somewhat of a personal shot at our current Prime Minister, Prime Minister Harper. This must be bash Prime Minister Harper day because I know, when you look at the New Democrats, they do seem to go between different days from when they're saying that Mr. Harper is doing a good job and they're having an easier time working with the Prime Minister than they were with other previous governments, particularly the Liberal administration who ruled Canada for many years, and then you hear comments like that from the Member for Radisson who says, we don't want to emulate the Prime Minister.

I suppose it must be nice to have it both ways, to on one day say we don't support the Prime Minister and on the next day say that we do support the Prime Minister. I know that consistency isn't a virtue that the members of the New Democratic Party often hold, but I would certainly encourage them to try to pick a position, try to pick a spot to land on, and try to stick with that.

Certainly, we believe on this side of the House, Madam Acting Speaker, that there are many good things that are happening federally. There are many, I think, reforms, institutions that we look forward to seeing happen. We've heard about some of them more recently and we look forward to seeing what is held in store from that government in Ottawa who are doing things new and doing things differently and have the support, at this point, of the plurality of the voters in Canada.

I do want to speak specifically on the issues as it relates to my constituency in the Throne Speech. I must say that I'm disappointed again with the short

attention that this Throne Speech gave to those who are living in rural southern Manitoba. It's as though this government over the last number of years has taken a marker and drawn a line along the Trans-Canada Highway and anything south of the Trans-Canada Highway, south of Winnipeg, isn't as important as other regions of the province.

I know that that draws a guffaw from the Minister of Education (Mr. Bjornson). He's not exempt from this particular criticism. In fact, I would say the Minister of Education bears a strong responsibility for this. Those who are in my region—it's a growing region of the province in the community of the city of Steinbach, of the R.M. of Hanover and also of the town of Niverville—have lobbied for many years for a new school, a new high school in that particular area, and it's fallen on deaf ears.

On the one hand, the Premier (Mr. Doer) says in Question Period, well, we're trying to govern for all areas of the province. But it doesn't seem to work that way when it comes to high schools or middle schools for the community of Steinbach, for the R.M. of Hanover, which is, in fact, bearing much of the benefits, but also the responsibilities of trying to welcome immigrants into the province, whether it's a growing Filipino community in the city of Steinbach or whether it's German immigrants who are coming into the R.M. of Hanover. They need a place to be educated. They need a place to have a strong education and that's not happening because of the overcrowding.

The elementary school not far from where I live, just a couple of blocks, I believe, has six, possibly eight huts on it. Now, already many of them have to go to gym facilities at churches nearby because there isn't enough space in their gym facility. So they have to go and have that programming done in other areas. Yet the Minister of Education hasn't seen fit to hear the concerns of these residents. He doesn't believe that it's a priority for him or for his government. So that was absent from the Throne Speech. Again, that particular area is being ignored.

When you look at infrastructure, when it comes to highways, I know I'm not supposed to mention or reference the attendance or the lack of attendance of ministers in the Chamber, but I'm glad to see that the minister of highways has joined us so that I can explain to him some of the needs, Madam Acting Speaker, for the highways in the growing region of Steinbach-Hanover and in Niverville.

The Minister of Finance (Mr. Selinger) was in the region for a pre-budget meeting not too long ago. As part of that, he had a bit of a slide show, and he tried to show what the investments that were happening in the region were. When he got to highways, the one that he highlighted was the repaving—it might even have been micro-repaving—of an intersection on Highway No. 311. That's the only thing in seven years that this Minister of Finance could put up on the board.

Where there are needs when it comes to Highway No. 12, other highways in the region, the only thing that the Minister of Finance could highlight after seven years was a few thousand dollars of pavement on one intersection of one small provincial road in what is really one of the fastest-growing regions of all the province. *[interjection]*

* (15:50)

Well, I hear the Minister of Finance talk about the 1990s. I would remind him, because he wasn't here. The Minister of Finance wasn't here when this comment was made. I was here in a different capacity, but I remember hearing the now Minister of Aboriginal Affairs, the Member for The Pas (Mr. Lathlin) saying this in *Hansard*. He said, in 1997, I believe it was, that if we don't spend one nickel on roads in southern Manitoba when we're in government those people won't suffer for five years. Those were the comments from the Minister of—the Aboriginal Affairs—the minister from The Pas, said that if they didn't spend a nickel on roads in southern Manitoba for five years that those people wouldn't suffer. I'd be happy to provide the quote for any of the members opposite so they can see that that's probably actually one promise that this government was close to keeping because they really didn't spend much money on southern roads for their first five years or even moving into the latter part of their mandate.

So let none of those members opposite, I know they sometimes like to throw back quotes. Let none of them think that they are beyond reproach on this issue because that was their position when they were in opposition and it hasn't improved much since they've been in government. So the next time the Minister of Finance comes to the region for a pre-budget meeting—I might mention this was his first in seven years, the only one he's ever been to in the city of Steinbach—

An Honourable Member: You didn't have any pre-budget meetings during the '90s.

Mr. Goertzen: The only one he's been to in the city of Steinbach—*[interjection]* The only one he's been to in the city of Steinbach—

An Honourable Member: The only one you've attended.

Mr. Goertzen: One in the city of Steinbach. Next time he comes to the city of Steinbach, Madam Acting Speaker, I look forward to having a broader announcement and not to ignore those regions.

You know, when it comes to the issues of Health, I heard the Minister of Health (Ms. Oswald) chirping from her seat about a recent announcement, which I applauded, on the expansion of the ER for the Steinbach hospital, an announcement that—I might add that a number of different groups, certainly not limited to myself, but the city of Steinbach, there are councillors, the regional councillors have been saying that they needed this for the last number of years. I'll certainly—*[interjection]*

I hear the Minister of Water Stewardship (Ms. Melnick) talking. She's doing so little in the province it's hard for me to criticize what she's doing because she's doing so little, but I'll get to her yet.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Marilyn Brick): Order. I'm having trouble hearing the speaker, so just a reminder to all members to give the speaker some attention.

