

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

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MANITOBA LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
Thirty-Ninth Legislature

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Thursday, November 29, 2007

The House met at 1:30 p.m.

PRAYER

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

**Bill 214—The Labour Relations Amendment Act
(Information in Employee's Language)**

Mrs. Mavis Taillieu (Morris): I move, seconded by the Member for Springfield (Mr. Schuler), that Bill 214, The Labour Relations Amendment Act (Information in Employee's Language); Loi modifiant la Loi sur les relations du travail (renseignements fournis dans la langue des employés), be now read a first time.

Motion presented.

Mrs. Taillieu: This bill amends The Labour Relations Act to require a union, when soliciting memberships, to provide each employee solicited with information regarding union fees and dues in a language that is understood by that employee.

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

**Bill 8—The Phosphorus Reduction Act
(Water Protection Act Amended)**

Hon. Christine Melnick (Minister of Water Stewardship): I move, seconded by the Minister of Education (Mr. Bjornson), that Bill 8, The Phosphorus Reduction Act (Water Protection Act Amended), be now read for a first time.

Motion presented.

Ms. Melnick: Mr. Speaker, this bill amends The Water Protection Act to reduce the amount of phosphorus released into Manitoba's water from cleaning products such as dishwashing detergent, personal care products and chemical water conditioners in the year 2010, if a national strategy is not already in place. It is another step in our multiphase plan to protect Lake Winnipeg.

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

PETITIONS

Crocus Investment Fund—Public Inquiry

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

The background to this petition is as follows:

The 2007 provincial election did not clear the NDP government of any negligence with regard to the Crocus Fund fiasco.

The government needs to uncover the whole truth as to what ultimately led to over 33,000 Crocus shareholders to lose tens of millions of dollars.

The provincial auditor's report, the Manitoba Securities Commission's investigation, the RCMP investigation, and the involvement of revenue Canada and our courts, collectively, will not answer the questions that must be answered in regards to the Crocus Fund fiasco.

Manitobans need to know why the government ignored the many warnings that could have saved the Crocus Investment Fund.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To urge the Premier (Mr. Doer) and his NDP government to co-operate in uncovering the truth in why the government did not act on what it knew and to consider calling a public inquiry on the Crocus Fund fiasco.

Mr. Speaker, this is signed by M. Goodmanson, A. Mateo, C. Karamchand and many other fine Manitobans.

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

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 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 lands 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 Mélanie Barnabé, Mike McDonald, Darlene Scollnik and many, many others.

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 into 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 Rudy Ammeter, Patricia Gantzert, Ken Cutts and many others.

* (13:40)

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 current retired teachers, as well as all future retirees, receive a fair COLA.

This is signed by Margaret Young, Yvonne Collins, Sandra Allen and many, many other Manitobans.

Introduction of Guests

Mr. Speaker: Prior to Oral Questions, I would like to draw the attention of honourable members to the public gallery where we have with us today Shannon Coombs and Chera Jelley from the Canadian Consumer Specialty Products Association in Ottawa. They are the guests of the honourable Minister of Water Stewardship (Ms. Melnick).

Also in the public gallery we have with us from Greenway School 50 grade 4 students under the direction of Mr. Linden James. This school is located in the constituency of the honourable Member for Wolseley (Mr. Altemeyer).

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

ORAL QUESTIONS

Education for Aboriginals Graduation Rates

Mr. Hugh McFadyen (Leader of the Official Opposition): Mr. Speaker, we know that a good education, the ability to read and write and to analyze problems, is the most fundamental prerequisite to a success in our society, that the aspirations of all Manitobans are linked in a very direct way to levels of educational attainment.

Recognizing, Mr. Speaker, that there are issues that need to be resolved in terms of funding, steps that need to be taken in partnership with other levels of government and leadership at other levels, we do note that in the province of British Columbia, very significant and innovative steps have been taken between the provincial government, the federal government and Aboriginal leaders in that province to address the issue of ensuring higher rates of graduation and higher levels of educational attainment on the part of Aboriginal people in that province.

We note, Mr. Speaker, that Manitoba would appear to be at least two years behind British Columbia in taking these sorts of steps and pursuing these kinds of partnerships at a time when Manitoba has a higher proportion of its population represented by our Aboriginal communities.

So I want to ask the Premier if he could provide the House with an update on negotiations and on initiatives being undertaken in this area and ask him why it is that Manitoba, once again, is falling so far behind other provinces.

Hon. Gary Doer (Premier): Mr. Speaker, I would point out that Manitoba is leading in post-secondary education for First Nations people with the University College of the North, a policy that was opposed by members opposite in the 2003 election. The people wisely had a different vision for the future of Manitoba.

We now have some 17 faculties, many of them in remote communities, in terms of the University College of the North. We're pleased that the chancellor of that university is one Ovide Mercredi and we feel very confident about the future of post-secondary education, particularly in the areas of direct provincial jurisdiction. So in that area we have moved ahead I daresay of many provinces in this regard.

Secondly, Mr. Speaker, we have a different treaty configuration in Manitoba than we do in British Columbia, but we supported the Kelowna Accord and it was Oscar Lathlin or, sorry, the Minister responsible for Aboriginal and Northern Affairs, who put this on the agenda, including with the Premier of British Columbia when we met together. He had the experience of the Opaskwayak Cree Nation and the school in that community in its very initial success.

But we believe that with the failure of Kelowna, we have indicated to the federal government that we want to have—they have the jurisdiction on First Nations communities—a more co-operative approach to public education.

It is in the Speech from the Throne. Ministers have been meeting with their counterparts in Ottawa and we concur with the general principles that are outlined in the question of the Leader of the Opposition.