Mr. Goertzen: I could speak up if I needed to, Madam Acting Speaker.

The Minister of Health, you know, it's a bit like focussing on a drop of rain when you've had seven years of drought. That's really what she likes to do when it comes to the city of Steinbach. That's a region that has grown by 30 to 40 percent over the last number of years. Finally, she provides the resources to that region which they deserve and which they need just to make the ER up to the current capacity. She says, well, look, now I must be done, I've done my work here, and she sort of wipes her hands. But it's only a small start, Madam Acting Speaker. If you look at the waiting times at the ER at the Bethesda Hospital in Steinbach, they are much longer than any other region in all of Manitoba. The reason that they're longer is because of that growth.

The Minister of Health is apparently blissfully unaware of the fact that the waiting times for surgeries are much higher at Bethesda than in other

regions. I provided her actually those statistics in Estimates, and I don't mind giving them to her again if she didn't read them the first time. But I certainly think, Madam Acting Speaker, it's important that they recognize that this is a critical region and that the redevelopment of the operating rooms in the Bethesda needs to be the next thing that happens. I would have loved to have heard that in the Throne Speech. I would have loved to have heard that announcement. But, of course, it's a region of the province that this government doesn't want to pay attention to, not just, of course, the southeast, but really, I think all of southern Manitoba they've simply eliminated from the map; it's not important for them; they've just dropped it off of the agenda.

I did have the opportunity to hear the Member for Minto (Mr. Swan) when he was responding to the Throne Speech. He talked about some of the issues related to Justice. He used metaphors, I think, also intertwined with football, because of the recent Grey Cup and some of the excitement that's happening here, or was happening here in Manitoba as a result of that. But I think in many ways he fumbled the ball when he was looking at some of the issues related to Justice and what happened in the past election. In particular, I know that the Member for Minto put on the record, the public record, his opposition to building more jail spaces here in the province of Manitoba. He said he didn't think it was necessary, thought it was only looking at one part of the picture. Isn't that interesting? Here you have a government who likes to talk tough on this particular issue, likes to say that they're going to get tough on criminals, and yet they don't want to ensure that those spaces are available so that when our police make an arrest, when our prosecutors go forward with the charge and get the conviction, that there really aren't spaces, or judges in many cases, and are forced to let these individuals back onto the street.

I mean, when you look at Headingley institution in Manitoba, it's to the point right now where, once one prisoner comes in the front door, another one has to pop out the back because of that overcapacity at that institution. During the election, we talked about the need for an additional facility, but not simply, not simply about having more spaces in that jail to ensure that those who are committing crimes are getting appropriate sentences for those crimes, but also to make it a therapeutic drug prison, Madam Acting Speaker, to ensure that those who have committed crimes as a result of their addiction would get the kind of treatment that they needed in prison,

so you simply didn't have prisoners coming in and then going out and recommitting those crimes.

This is a government that likes to talk tough on justice, but they simply don't deliver. When there are innovative ideas that are brought forward to try to reduce crime, to try to stop the recidivism rate, they don't seem to want to listen. They seem to think they know best on that and every other issue.

I did have the opportunity in the summer after the election to visit a prison outside of Chicago that is the largest therapeutic drug prison in the United States where they're taking individuals in. About 1,200 is the capacity of that prison. They're putting them through a two-year drug prison program. The recidivism rate there has dropped in half in that prison as compared to any other prison in Illinois, specifically because they're doing that sort of treatment. Yet, when you have innovative ideas that are brought forward, whether it's in health care or justice or any other area, this government says, we're not going to listen because it's not our idea. We're going to dismiss that idea. We're not going to give it the sort of credence or sort of discussion that we'd like.

There was a discussion by the Member for Minto (Mr. Swan) regarding the police recruitment and the need for a police college in Manitoba. You know, here we see a specific need to have training, to have standards put in place for those various police forces across Manitoba, and the Member for Minto says, well, it's something that we wouldn't even consider. You know, it would be an affront; it would be a criticism of the municipal police forces that we have here in the province.

I would direct his attention to other jurisdictions like Edmonton or like Alberta and Calgary where they decided that they wanted to have a police centre, where they wanted to have a police recruitment and training centre. They got those jurisdictions together. They got the city of Calgary, they got the city of Edmonton, which were each doing their own training, to come together and to look at a police recruitment and a police training centre. But the Member for Minto says, well, it's not something that we would look at. It's not something that we'd want to do.

He dismisses the fact that the city of Winnipeg, that other municipal police forces across Manitoba might benefit from that sort of a police college like Alberta has benefited from theirs. They work co-operatively. I know working co-operatively is a new

sort of feeling for the Member for Minto or for other members of the government, but you can work together. You can have people come into a room together and say, how is it that we can get this project going to make it better so that all of the police in this province benefit from that?

The other issue that the member took issue with, of course, is how the appointment of judges is done and how it might be done differently. I know that when it comes to change in the justice system, the members opposite, the Member for Minto leading the way in this regard, say, we don't want to have any changes in this system. We think it's perfect exactly the way it is despite the fact that Manitobans would look at the system and say that there are those who aren't getting appropriate sentences. There are those who aren't getting arrested and ensuring that they're getting appropriate sentences. There are those who are working throughout this system who aren't getting what we believe would be the appropriate resources to put criminals in jail. Despite all of that, the Member for Minto says, no, we think things are perfect in the system. We don't want to change it. We like it exactly the way it is. To the extent that there are any changes that need to be made, they're not our responsibility; they're the federal government's responsibility.

To use a football analogy that the Member for Minto would bring you forward, that's a punt. They like to punt the issue of justice over to the federal government at any opportunity to say it must be somebody else who's responsible; there's nothing that we can do.

* (16:00)

That's certainly unfortunate because I think that the Member for Minto does himself a disservice, because I believe that if he was honest with himself, he would know that there are many new and creative things that could be done. He could be part of that change. He could be part of improving the justice system as opposed to just saying, there's nothing that we can do. But I know he feels obligated to simply go forward and repeat the government line and to repeat what's being said by his Premier (Mr. Doer) and repeat what's being said by others in his government. He feels that he can't break out of that shell, can't bring forward his own ideas, but I think that's unfortunate. It's not something that does him a service or certainly anybody else.

When it comes to the issue of recruiting officers, I know I heard the Member for Minto say that he was

at a graduation of police officers, and certainly we always wish those officers well. We know that there are many dangers that they perform in their job, and this government continues to underestimate the need that we have for police officers, and so leaves us with little—

An Honourable Member: Support the budget.

Mr. Goertzen: Well, we finally hear the Minister for Water Stewardship (Ms. Melnick) ask questions like, why don't we support a budget that underfunds our police. Well, why would we support a budget that underfunds our police? It doesn't give the resources it needs to those particular—why would we come forward and say, this is as good as it can be when we know that it could be better, when we know that our police need more, when we know that they're asking for more? We certainly wouldn't support a budget that doesn't do due service to those who each and every day are putting their lives on the line.

But there's another play in football that's called a fake. Of course, when it comes to faking things for the Manitoba public, for Manitobans, this government does it very well. On the one hand, they say that there are more police coming into the system, that there are more resources coming into the system, and yet every time we do due diligence and do our checking, we find that there are shortages. There continue to be shortages in this system. So they're saying one thing to Manitobans when, in fact, it's not the case; it's not what's happening on the street.

So I would ask the Member for Minto (Mr. Swan), I know he feels he has a certain duty and obligation within the context of his role to follow everything that his government says. I would encourage him to look beyond that and to use some of his own fortitude. In fact, I know his seatmate here in the Legislature, the new Member for Fort Rouge (Ms. Howard) more recently—*[interjection]* Well, I'm glad that they're happy to hear this. The Member for Fort Rouge recently went against her government and brought forward a resolution here in the House. It was directly opposite to the position that her government has taken when it comes to certain areas of health care, and so there's precedent. There's obviously precedent here in the House set by the Member for Fort Rouge, and you can speak against your government. Well, there may have been repercussions; there may have been some sort of a punishment for that. But I'm glad to see that she has taken that lead, and I'm sure that others could as well.

There are many things, Madam Acting Speaker, that one could go through the Throne Speech and find missing, omissions, that there are places that weren't addressed, many critical areas for Manitobans. But I know that there are others who want to speak, who want to point out those omissions, whether they are members of our party or others, any independent members who want to bring those forward. I look forward to hearing those.

But I would say, in conclusion, that those members opposite who don't believe that it's worth investing into areas of southern Manitoba, that it's not worth investing into ridings which they don't currently represent and which they feel that they might not be able to represent in the future, that, in fact, regardless of who's in government, whether it's a Conservative government or New Democratic government or even a Liberal government, you truly are elected to represent all the different regions.

This idea of punishing certain areas, of the idea of punishment politics, just doesn't hold up to the standard of office that Manitobans would expect all their government leaders to bring forward. You can't simply eliminate the concerns of one area of the province, one region of the province, because you don't believe that you're going to have electoral success there. You have to know that what's good for regions that are growing—even if you don't represent those areas, even if you don't hold those seats—if it's good for those areas, it'll benefit other areas of the province as well, and they simply need to look at a broader perspective. They simply need to look at an approach that won't be a punishment sort of approach to politics, but one that will benefit all Manitobans, recognizing that it'll make each of us stronger.

So, with those words, Madam Acting Speaker, I look forward to hearing the comments of my colleagues and other members of this Legislature.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Marilyn Brick): Before recognizing the honourable Member for Wellington, I just want to remind all honourable members that I have to make rulings on language. So, just if we could keep the noise level somewhat more muted, that would be much appreciated.

Ms. Flor Marcelino (Wellington): Madam Acting Speaker, it is with great joy that I stand today in this august Chamber to speak in favour of this year's Throne Speech.

There are several major investments in key priority areas that are addressed in the

Throne Speech, but I wish to touch on one of the top priorities of this government, which is health care, on which it has a remarkable record of achievements.

Madam Acting Speaker, I will need a day of speaking in this House if I were to speak on all of these areas because this government's accomplishments in all these areas are humongous. So, because I was told to only speak for 10 minutes, I would be brief, although I really wanted to shout with joy all the accomplishments of this government.

Madam Acting Speaker, this government has taken seriously its duty to ensure that universal access to health care—The Health Care Act, by the way, is very dear to my heart and to so many people I know. Individually and collectively, we have been touched by the improved health-care services in Manitoba. I can speak with conviction and certainty on this topic. When I was hospitalized at the Health Sciences Centre, which, by the way, is in the Wellington constituency—

An Honourable Member: You're getting a new hospital.

Ms. Marcelino: Oh, yes, coming—for a critical brain surgery, I saw how medical practitioners carried out their tasks with great care and competence. Daily our health-care practitioners are doing heroic acts unbeknownst to them.

Ms. Bonnie Korzeniowski, Deputy Speaker, in the Chair

Madam Deputy Speaker, improving health care for Manitobans, as we all know and as the voters of Manitoba know by now, remains a top priority for our government. Since 1999, significant steps have been taken to address the impacts of the prior decade's health cuts by expanding the education and hiring of health professionals.

Speaking of education for health professionals, last month I was at this Philippine nurses' dinner and dance. I was so pleased to see several of the registered nurses who are now working for our hospitals and our care homes here in the province. They were the very students whom I had administered the tests to. They were taking their upgrade courses at Red River College.

Mr. Speaker in the Chair

In that same party, I know several BSN graduates of U of M, children, daughters, sons of many friends. I also saw several practitioners who worked for personal care homes in the city. I was so

proud that they're contributing, Mr. Speaker, to the human resource component of our health-care field.