Mr. McFadyen: I know the Premier wouldn't want to leave misleading information on the record about our position, Mr. Speaker. We do support University College of the North. We support the extension of educational opportunities. I think that perhaps contrary to the popular perception we in opposition do in very many cases support and encourage steps being taken by the government, including steps taken with University College of the North.

But it does need to be put in context, Mr. Speaker, that the number of people graduating from those good programs and graduating from other good programs, such as the one initiated by our government through the Faculty of Engineering at

the University of Manitoba and other places, is still a very small percentage of the overall population of First Nations, Aboriginal people in Manitoba. You first have to achieve graduation from high school before being able to take advantage of the opportunities in post-secondary education. We have a very distressingly low graduation rate particularly on reserve.

So clearly it is a matter that requires urgent attention, energy and commitment. We know it requires the efforts of other levels of government, and we are concerned about the fact that we are so far behind British Columbia and that we still continue to see graduation rates that are lower than what we would all hope for as Manitobans.

So I would ask the Premier, acknowledging that they have introduced on a pilot basis standards tests within a small number of reserves in Manitoba, when he will take the step of enhancing the partnership, improving graduation rates and extending the application of standards tests which are supported by his Minister of Northern Affairs (Mr. Lathlin), when he is going to extend those to other communities as well as all of the other improvements in education where British Columbia is leading the way and we're following far behind, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Doer: Mr. Speaker, the members opposite have recast their position. In 2003 they opposed the University College of the North and between 2003 and 2007, 16 faculties were set up. If the members opposite had implemented their policies, there would have been no faculties implemented in the University College of the North. So they have an after-the-fact conversion on the road to Damascus. I'm pleased they've had that.

Secondly, Mr. Speaker, the high school graduation rate was 73 percent in Manitoba in public schools in 1999. It is now 84 percent in the year 2006 and '07, but the high school graduation rate is totally inadequate in First Nations communities. We do have different treaty configurations than they do in British Columbia, but for the last year the former Minister Prentice, after they walked away from the Kelowna Accord, we met a year ago with Minister Prentice. Again, the Minister of Aboriginal Affairs (Mr. Lathlin) met with him on our behalf to recommend a trilevel rearrangement and reconfiguration of First Nations schools. We support that. We also met just last week with Minister Strahl, again recommending strongly that we proceed with a new model of education for First Nations people.

We also know that part of what challenges us in First Nations communities is the belief that if they graduate from high school there are post-secondary courses to go to. So one of the reasons why the post-secondary education in the University College of the North is connected to the high school graduation rate is the whole idea of hope, that there are courses available in First Nations communities to go to if they graduate from high school.

But we do agree that the fundamental old status quo on First Nations public schools should be changed. The Province of Manitoba is ready, willing and able to change with the federal government. We proposed it a year ago. We proposed it again last week. We put it in the Speech from the Throne, and we are in favour of changing because change is absolutely necessary and we have some of the resources that should be targeted in First Nation communities, Mr. Speaker.

*(13:50)

Standardized Tests

Mr. Hugh McFadyen (Leader of the Official Opposition): I want to just say that we acknowledge that there seems to be a sudden interest in a conversion on the road to Damascus on the part of the NDP government on this issue. We welcome that, Mr. Speaker, the sudden new interest in this issue. We do question the inaction of the last eight years, but I am encouraged to hear the Premier say that meetings are taking place.

I just want to ask the Premier if he can commit as part of the process that's now under way through discussions with the federal government which are two years behind British Columbia—he can't blame differences in treaty issues on that. This is a matter where steps could have been taken if the provincial government had been interested in moving forward with the federal government. Treaties are not the issue that are slowing the government down. The issue that slows the government down is the fact that they simply don't do anything until they're under pressure to do it or until something is brought to their attention that would call on them to bring action, managing from one crisis to the next.

So, Mr. Speaker, I want to ask the Premier if he will commit, as part of the discussions ongoing right now, to the extension of both the measures being pursued to encourage kids to stay in school but also the extension of standards tests to other communities throughout the province of Manitoba.

Hon. Gary Doer (Premier): Well, the position to change public education in Manitoba First Nations schools was taken by our government at the Kelowna meeting with the Prime Minister and 13 other jurisdictions. We proposed to the then-Prime Minister Martin, as part of the funding system, that there may be more available resources to the First Nations communities, and we changed the way in which we deliver public education, through a tripartite agreement with First Nations which have jurisdiction in their own communities, the federal government which has the fiduciary responsibility and the provincial government.

So that's a position we took two years ago. In fact, it was two years ago almost to today in Kelowna. So when we proposed this to Minister Prentice after it became clear that the Tories had killed Kelowna, Mr. Speaker, we proposed this model to the people in Ottawa and we got a fair degree of support for it from Ottawa. We again proposed it with another minister of Aboriginal and native affairs in Ottawa, Mr. Chuck Strahl, last week, and I have raised it in meetings I've had, bilateral meetings. We support it. We're ready, willing and able to make those changes.

I would also point out that we have been recognized with Aboriginal nursing programs now in The Pas, Aboriginal programs in Thompson, Norway House, Oxford House, Shamattawa, Bloodvein, 16 communities, Mr. Speaker, in terms of post-secondary education. We're using the Frontier School Division, by the way, that is also very effective for northern and Aboriginal communities.

But the status quo is not our position. Our position in Kelowna was to change the way we delivered public education in First Nations communities. Our position when the federal Tories killed Kelowna was to change, and our position today is changing. We haven't had any change of position, except to say change the system. We can do a lot better and we have to do a lot better for First Nations people, Mr. Speaker.