* (16:10)

Besides more training spaces that are added to Manitoba's universities and colleges, there will be soon a primary care paramedic program to be introduced at Red River College. Also, Mr. Speaker, more dieticians, respiratory therapists and occupational therapists are to be added as part of a long-term strategy to improve quality of care for seniors. We love our seniors and we want to give them the best care in their years. We want them to enjoy their years.

Also, there'll be a new hospital for Selkirk. Where's our Selkirk guy? You should be happy, Mr. Selkirk guy. Also, there'll be new operating facilities at Ste. Anne Hospital. Also, redevelopment of the emergency ward at Steinbach's Bethesda hospital. There are also additional dialysis treatment facilities to be added in Winnipeg, Gimli and in the First Nations communities of Berens River, Norway House and Peguis.

This is very exciting. Consultations will begin on constructing a new Women's Hospital at the Health Sciences Centre. Also, a new south-end birthing centre to be managed by the Women's Health Clinic. This government truly recognizes the need of women population of this province. As well, the redevelopment of the maternity ward at St. Boniface General Hospital. Also, there'll be a new MRI and a cardiac catheterization lab at the Children's Hospital. When I was for my weekly MRI schedule at the hospital, it used to be children were also assigned to that same facility, but with this new MRI and a cardiac catheterization at the Children's Hospital, these infants and children will be given the best care—[interjection]

Oh, I'm sorry. Just one more. A new asthma and allergy clinic for children at the Health Sciences Centre and a new pediatric ophthalmology program at the Health Sciences Centre.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mrs. Myrna Driedger (Charleswood): I'm very pleased to have the opportunity to rise today to respond to the Throne Speech. I feel it is an honour and a privilege to have this opportunity to speak on behalf of the people of Charleswood. At this point in time, I would like to acknowledge and thank the people of Charleswood for their confidence in electing me again in this fourth election that I've run,

and I would like to indicate to them that I will continue to work very hard on their behalf. I remain committed and passionate to what I do in my job, and I will continue to be available to my constituents and to work very hard on their behalf. I am, indeed, grateful to my community, and I am honoured to represent them. I certainly enjoy living in Charleswood, and I enjoy the interactions I have there with all of our constituents.

I would also like to welcome back to the House all honourable members and to welcome the new members that have been newly elected in this last election. I would also like to welcome back the table officers and the pages, and I wish them a great experience, and also to the Sergeant-at-Arms. For everybody's great work and commitment to what they do in this House, I think we are all very, very grateful. To you, Mr. Speaker, I would also like to say that I certainly appreciate your patience and your fairness in dealing with all of us in this Legislature.

Certainly, Mr. Speaker, when we look at this Throne Speech, it's interesting to address what the public has said about it, and it is interesting to note that there wasn't a whole lot of enthusiasm that was brought forward after this Throne Speech. In fact, this was probably one of the more lacklustre feelings that prevailed after the Throne Speech. Certainly, when we went out into the rotunda, there wasn't the kind of excitement that I can recall hearing in past Throne Speeches. According to the *Free Press*, they certainly indicated that this Throne Speech was particularly underwhelming, and I think that was a general feeling across the board from many people, a lot of the media plus a lot of the other groups that were here to hear the Throne Speech that day.

As the *Free Press* went on to say, it's tough to pick out one or two driving issues that have captured this government's imagination. That is particularly true. As we've seen now after eight years of governing, they seem to be either in neutral or certainly sputtering. There are a few sparks here or there, but nothing dramatic and certainly not enough to drive this province forward and to take us out of the most embarrassing spot of being the only have-not province left in western Canada.

When Saskatchewan is running on all cylinders and they're leaving us in the dust on so many issues, it certainly was something that we expected more from this government in this Throne Speech, and that was to put us on a sound economic track so that we, indeed, could become what everybody else has

strived for and set a goal towards and that is, becoming a have-province. But we're being left in the dust. We are now in the same boat as a lot of the Maritime provinces, and we are not able to deliver for our citizens what the citizens of Manitoba deserve.

In fact, the *Free Press* went on to say that this government is spread pretty thin right now on policy. That was certainly something that I think, you know, as I said, most of us certainly felt. One place where they should have been more on the ball would certainly have been around environmental issues, but as we saw this week, on a number of environmental issues, this government has dropped in its rating to an F+. So they are not doing more than putting forward a lot of rhetoric and not really putting forward the kind of policies that would improve this government's green policy, if one can use those words. In fact, according to the *Free Press* reporter who did go on to say, he said the emission promise in the Throne Speech to get Manitoba to 2000 emission levels by 2010 looks more like a public relations sleight of hand than a bold gesture.

There were some sleights of hand in this Throne Speech; there's no doubt about that. In fact, as it was pointed out by the *Winnipeg Sun*, there were some numbers that certainly didn't add up. According to the Throne Speech and according to this Premier (Mr. Doer), Manitoba had the third-highest job growth among the provinces over the past year. In fact, if one goes on to read what this particular journalist had to say, he went on to, again, talk about one aspect or one quote from the Throne Speech that says we've also had the most stable economy in Canada over the past eight years when the NDP government won government in 1999. But what the reporter says is he suspected that nobody's ever going to check up on this and that this government just made it up in hope everybody believes it.

He went on to say that this Throne Speech's glowing yet misleading version of Manitoba's job record probably explains why there was virtually nothing in the Throne Speech legislative blueprint to help jolt Manitoba out of its economic slumber. He goes on to say that, according to the provincial government's own statistical agency, Manitoba placed seventh out of 10 provinces in job growth last year, not third as this Premier claimed. The number of jobs in Manitoba grew 1.2 percent in 2006, well below the national average of 1.9 percent, according to the Manitoba Bureau of Statistics. In fact, Manitoba ranked seventh, eighth, and ninth in job

growth over the past four years among the provinces and well below the national average each year.

Well, Mr. Speaker, when one really looks at the actual facts rather than the misleading information that was put forward in the Throne Speech, it does not look like Manitoba is doing that good. In fact, we're tied for last with Newfoundland in job growth. That, unfortunately, is not much to boast about. Yet, in the Throne Speech, we have got the Premier of this province reporting that Manitoba is experiencing an economic boom. We see that kind of manipulation of information, which is very misleading, across the board by all ministers. Obviously, when you've got the Premier of the province leading the pack in putting forward misinformation, it's no wonder that he sets a tone for his government, and it's certainly one of low expectations and no striving towards making Manitoba the kind of province that could reach the potential that is certainly there.

*(16:20)

Also, we didn't see any acknowledgment in the Throne Speech about the number of people fleeing Manitoba for other provinces. We're bleeding more people to other provinces than we have in the last 10 years. Certainly, that should give this government a lot of concern. Unfortunately, it doesn't seem to be on their radar screen and, in fact, they really are missing the boat in that one area.

Instead of moving forward, the NDP—although they like to use that rhetoric and we understand it's Tony Blair's rhetoric; it's his line from something he used—but what we see with this government, instead of moving forward, this NDP live in the past and blame former governments for today's problems, for their own shortcomings.

It is so interesting to hear all of the ministers, particularly the Minister of Health (Ms. Oswald) comes to mind, lately the Minister of Advanced Education (Ms. McGifford) has chirped in on that same rhetoric, but we do not see this government taking responsibility and demonstrating the kind of leadership that should be forthcoming for a government that has been in place for eight years. Rather than looking at taking responsibility for their own actions, instead of coming forward with a kind of vision that would strengthen those particular areas of Manitoba, what we see is a government that lives in the past and blames just about anybody, but particularly the former government for their own problems.

Mr. Speaker, it comes time for a government to grow up and to take responsibility and to get away from the childish kind of rhetoric that you can expect from children, but you don't expect it from parliamentarians, from policy-makers, who, obviously, when they don't have the kind of responses they need and they aren't able to defend their own actions, the easiest thing is to fall back and blame somebody else. That's what kids do. We shouldn't be seeing it from a government that has almost had a decade to be here to come up with a lot of ideas. Instead, we see this kind of childish behaviour and childish rhetoric that is starting to really be recognized in the province for what it is by this government.

So maybe it's about time they paid a little bit more attention and put more energy into where they can make a difference instead of expending so much energy looking backward, always blaming somebody else, and maybe put that effort forward into making Manitoba reach the potential that it has as a province. Unfortunately, we did not see that from this government. I know that a lot of them have read our alternative Throne Speech, and I hope that they take something good out of that. We called it One Manitoba: Strong and Proud, and I would certainly hope that this government would pay some attention to that.

We do know that they listen and if there's enough noise from around them they do have a tendency sometimes to try to avoid, you know, a lot of the challenges, so they will sometimes pick up on some of the good ideas around them, not very often, but I certainly hope that this time they might look at that document that we put out, One Manitoba: Strong and Proud, because it is a bold, new plan to get Manitoba's economy firing on all cylinders. It also looks at making our communities safer, healthier and cleaner. So, rather than just a lot of rhetoric from this government, maybe they might find some ideas in there that they can grab onto and move this province forward.

Mr. Speaker, I would also like to spend a few minutes just highlighting some of the concerns we have around post-secondary education funding, because Stats Canada recently reported that Manitoba brought up the rear in post-secondary funding. We have in this province, from this government, the worst support in Canada: dead last of all the provinces in their funding support of post-secondary education. Yet the Throne Speech had absolutely nothing in it that would address this problem, and it is a problem. It has become actually

a very serious problem in Manitoba, and it begs the question: How can this government justify spending the least in Canada on supporting post-secondary education when they are receiving such large amounts of money flowing into this province from the federal government? One-third of the dollars that we have in Manitoba that are spent come to us from taxpayers in other provinces because this government is so busy with their hand out, asking the federal government for more and more money, that they have got it. They are getting more money than almost every province in this country in terms of bailouts from the federal government in the various payments that are coming from the east.

In fact, I think it's Manitoba and Prince Edward Island that are the two provinces that are most reliant on federal dollars. Well, one day, Mr. Speaker, those dollars are going to dry up, and this government is going to have a really difficult time because they have never had to govern in the tough times. This government has only had an easy ride for the last eight years. But, some day, if they are ever forced to have to address some serious challenges, I think this government's going to have a really hard time.

On top of spending the least amount on post-secondary funding in this province, they've also squeezed the university even further with putting in a tuition freeze. This government, at some point, is going to have to wake up to what they've done and what it is doing for students in this province, because we can't even compete with any other university in Canada, because our universities are struggling to try to provide a good education here in Manitoba. We can't even compete with Saskatchewan and Newfoundland. What a shameful place this government has put Manitoba and taken away the great opportunities for our kids in this province. We heard further, today, some serious bungling from this government in terms of what they're doing with Waverley West and the lack of schools in this area.

One glaring aspect, and I know I only have a few more minutes, and I would like to touch on a glaring aspect missing from this education. I think one of the *Free Press* headlines said it best: Dead kids don't vote: how convenient.

I would like to point out, Mr. Speaker, that in this Throne Speech there was an opportunity to address this. In December of 2002, before all of the problems started in Child and Family Services here, we called for a full independent review of Winnipeg Child and Family Services before it devolved. All of

the social workers were worried kids weren't getting access to the right treatment quickly enough, if at all, and other kids were being returned to their parents prematurely. Other social workers said that kids were being abused while in care.

We wanted the review done, Mr. Speaker, prior to devolution so that the problems were not carried over into the new agencies. We wanted this in order to ensure children were safe. Even the Children's Advocate sounded the alarm. The situation was so bad that social workers were ready to leave their jobs. It was ironic that an agency that is supposed to protect kids is, in many cases, taking them from a precarious situation and placing them in another precarious situation, said one front-line social worker. She said, we are, in a sense, replicating the abuse.