Violent Crime Combating Rising Rates

Mr. Gerald Hawranik (Lac du Bonnet): Mr. Speaker, every day, the streets of Winnipeg are becoming more and more dangerous. According to the City of Winnipeg police, violence is on the rise. In the last few days, criminals stole two vehicles and then tried to use those vehicles as a weapon against police officers who stopped them. This is just one of

the examples of increased violence and disregard for the law that police are now facing on a daily basis.

So I ask the Minister of Justice: Considering that he promised safer communities in each of the last three elections, why has he failed to make our streets and our communities safer?

Hon. Dave Chomiak (Minister of Justice and Attorney General): Mr. Speaker, making our streets safer is a part that we all play, the community, the governments, all levels of government, the police, et cetera.

We have funded, Mr. Speaker, 70 percent more prosecutions; 150 more police on the street; more programs like Turnabout. That's the only program of its kind to provide supports for 12 years old and under. Spotlight is intensive supervision.

By the way, we've been able to reduce auto theft by 28 percent this year. That's by a concerted effort of working with the community, not just the laws—we've asked for tougher laws in Ottawa—but for programs that keep kids off the street and out of trouble. It's all of our duty to respond to them.

Auto Theft Bait-Car Program

Mr. Gerald Hawranik (Lac du Bonnet): Mr. Speaker, this government has had eight years to fulfil that promise and eight successive years it's failed. The Minister of Justice killed the bait-car program in Manitoba, and had those two stolen vehicles been a part of that bait-car program the vehicles could have been shut down and the lives of our police officers would not have been jeopardized.

So I ask the Minister of Justice: For the safety of all Manitobans and for the safety of all our police officers, reinstate that bait-car program.

Hon. Dave Chomiak (Minister of Justice and Attorney General): Let me understand, Mr. Speaker. We've put in 14 police officers in a program. We've put several million dollars in. We've reduced auto theft by 28 percent. We have statistics. We're considered the leader in the country, Alberta and other places—I have the Alberta report here—and the member's saying reinstate police bait cars as their only plank when, in fact, we offered bait cars to the police.

It's the police's decision to use them. They can use them whenever they want. They have the option. We will listen to what the police direct us to do and we won't criticize the police, as the member does

regularly, nor will we criticize the Crown prosecutors. We'll work with them and with the community and with all of the community to try to prevent and provide safety on the streets.

Traveling for Health Care Expenses Covered

Mrs. Mavis Taillieu (Morris): Yesterday I told this House about Mr. Ed Johner, who, if he had not gone to the United States for cancer surgery, feared that he would not be with us today. His tumour had grown by 50 percent.

The minister responded that she would work with my constituent. Mr. Speaker, if the minister cannot ensure that people will receive lifesaving surgeries in a timely manner, will she then stand by her commitment and ensure that Mr. Johner, and others like him, have their expenses covered when they seek help and compassion outside of Manitoba?

Hon. Theresa Oswald (Minister of Health): As I said to the member opposite yesterday, we're all concerned when any of our friends or loved ones are battling cancer. We want to continue to work to maintain our status that CIHI gives us about No. 1 in the country for radiation therapy.

I think it's constructive for the member opposite to be aware that when we came into office in 1999, the wait time for radiation therapy was dangerously high. We know, also, that her leader who was chief of staff at the time rejected, out of hand, the prospect of sending people out of Manitoba, to the United States or elsewhere, to get their treatment. We did that immediately, Mr. Speaker, and today our radiation wait times are No. 1 in the country.

Mrs. Taillieu: Mr. Speaker, in 1999 when they came into office, they promised they'd end hallway medicine in six months with \$15 million.

This government is failing to provide timely access to health care. If Mr. Johner had waited until November for his surgery, when it was scheduled, the outcomes would have been significantly different or fatal. No one should have to face this situation, being forced to wait in debilitating fear, knowing or not knowing, that their disease is spreading.

Mr. Speaker, will this government reimburse Mr. Johner, and people like Mr. Johner, who have no option but to seek services outside of Manitoba, or will they make them wait until it's just too late?

Ms. Oswald: Again, I would say to the member opposite that when it comes to the complexities of

issues with cancer, cardiac, other life-threatening illnesses, we know that politicians should not make these decisions. Medical doctors need to make these assessments, these diagnoses and make the protocols that are appropriate for treatment. They're the ones that schedule surgeries and treatment, Mr. Speaker.

* (14:00)

I believe that these are crocodile tears, indeed, coming from the side of the House that had dangerously long wait times in 1999, six weeks or more. We sent those patients, not a politically popular thing to do, we sent them elsewhere to get that treatment and worked hard to bring that wait time down.

Today the wait time for radiation therapy in Manitoba is one week or less. It's No. 1 in the country. Don't take my word for it. It's CIHI, Mr. Speaker. We're going to keep working for the patients of Manitoba.

Manitoba Public Insurance Driver Licensing Profits

Mr. Cliff Graydon (Emerson): Mr. Speaker, the NDP government has a long history of abusing Manitoba Crown corporations. Three years ago the NDP offloaded driver's licensing on MPI and each year the NDP gives them \$21 million for the job they do. The president of the MPI says that delivering this service is actually costing \$26 million. MPI ratepayers pay the difference to the tune of \$5 million every year after and it doesn't end there. The NDP get \$117 million a year in profits from driver's licensing which MPI policyholders are helping to pay for.

Will the minister explain why he is raiding the pockets of MPI policyholders?

Hon. Dave Chomiak (Minister charged with the administration of The Manitoba Public Insurance Corporation Act): Mr. Speaker, this is an example of the glass not being half empty but of the member not even seeing the glass. MPI has the lowest rates in North America. MPI for three years in a row has—*[interjection]*

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Mr. Chomiak: MPI has provided rate rebates for three years running, Mr. Speaker. It offers comprehensive coverage. It invests in Manitoba. It allows for expanded access to licences and driver's licences as a result of the combination.

Mr. Speaker, the Tory option, I suppose, is to go the MTS way. Sell it, let it go out of the province and let it be traded on the stock exchange all around North America without our own ownership, without our control and with some of the highest rates in North America.

Mr. Graydon: Mr. Speaker, the minister must be wrong. The Fraser Institute says that we are the highest, the Fraser Institute. Not only has the NDP dumped the task of driver's licensing on MPI, this minister also expects to reap all the profits while MPI ratepayers help foot the bill.

Let me break this down for the minister so that he understands. The NDP give Manitoba Public Insurance \$21 million a year to do a \$26-million-a-year job. The NDP get \$117 million in revenue from MPI's work and MPI ratepayers foot the bill, \$5 million a year every year.

Will the minister stop trying to hide the fact that he's handing out a rebate with one hand while robbing the pockets of MPI policyholders with the other?

Mr. Chomiak: Mr. Speaker, I think most Manitobans know—maybe the Fraser Institute and a couple of members opposite don't know—that we have the lowest insurance rates for autos in the country. Most young people driving know that if they had to get a licence and insurance in another jurisdiction, they may not be able to drive a car because of the prohibitively high rates in other jurisdictions, doubling in Alberta, quadrupling in some centres. Most seniors know that money that is invested in schools and hospitals as a result of MPI is a significant contribution to the Manitoba economy.

Mr. Speaker, forward, not back.

Hybrid Car Rebate Program Source of Rebates

Mrs. Heather Stefanson (Tuxedo): A long history of misuse and interference shows that the NDP can't be trusted with Crown corporations in our province, Mr. Speaker, and one only need to look to Manitoba Hydro and the hundreds of millions of dollars that they raided from Manitoba Hydro.

Some Honourable Members: Oh. Oh.

Mr. Speaker: Order. I need to be able to hear the questions and the answers.

Mrs. Stefanson: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, and I appreciate that very much.

Late last year the NDP announced a hybrid car rebate program and while we applaud them for actually implementing one of our ideas, Mr. Speaker, we have some very serious concerns about the way they are going about implementing this.

Can the Minister responsible for Manitoba Public Insurance confirm that MPI is issuing the cheques for hybrid car rebates?

Hon. Jim Rondeau (Minister of Science, Technology, Energy and Mines): Mr. Speaker, I'm very pleased to say to the member how it works. What happens is we found a very, very cost-effective, efficient way of doing the process. Rather than setting up a separate bureaucracy, this is run by a very, good, efficient method. It's done automatically when a person purchases their vehicle and we, as government, pay them a fee to administer the process and send the cheques.

Mrs. Stefanson: Mr. Speaker, it might be cheaper for the government, but it's not cheaper for ratepayers in Manitoba.

Mr. Speaker, the NDP offloaded driver licensing on MPI, and while the NDP are reaping all the benefits, they're not even paying for the full cost of delivering it. Now they've announced a hybrid rebate program, but MPI is issuing the cheques. Ratepayers wonder if they're going to be left footing the bill for this one, too.

Will the minister confirm that the government is covering the full cost of administering this rebate or is the MPI ratepayer going to be left to foot the bill for this one too, Mr. Speaker?

Hon. Greg Selinger (Minister of Finance): Mr. Speaker, I can confirm for the member opposite that the full cost of the rebate is covered by the Manitoba government through its budget. MPI is not paying the rebate, will not pay the rebate, has not paid the rebate.

Spirited Energy Campaign Manitoba Public Insurance's Contributions

Mrs. Leanne Rowat (Minnedosa): Mr. Speaker, people talk about gifts that keep on giving. Well, the Spirited Energy campaign is a gift that keeps on taking, taking money out of the pockets of hardworking Manitobans. Manitoba Public Insurance has dumped \$90,000 worth of Autopac premiums into Spirited Energy in two years. While MPI ratepayers were footing the bill for the campaign, this NDP government was reaping the benefit. We

were recently informed that all money made from the Spirited Energy campaign merchandise went directly to general revenues.

Mr. Speaker, I ask the minister: Why did this money go into the hands of Cabinet instead of back to the MPI ratepayers who are footing the bill for this wasteful sales campaign?

Hon. Dave Chomiak (Minister charged with the administration of The Manitoba Public Insurance Corporation Act): Mr. Speaker, people are getting a rebate. We have the lowest rates in the country. The members bragged and talked about the Bombers all last week like they were on the football field, and MPI helped sponsor some of those things. MPI paid some money to have students check cars in parking lots to deal with safety, to make sure cars weren't stolen. I think that's within the mandate and the appropriateness of what MPI should do.

Mr. Speaker, the members opposite know that MPI spent that money in a program to deal with stolen autos and providing advice into parking lots and students who were employed to look after, to make sure that safety programs were—

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Mrs. Rowat: Let's connect the dots. Money out of the ratepayers' of MPI pockets went into the Spirited Energy campaign. That money promotes the campaign and the sale of Spirited Energy merchandise. The money made selling the merchandise then goes to general revenues directly into the hands of this minister and his colleagues. It's Howard Pawley's MPI mismanagement all over again, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, if the NDP wanted to siphon off MPI revenues, why the elaborate charade? Why weren't they just honest with Manitobans and tell them they were raiding MPI revenues in the same way they raided Manitoba Hydro in 2002?