We said at the time, the fears out there were real. Social workers were calling us. I was meeting some social workers at midnight for coffee. This government was failing the kids and we said, somebody is going to get hurt. A child is going to fall through the cracks. We begged this government, do not devolve Child and Family Services until we would have an independent, systemic review, otherwise, we are going to see children fall through the cracks. And what happened? Exactly what we predicted would happen happened. Thirty-two children have died. I think this government has a lot of explaining to do for that circumstance of what happened and why nothing was in this Throne Speech to improve that situation. Mr. Speaker—

* (16:30)

Mr. Speaker: Order.

The hour being 4:30, pursuant to rule 45(3), I am interrupting proceedings in order to put the question on the motion of the honourable Member for River Heights, that is, the subamendment to the motion for an Address in Reply to the Speech from the Throne.

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

Some Honourable Members: Agreed.

Some Honourable Members: No.

Voice Vote

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

Some Honourable Members: Yea.

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

Some Honourable Members: Nay.

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

Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights): We request a recorded vote.

Mr. Speaker: Does the honourable member have support? You need four to have a recorded vote.

No. I see no support, so we will not have a recorded vote.

The motion has been lost.

House Business

Hon. Dave Chomiak (Government House Leader): On House business, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: On House business?

Mr. Chomiak: Yes. Is there leave of the House to waive the existing rules for the submission and House leaders' consideration of PMRs, and to instead have PMRs filed and considered by House leaders prior to the resumption of the spring session? And is there also agreement that next week the PMRs to be considered will be announced in advance by the House leaders, in accordance with rules 31(8) and 31(9)?

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Mr. Chomiak: I would like to announce, according to our rules, that the PMR we will be bringing forward next Tuesday will be Women Minorities and Aboriginal People in the Legislature, moved by the Member for Kirkfield Park (Ms. Blady).

Mr. Speaker: It's been announced that, for next Tuesday, the PMR will be women minority and Aboriginal women in the Legislature that will be brought forward by the honourable Member for Kirkfield Park.

Mr. Chomiak: Mr. Speaker, also on House business, I wonder if there is leave of the House for tomorrow afternoon after Question Period to have no vote, no quorum after Question Period until 5 p.m. tomorrow.

Mr. Speaker: Is there agreement that after Question Period tomorrow there will be no vote or quorum calls? *[Agreed]*

* * *

Hon. Stan Struthers (Minister of Conservation): Mr. Speaker, I know the Member for Inkster (Mr. Lamoureux) is just chomping at the bit to get up and support our Throne Speech, so I promise I won't take too much time. I want to hear what he has to say, all those good things he's going to say about our Throne Speech. Maybe he can make a deal that if the Throne Speech passes he can resign his seat or something. He's been known for those kinds of agreements in this House and outside of the House and everywhere else that he didn't follow up on.

I'm really very pleased to stand here today to support the Throne Speech that was presented by this government not too long ago. There are some very good reasons why members opposite should vote against their own motion. Or you know what? Let's take the pressure off members opposite a little bit. They can vote in favour of their motion because I understand that would be quite a break with tradition, not to vote in favour of their own motion, and they can do that. I'll cross my fingers that most members in this House have the good sense to vote that amendment down. That, Mr. Speaker, members opposite should see as an opportunity because then they would be free and clear. The road would be—there would be no obstacles on the road in front of them to do the right thing on behalf of all Manitobans, stand at their seats and vote in favour of a very good Speech from the Throne, which is what we're debating here in this Legislature

Maybe people would expect me, as a—*[interjection]* Thanks for that advice, Mr. Speaker. I'm being heckled by the Speaker. Can I rule the Speaker out of order?

Anyway, I'm very—*[interjection]* The advice from the Member for Arthur-Virden (Mr. Maguire), it's always good to hear from the member. He knows that the priorities of his constituents are the priorities of this government, and that they are very well reflected in this Speech from the Throne. I think that there's a chance. The Member for Arthur-Virden is a reasonable person deep down, and I think there's a

chance that he might be considering supporting this Speech from the Throne because—I'll give you one reason why the Member for Arthur-Virden should—

An Honourable Member: The minimum wage.

Mr. Struthers: There are lots of reasons. I'm getting lots of advice on all the reasons. But here's a member who represents farmers, as I do, Mr. Speaker. Here's a member who represents farmers, farmers who will benefit to the tune of \$95 million, which is our provincial government's commitment to the CAIS program. I know the member is on record as saying this and that and another thing about the CAIS program. I know that our Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Initiatives (Ms. Wowchuk) has taken up the cause with her federal counterparts in terms of CAIS and making improvements that'll show some real benefits for farmers in our province, farmers in his constituency.

Mr. Speaker, in all honesty, the Member for Arthur-Virden can't vote against a \$95-million injection into the farm community, into a community that he has claimed, and I understand, is facing tough times. We have farmers who are at the behest of Mother Nature. They're dependent on factors that they have no control over. Everything from the weather, hail, tornadoes—

An Honourable Member: International prices.

Mr. Struthers: —wind from Mother Nature's side, and as my colleague from Transcona points out, there are international pressures. There are human-caused pressures, protectionism with some of our trading partners. There's some wacky idea even that some of the federal Conservatives have to ditch the Wheat Board, which would work against farmers. That would have an awful impact on his constituents. I know the Member for Arthur-Virden has been a long-time participant in that single-desk debate that we've been having in this province. I know he's been on the wrong side of that issue, decade after decade, but this is an opportunity for him to stand up and say, you know, the Wheat Board's over here and Mother Nature's there. They're all having a negative impact on my constituents. But, by gosh, here's one factor that the NDP government has right. Here's something positive that I can stand and support. He'll have his chance, Mr. Speaker. He'll have his chance to do that, and I look forward to seeing him do that.

This is a very good Speech from the Throne for rural Manitoba. I've already mentioned the \$95 million that we're injecting through CAIS, which

is our commitment. But you know, in rural Manitoba, it's not only about farming. We know that farming is the basis of our economy; we understand that. We know that if there are good times in the farm community that translates into good times throughout rural Manitoba, and, as was evident the other day at the Keystone Agricultural Producers' lunch, it's good for the city of Winnipeg, and it's good for the Canadian economy as well.