Mr. Chomiak: Mr. Speaker, I think we clearly can see the two solitudes. On the one hand, you take a Crown corporation like MTS, you sell it at half a share price, it leaves Manitoba. On the other hand, you have MPI and Hydro, you sponsor like any good corporate citizen, like Great West Life—

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Mr. Chomiak: Mr. Speaker, they sponsor things like the Winnipeg Blue Bombers, the ballet, other

charitable productions, as a good corporate citizen should do. I think Manitobans expect that of Manitoba corporations, rather than having Tories buy shares at half price, leave the province, head office leaves the province, and we're left with nothing and higher rates.

The two solitudes have never better been illustrated than in this line of questioning, Mr. Speaker.

* (14:10)

Government-Owned Homes Disclosure of Flood Damage

Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights): Mr. Speaker, in 2006, Tara-Lee and Artur Maciuszonek purchased from a private vendor a home which had been badly flooded in the 1997 flood. This badly damaged house was initially bought, then sold by the government. Drywall covered serious problems with the mould by the time it was purchased by the Maciuszoneks, and it wasn't until they started to make renovations that they discovered, to their horror, the huge mould and other problems which had been hidden. The house was indeed so bad that it had to be demolished.

I ask the Premier (Mr. Doer): Why was it that such a flood-damaged, government-owned home could be resold to Manitobans without adequate disclosure of the flood damage history?

Hon. Greg Selinger (Minister of Finance): I thank the member for the question. The program, the flood protection program, was created in 1997, and we do remember who was the government then. And they had no requirements for disclosure at that time.

The house was sold to a purchaser who then resold it to this purchaser who had the problems. I'm informed that the Manitoba Securities Commission is reviewing the matter in terms of the role of the real estate agents and will bring forward a judgment and a recommendation on what they think is appropriate.

It is unfortunate that the original program in '97 was designed that way. The people still have recourse through the courts if they wish to do that, and we will expect a report from the Manitoba Securities Commission on the role of the real estate agents involved.

Mr. Gerrard: Mr. Speaker, the government may have been technically acting in a lawful way, but the government surely has some ethical responsibility when a home which they owned was badly

contaminated with mould. Certainly the government should have done something to prevent the huge problems with contamination with mould that the Maciuszoneks found. The cost to the Maciuszoneks has been huge, about \$180,000 to buy a worthless home, and huge heartaches in the process.

Will the government look at ways that the Maciuszoneks can be compensated for the failure of the government to prevent this problem from occurring?

Mr. Selinger: I thank the member. I do believe it is a good question. It is true that in '97 the program sold the house as is with the caveat that they may or may not have been flooded. No home inspection was done by the Province, and at that time I think we can see that that created the original problem.

Since that home was sold by the original purchaser to the family in question and they did discover mould, they have had a concern about whether the real estate agents should have had some responsibility to disclose this if they knew about it. The Manitoba Securities Commission, which is responsible for the laws applying to real estate agents and the regulations, are reviewing this matter and I look forward to their recommendation.

As to the matter of whether we can prevent it in the future, that is also a worthwhile question which we will ask the Manitoba Securities Commission to give us their policy advice on, but it is true that this family has suffered as a result of this.

Mr. Gerrard: Mr. Speaker, surely there needs to be some accountability on the part of government here. The Maciuszoneks have a young child, Malia, who could have had serious health problems had the family moved into this mould-ridden house. How many more children like Malia are living in a mould-infested house because this government hasn't taken the appropriate preventive action to make sure that this doesn't happen?

I ask the Minister of Finance whether he will support the bill that we're going to introduce in the spring calling for mandatory inspection of all homes, including for mould, and mandatory reporting to all buyers of previous flood history.

Mr. Selinger: We haven't seen the member's bill and anybody that purchases any high-value product like this always has the choice of doing an inspection on it before they buy it. This is the same not only with homes but also with cars.

We would be happy to review the specifics of this case after the Manitoba Securities Commission has taken a look at the role of the real estate agents. I think we all have an interest in ensuring that Manitobans make wise purchases when they're for large amounts of money.

The due diligence on the part of any purchaser when you purchase a home is to have it inspected. I remember when I did the very same thing myself. When I bought my home, I had it inspected to understand what the problems were or could be in the future so I would have a clear idea of what I was getting into.

We have had a very hot real estate market and some people have purchased products lately, and homes, without doing the due diligence on it. If there's a way we can improve that process, we will look at that.

Personal Care Homes Increased Levels of Staffing

Mr. Doug Martindale (Burrows): Mr. Speaker, the level of care needed for our seniors and elders in personal care homes has been increasing as people stay longer in their own homes and supported by excellent programs like Home Care.

We all want the best possible care for our loved ones in personal care homes. To this end, the Minister of Health this morning made a good news announcement about increased levels of staffing.

Could the Minister of Health share with all Manitobans the details of this good news announcement?

Hon. Theresa Oswald (Minister of Health): Mr. Speaker, I am delighted to announce that this morning we were able to announce that we will invest more than \$40 million to implement a comprehensive strategy to improve the quality of care at personal care homes in Manitoba.

This funding is going to be used, among other things, to hire 250 nurses, 100 personal health-care aides and 50 allied health-care workers in order to increase the direct hours of care that residents will get in personal care homes in Manitoba.

Not only that, Mr. Speaker, but we're going to work very diligently to ensure that we're improving education and training, improving residents' safety through a safe-handling program, as well as

including equipment and, importantly, we're going to strengthen education concerning Alzheimer's and other related dementias.

Young Farmer Rebate Program Implementation

Mr. Ralph Eichler (Lakeside): Mr. Speaker, it's with regret that I have to point out that a minister is making fun at another member's question in this House, and it is deploring whenever that happens. I'm very embarrassed for that minister. Shame on her.

Mr. Speaker, on April 18 this year the provincial government announced changes to the Young Farmer Rebate program. Well, here we are seven months later and changes have yet to be implemented. That's not helping our young producers.

Mr. Speaker, will the minister explain why this government is delaying the implementation of this policy change? Is she waiting for another photo op at Ag Days or what's her plan?

Hon. Rosann Wowchuk (Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Initiatives): Mr. Speaker, I am very pleased to know that the opposition does support our Young Farmer Rebate program because that's a program they voted against. They voted against it, and they voted against the budget that would allow for additional changes to the Young Farmer Rebate program.

Mr. Speaker, it is this government that has recognized that it's important to have a transition package to help young farmers take over. It's important that we have a program to ensure that those people who are retiring from farming can be assured of their income during this transition period.

That's why we brought the program in, Mr. Speaker. That's why we're making changes and that's why we're extending it to rural businesses and to fishers as well.

Mr. Eichler: The budget barely even mentioned the agriculture sector. That's why I voted against the budget.

Mr. Speaker, in case the minister hasn't noticed, we have an aging farmer population in this province. We need to take concrete steps that the next generation of producers are into the industry.

In her press release, the minister stated, and I quote, "We are committed to helping ensure

Manitoba's next generation of young farmers has a strong, vibrant future."

Mr. Speaker, I ask the minister again: Why is she stalling on changing this implementation of the young farmers act? If she is really committed to helping young producers in the industry she would have done it seven months ago when she put the press release out.

Ms. Wowchuk: I know the member opposite wishes that he could have been in the press release, Mr. Speaker, but I am just so surprised that he is now endorsing a program that we brought in, a program to help with the transition of farming from one generation to the next, a program that he voted against.

When we introduced the program, they voted against the budget. When we announced amendments and put those funds into this year's budget, he voted against that budget. I'm surprised the member opposite is proud that he voted against the budget that was—a Throne Speech, I should say, Mr. Speaker, that would put \$95 million over and above what we committed.

* (14:20)

Waterhen Community Funding for Flood Protection Measures

Mrs. Leanne Rowat (Minnedosa): Mr. Speaker, in speaking with Larry Chartrand, the mayor for Waterhen, he had indicated that the situation in Waterhen was definitely getting under control, but the question that he did raise that I would like to ask the minister about is \$72,000 that the community had put forward in creating a permanent dike around their school and community hall. Without doing that, their community would have been in crisis even more so. When he had pushed the government to find out where the \$72,000 was, he was told that it was before Treasury Board.

Can the minister indicate to me, are you saying that Larry Chartrand isn't accurate, because this is what he has shared with me? So I'd like to know from the minister opposite where their \$72,000 is and when they can expect that money back from this government.

Hon. Rosann Wowchuk (Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Initiatives): Mr. Speaker, I would say to the member that the money has been approved. There have been discussions. Since Larry is my constituent and my staff have been in there

during the flooding period, they have been made aware of the money, but I will certainly follow up.

I can assure this House that we have dealt with this at Treasury Board. It has passed, and the community has been notified that this government is paying for the permanent dike.

Personal Care Homes Nursing Shortage

Mr. Larry Maguire (Arthur-Virden): Mr. Speaker, the Virden retention committee was told a year ago that the nursing shortage would be taken care of in their community. Today we see an announcement by the government that they're going to have some courses. This is déjà vu for the people of Virden.

All over Manitoba, there are personal care home beds that are empty in this province, large percentages of beds empty in particular locations, yet this is too little, too late again, Mr. Speaker. This government doesn't recognize the seriousness of the circumstances in rural Manitoba as well as here in the city. They're announcing new personal care homes when they can't even fill the ones that they have presently got, not that there isn't a need for those, but the nursing shortage that we've got is not going to be fixed now. This is just placating more. We saw courses be announced a year ago for nurses that were never taking place. The nursing shortage was never filled.

Will this minister guarantee that these nursing shortages will be filled now from this program?

Hon. Theresa Oswald (Minister of Health): Mr. Speaker, I can correct for the member that we didn't announce some courses. We announced \$40 million to increase personal care home staffing guidelines in Manitoba. These guidelines have not been reviewed since 1973 or thereabouts. We certainly do know that the level of care, the acuity of patients that exist, residents that exist in personal care homes today is not the same as 1973. That's why we took the advice of nurses, of regional health authorities, of those working in long-term care on how we should improve those staffing guidelines.

I can say to the member opposite that we're going to continue to aggressively recruit and educate nurses in this province. I can also say for the record that we're not going to fire a thousand of them.

Mr. Speaker: Time for Oral Questions has expired.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

Manitoba Mining Industry

Mr. Gerard Jennissen (Flin Flon): Mr. Speaker, Manitoba's \$3-billion a year mining industry is booming. With any boom we see both opportunities and challenges. One challenge is maintaining the long-term viability of the Flin Flon smelter. Our government will continue to work with the company to help meet its environmental targets. As noted today by HudBay's VP of technical services and human resources in the *Free Press*, "the zinc smelter which is newer and has zero emissions is more profitable." I've always believed that going green is good for the bottom line as well as the environment. There are mining opportunities all over the north that are good for every corner of our province.

On October 19, I joined the members of the Mines branch to witness a spectacular planned demolition of the Farley Mine head frame in Lynn Lake. This demolition was necessary for safety and development reasons. That afternoon, we listened to a very interesting presentation on bioheap leaching technology given by a representative from Western Areas NL, an Australian company. Such technology can be applied to cleaning up mine tailings or directly used to extract ore, as is presently being piloted in Finland.

Prospector Drilling is drilling for Western Areas NL around Lynn Lake. Independent Nickel is also active in the region and is bringing in more drills, including the Boart Longyear Company. Carlisle Goldfields Limited is actively drilling at the old MacLellan gold mine.