* (16:40)

So, Mr. Speaker, another aspect that we have to consider, when we try to decide whether we're voting in favour or not of this very good Throne Speech, is support in rural Manitoba for infrastructure. Now, I think that this Throne Speech understands that infrastructure is more than just roads, bridges and culverts. Although nobody can argue with \$400 million per year and a long-term plan that my colleague, the minister of industry and transportation has put forward. Nobody can argue with that, especially a bunch of politicians, who, at the best, may have put up 30 percent of what we're doing, at the best. I'll give them a little bit of credit there, but it was falling further and further behind all through the '90s. Now they have a chance to support a real and a generous infrastructure package, but that definition of infrastructure isn't good enough anymore. We need to be looking at water and sewer. We need to be looking at high-speed Internet. We need to be expanding the view that we take when it comes to infrastructure, and that's just not rural Manitoba either. That is in the biggest centres of this province right down through to the tiniest centres in this province.

We have to look at infrastructure differently, and we have to put our money into the infrastructure and make improvements to infrastructure because that gives people some hope, some hope that they can make economic development, sustainable economic development, decisions and have the infrastructure that they can count on to get the job done.

So, Mr. Speaker, \$150 million is the provincial commitment to rural and northern water and wastewater projects. That's a real commitment. That's a good thing. That's another reason why maybe members opposite should be thinking very seriously about throwing their considerable support behind this good Throne Speech—\$150 million: (a) that's nothing to sneeze at; and (b) it's going to produce action in rural and northern Manitoba. It's going to produce hope for some small communities that count on us in

this building and count on our federal counterparts and count on municipal leaders to put the partisan politics behind them and step forward and make these kinds of decisions in a co-operative way.

Now, Mr. Speaker, I think all three of those levels of government can take a lot of credit in the amount of money, the amount of attention that we have given to water and sewage projects all across Manitoba. We have to continue that momentum. There are lots of smaller communities especially who depend on that, absolutely depend on us coming through with what we have said we're going to come through with. I think that is a very progressive move on our part.

I also want to use my time to put in a plug for something that affects my constituency as one of 57 in this province. My constituency is the best constituency going, but also it's got the normal kinds of demands, normal kinds of needs that all 57 of our constituencies in this province face. The one right now that I'm concerned about is the number of signs that indicate that we don't have the labour that's necessary to move forward with all the good projects that we're working on.

In my part of the world, the Dauphin-Roblin area, we have got a population that is declining. We have an average age that is on the rise somewhat. We've got some unique pressures. We have a whole number of young people who've—well, they may not have the tickets that they need in terms of skilled labour. They're all young people who've grown up in the farms and in small communities. They know what to do with a hammer; they know what to do with a welding torch. It's very easy for them to pick up employment with a whole number of good projects that are going on in this province, everywhere from the building of the Hydro building to the redevelopment of the airport. Wuskwatim will come on line. There is the floodway. Lots of opportunities. What this Throne Speech did was committed ourselves to 4,000 new apprenticeship spaces over four years, and that is, Mr. Speaker, so that we can build a skilled economy. This is the largest increase, or this will be the largest increase in apprenticeship training in the history of our province. That's worth voting for. That's worth being positive. That's worth being forward-looking enough to stand up in this House and vote in favour of.

Mr. Speaker, I haven't seen any of these. Of the three things that I've talked about so far, I didn't see any of them in that so-called alternative Speech from

the Throne, alternative, very alternative Speech from the Throne that they presented to us last week. It was out of touch.

I think, too, Mr. Speaker, that I want to focus on one more issue that I think is very important. There's a lot of talk throughout the country about greenhouse gases and Kyoto targets and, you know, what the federal minister called aspirational goals. We can talk a lot about those, but to me what's important is the action that we take. It could be very big, large actions that we take. It's fine and you know we've done that. I like working with people, local people, local groups, other levels of government; I like working with them with a goal in mind.

I want to talk a little bit about our commitment in this Speech from the Throne to plant one million trees every year for five years. You know what's the best part about this, Mr. Speaker? It's practical. It's doable. We can get this done. We can work with all kinds of groups in this province. We can do that, and make sure that we do make an honest-to-goodness difference in reducing greenhouse gases in this province. We can do it by involving groups from one corner of this province to the next: from Churchill to Antler to Middlebro, everybody in between. We can make sure that we plant a million trees a year for five years and make a real, positive difference.

Everybody knows, and you don't need me to go into it, but everybody who can think back to their science classes in junior high and high school about the importance of planting trees. This represents, and we know why, with carbon dioxide and oxygen and that whole transfer, we know those reasons why. What we need and what we have is a government that's willing to do it. It's right here in the Throne Speech.

You know what, Mr. Speaker? One of the things I'm proud of is the things that eight times—well, since 1999, I suppose this is our ninth Throne Speech. Every time we've introduced a Throne Speech, we follow through with legislation. We follow through with a budget. We follow through with announcements, and we follow through with action leading from that Throne Speech, just as it's supposed to be. This is how it should work. My advice to members across is to be part of that, get to stand in this House and support something that's positive for once.

Mr. Speaker, I just want to wrap up. I appreciate the support from my colleague the Minister of Science, Technology, Energy and Mines (Mr. Rondeau).

The thing that this Speech from the Throne does with commitments to mandates and biofuels, commitments to continuing our good work in hiring doctors and nurses and specialists, our continued commitment to protection of land, our continued commitment to consultations with First Nations, our continued commitment to working with industry to provide economic opportunities and jobs in this province—I think that there are lots of good reasons for members opposite to consider voting in favour of this Throne Speech.

I'm very much looking forward to voting in a positive way on the Throne Speech, and hoping—I have my fingers crossed—that maybe this is the one, finally, that members opposite stand up and vote with us on. So thank you very much for allowing me this opportunity.