Around Sherridon, Halo Resources is very active. Near Vamp Lake, Mourgor Resources are drilling for HudBay Minerals. Near Snow Lake, there is drilling at the Lolar Lake deposit. Results there are very exciting.

The search for zinc, copper, nickel, gold and other minerals continues unabated. Mr. Speaker, all this is just the tip of the iceberg. I am proud that our government's Mineral Exploration Assistance Program, MEAP, this year includes 42 different projects, 15 of which are in the Lynn Lake, Leaf Rapids, Snow Lake, Sherridon area.

We hope the super cycle in mining continues for many more years. This is critical for the continued economic development, not only for northern Manitoba, but also for our entire province. Thank you.

Mary Ellen Clark

Mr. Stuart Briese (Ste. Rose): Mr. Speaker, today I would like to bring to the attention of the House a woman who is simply an inspiration. In October, Mary Ellen Clark was awarded the Great-West Life Award of Distinction at CancerCare Manitoba's Guardian Angel Benefit for Women's Cancer.

This award recognizes her volunteer work with CancerCare's Manitoba Breast Cancer Centre of Hope community contact group. Mary Ellen provides support and guidance to rural women and their families facing cancer. But, Mr. Speaker, the greatest gift Mary Ellen gives is hope. She is a survivor of cancer after being diagnosed 12 years ago.

Mary Ellen is also the palliative care co-ordinator of volunteers for Neepawa and District, having developed a program for the Assiniboine RHA. But her community service goes far beyond working tirelessly to help those living with cancer. Mary Ellen is truly a pillar of the Neepawa community.

She is a member of the fundraising personal care home group and the chair of the special events committee. Mary Ellen is on the medical committee to help form a community clinic, as well as recruit and retain doctors. She served as chair for both Neepawa Yellowhead Centre and building committee for the Neepawa United Church. Neepawa's 125th homecoming in 2008 will be all the better with her involvement on the planning committee.

Mary Ellen is well known for helping young people. She is a member of the Inner Wheel, a volunteer women's group associated with the Rotary Club, and she is responsible for the Rotary Exchange student weekend. Currently, she has three Neepawa junior hockey players billeted at her home and has had as many as four. She continues to support the Beta Sigma Phi Sorority as an alumni member. Mary Ellen has shown a commitment to post-secondary education, having served on the Brandon University Board of Governors.

I would like to congratulate her on her most recent award and also acknowledge she has received the Brandon YMCA Woman of Distinction Award and the Citizen of the Year Award from the Neepawa and District Chamber of Commerce.

Her dedication and enthusiasm seem boundless. Mary Ellen Clark has touched many hearts and lives.

Mr. Speaker, I cannot express how blessed and thankful we all are to know Mary Ellen. Thank you.

Sgt. Tommy Prince Legion Branch No. 158

Mr. Tom Nevakshonoff (Interlake): Mr. Speaker, it is my privilege to rise today to tell members of the Legislative Assembly of a very special event which occurred in the community of Hodgson on November 12. I am referring to the renaming of the Royal Canadian Legion there to the Sergeant Tommy Prince Branch No. 158 in honour of Canada's most decorated Aboriginal warrior.

Mr. Prince was a member of the Brokenhead Band, formerly St. Peter's Reserve, and was a direct descendant of Chief Peguis. After several attempts, he was successful in enlisting in 1940 and was a sergeant with the Canadian Parachute Battalion by 1942. As he was a superb marksman and tracker, he was assigned to the 1st Canadian Special Service Battalion which soon merged with an elite American unit to become the 1st Special Service Force. This unique group of 1,600 men, often described as the best small force of fighting men ever assembled, later became known as the Devil's Brigade.

For his action in Italy and France during World War II, he was personally decorated by King George VI at Buckingham Palace with a Canadian Military Medal and the U.S. Silver Star, one of only three Canadians to hold both of these medals.

In 1950, he re-enlisted to fight in Korea with the Princess Patricia's Canadian Light Infantry, and he fought in the famous battle of Kapyong which repelled a massive attack by Chinese Communist forces. Over the course of his military career, he was decorated a total of nine times.

After having opposed Chinese communism and Nazi fascism, Tommy returned to Canada to a country that denied him the right to vote in federal elections and refused him the same benefits as other Canadian veterans. Fiercely proud of his heritage, he dedicated the remainder of his life to attaining increased educational and economic opportunities for Aboriginal peoples.

After a hard life, he died at the age of 62 at the Deer Lodge Hospital and is interred in Brookside Cemetery.

We honour the memory of a truly remarkable man. Meegwetch, Mr. Speaker.

* (14:30)

Alex Krawec

Mr. Ralph Eichler (Lakeside): On October 26, Alex Krawec of Stonewall was honoured with the 2007 Murray Smith Award from the Manitoba Council on Aging, acknowledging his skills in the area of advocacy, volunteerism and policy influence. Although Mr. Krawec has never wished to use his accomplishments as a way of attracting attention, he is most deserving of recognition through this award.

Mr. Krawec was involved in municipal politics in Stonewall from 1979 to 1986. He served as both a city councillor and as mayor. While in council, he contributed to the beautification of Main Street and helped in the creation of a designated area of town to be dedicated for seniors' activities.

He was also a long-serving volunteer in many organizations including: The Kinsmen Club in Stonewall, The Heart and Stroke Foundation, Stonewall and District Health Centre, Interlake School Division Board, the South Interlake Fifty-Plus Incorporated, among many others. Alex is also a supporter of the Manitoba Association of Multi-Purpose Senior Centres. He has dedicated countless volunteer hours to the betterment of his community and has no intention of stopping any time soon.