* (16:50)

Mr. David Faurshou (Portage la Prairie): Mr. Speaker, it is truly an honour and a privilege to have the opportunity to rise in the Manitoba Legislative Assembly. I say that because I do feel very privileged to have this chance to serve not only the constituency of Portage la Prairie, but to be part of the ongoing process of creating legislation that serves the province of Manitoba.

But in service very rarely do we have the chance to say thank you to those that serve the Chamber each and every day. I would like at this point in time to thank our Sergeant-at-Arms, Mr. Garry Clark, and the Deputy Sergeant-at-Arms, Blake Dunn, who have served this Chamber for many, many years. Along with the Sergeant-at-Arms and Deputy Sergeant-at-Arms, we have gallery attendants Dennis Huyda, Ray Gislason, Michael Altham, and Craig Waterman, and the outside message rooms that open the doors for us on many occasions, Denise Abgrall and Jeanette Buhler. I want to thank all of the Chamber Branch personnel for their service to us as members of the Legislative Assembly.

Also, too, making mention of service to the Chamber, up-and-coming votes will definitely test those memories of the pages. I want to make a listing in the *Hansard* here of all the pages that have served in the Chamber each and every day on rotation: Angela Cung, Karen Power, D.J. Levy, Laura Dutfeld, Stacy McPhee, Jennifer Aho, Autumn Beardy and Abd-Al Mageed Salem. To each and every one of them, congratulations on your opportunity to serve in the Legislative Assembly, I

hope that it is an experience that will indeed last you a lifetime.

Mr. Speaker, the Throne Speech has received a fair amount of debate over the last number of days. Each and every day another point of view is brought forward, and the members extrapolate on that point. I must then start with the most recent point, about the million trees to be planted. Basically, how small an amount that really, truly is. I personally have planted over 100,000 trees here. It is truly not a great deal. The entire five-year plan of this government to plant five million trees is 10,000 acres; 10,000 acres, my goodness. There are a lot of farms that plant 10,000 acres, and I will speak for myself included as participating in the farm that farmed almost 13,000 acres.

So I say to the minister, truly, a five-year plan for a government to plant 10,000 acres—really? Let's get this thing in perspective; it's not a huge challenge. But, anyway, I will compliment the government on saying that planting trees is a great idea because we in the rural have been doing that for years upon years upon years with the co-operation of PFRA and their supply of good nursery stock out of Indian Head, Saskatchewan.

May I then turn my attention to the honourable Minister of Justice (Mr. Chomiak) that spoke quite loudly here in the Chamber right after our honourable leader, some of the points that he wanted to make here. I will say, I would like just to ask the question—he stated that on his commentary regarding health care and the dark days of the '90s about the closure of the Misericordia Hospital—well, truly, after all of the years that the NDP have been in government, and the billions upon billions of additional dollars expended into health, why it has not been a consideration to reverse that particular decision. He continues to say that it was a wrong-headed move. Yet why does the NDP not correct this wrong-headed move? Perhaps it was the right move and he's just extolling the fact that the NDP truly support that because eight, nine years now, coming nine—the NDP government has not changed that designation or responsibility for services rendered to the health-care system by the Misericordia Urgent Care facility. So I suggest by the absence of action that the government supports the Progressive Conservative decision.

So let's move on. Again, we heard members talk once again about the sale of MTS. But, when we asked the question of honourable members across the

way as to whether or not any one of them actually bought an MTS share with their own money—total silence, total silence. Not one single member of the sitting New Democratic Party in the Chamber of the Manitoba Legislative Assembly thought enough of MTS to invest their own money. But, no, they were willing to invest hard-earned taxpayers' dollars. Oh, yes, and they continued to go on and on and on how they would risk taxpayers' dollars in place of their own dollars. But ask that same question on this side of the House, how many of us on this side of the House invested in MTS, I would find that there would probably not be one hand left down when asked the question because we believe in MTS and a future here in Manitoba. *[interjection]*

I thank them for the applause because it is indeed a thriving corporation in the province of Manitoba that continues to grow through expansion, either by merger, acquisition or by contractual agreements. I think we should all be very, very proud of the accomplishment of MTS Allstream Inc. So let us not say much more to the contrary. I hope the honourable members can move on because I know, again, even though they've received billions and billions and billions of dollars from other provinces because other provinces are working harder and they're seeing more prosperity and success, regardless of however the government might want to spin it, Manitoba is lagging behind.

An Honourable Member: Wrong.

Mr. Faurshou: I see the honourable Member for Selkirk (Mr. Dewar) says that's a wrong assessment. Well, statistics speak very loudly because the statistics are providing the information to the Government of Canada, and the Government of Canada is saying that Manitoba needs more help.

More dollars are coming to Manitoba because we are not as prosperous as other provinces.

Now I don't know how members can argue the fact. The Finance Minister (Mr. Selinger) has tabled a budget, and a tally of 36 percent of our budget comes from the federal treasury to Manitoba. If one also goes to look at whether it's increasing as a percentage or decreasing, you will see that it is increasing. That means that Manitoba is falling further and further behind other provinces.

We have to then ask the question, does this government truly understand how to make a province prosperous? The answer to that question is found in the Throne Speech, and it can be capsulated just with two letters, N-O.

This Throne Speech lacks vision. It lacks clarity and understanding, and it is one that, quite frankly, we should be embarrassed about because it tells a lot of what the government has done in the past. If all those excerpts from previous throne speeches or other government announcements were removed, we'd probably be looking at maybe one page perhaps. I have not yet asked staff to do so, but I think it would be a good exercise to find out what is actually new in this budget.

Anyway, Mr. Speaker, I look forward to discussing further the points that have been brought forward by the honourable Leader of the Opposition (Mr. McFadyen) in the motion—

Mr. Speaker: Order. When this matter is again before the House, the honourable Member for Portage la Prairie will have 20 minutes remaining.

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

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Tuesday, November 27, 2007

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