Alex is admired and loved by his family, friends and community. He continues to have a full life of volunteering and travelling, but most importantly, spending his time with his family. I would also like to take a moment to acknowledge his wife, Shirley, who is a wonderful woman and also an important part of our community.

Mr. Speaker, I ask the members here today to join me in congratulating Alex Krawec for being honoured the 2007 Murray Smith Award. His dedication and leadership have made him a role model to people everywhere. His commitment and advocacy on behalf of seniors is outstanding. We thank him for his hard work in helping to make the community of Stonewall and the province of Manitoba a better place to live.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Bill Blaikie

Mr. Jim Maloway (Elmwood): Mr. Speaker, very few people in our province would not know the federal Member of Parliament for Elmwood-Transcona. Bill Blaikie is probably one of the most recognized political names in all of Canada.

His work over the last 28 years has set the benchmark for what an outstanding parliamentary career should look like. In fact, Bill was voted by fellow MPs as this year's best Member of Parliament.

Bill has always had a strong social justice view of the world which helped him become a compassionate and dedicated minister. He used his faith to advocate for those who found themselves without a voice of their own in Winnipeg's North End. He reached out and ministered to those who believed that the problems of the North End of Winnipeg were problems for other people. Bill made them see what was happening in their own city and told them that if we don't elect representatives who care, then we will never see life improve for those who need the most help.

I think it is safe to say that for all Canadians there are only a few political documents that define who we are as a people. One of those is and always will be the Canada Health Act. What most people don't know is that Bill was instrumental in developing that legislation. He used his skill as a parliamentarian to influence the government to protect Canadians from private, for-profit health care and to ensure that governments do not bill their citizens for medically necessary procedures.

Bill has made a lasting and distinguished mark on our province, the Parliament of Canada, and every citizen in our country. His style of politics has earned him the respect of both political friends and foes. Even in the bedlam of Ottawa Question Period, when Bill gets on his feet the Chamber falls to a hush.

It has been a pleasure to work with and learn from this outstanding parliamentarian. I know he will continue to do great things and influence the great minds and leaders of tomorrow.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

GOVERNMENT BUSINESS

THRONE SPEECH

(Seventh Day of Debate)

Mr. Speaker: Resume adjourned 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, standing in the name of the honourable Member for Springfield (Mr. Schuler), who has 23 minutes remaining.

Order. Before I recognize the honourable Member for Springfield, I'll recognize the honourable Member for Lac du Bonnet (Mr. Hawranik), who has some House business to take care of.

House Business

Mr. Gerald Hawranik (Official Opposition House Leader): On House business, Mr. Speaker, I'd like to announce that the Spirited Energy resolution will be considered next Thursday, sponsored by the Member for Minnedosa (Mrs. Rowat).

Mr. Speaker: Okay. The resolution that we will be dealing with next Tuesday will be Spirited Energy; that will be brought forward by the honourable Member for Minnedosa. That's for information for all members of the House.

* * *

Mr. Speaker: Now we will resume debate on the adjourned debate. The honourable Member for Springfield, who has 23 minutes remaining.

Mr. Ron Schuler (Springfield): Yes, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to continue where I left off yesterday, and before I get into the meat of the Throne Speech, I thank the Progressive Conservative researcher who does a lot of the education research, Julie Goertzen, who does an amazing job, and all the other staff of the PC caucus who work very hard. I know that, unlike the minions of staff that work for the NDP government—they come in at 9, 9:30 in the morning, leave at 3—our staff has to be in, working hard. They are very short in numbers, but they are great in the quality and the kind of work that they produce. We really, really appreciate everything that they do for us, particularly Julie, who makes sure that we uncover all the horrific scandals that take place in the Department of Education, that we try and keep the Minister of Education (Mr. Bjornson) on the straight and narrow.

With that, Mr. Speaker, I would like to get into the Throne Speech and give reasons why I believe every member of this—[interjection] We want to give reasons why all Manitobans should be opposed to this lame-duck, lacklustre Throne Speech. In fact, in

the United States after about six and a half, seven years, of a presidency, a president then goes into what's called the lame-duck phase of his administration. And what's interesting is that's about where the current government is.

They've produced a lame-duck Throne Speech and is seen as go nowhere. It's a backwards, not forwards, Throne Speech and it is most unfortunate. We have asked all kinds of questions in regard to safety for communities around the province. I've had the opportunity to speak to this House or ask the minister of highways about the CNR main line bridge over the floodway.

Ms. Marilyn Brick, Acting Speaker, in the Chair

It's another one of these intriguing kinds of NDP ways of doing things. First, what they did is they built a new bridge to the side of the old train bridge, rerouted the train, then they ripped down the old bridge and rebuilt the old bridge with a new bridge, which then they'll reroute the train onto the second new bridge, and then they'll rip down the old new bridge.

In the meantime, we have one of the busiest two-lane bridges, bar none, in the province of Manitoba, which even the minister's department deemed as not being safe, goes without even a fresh coat of paint, Madam Acting Speaker. It is very unfortunate that what we have is a government that is more concerned about the oil and grease and steel of a locomotive, the safety that it gets across safely and not about human beings, about families, children, individuals, citizens of ours travelling across PTH 15 or the Dugald bridge.

That's why, Madam Acting Speaker, we have such difficulty, whether it's at a local level, to support this Throne Speech.

Even more to the point is the kind of scandals that we have seen, and we're seeing no addressing of the issues that stand in front of the government, for instance, Crocus—right. Now the government is back into court because of the debacle, because of the unparalleled scandal of the Crocus Fund and its collapse.

Again, we know that this Premier, the Member for Concordia (Mr. Doer), is no stranger to being sued. When he was a minister in the Howard Pawley government, there was a lawsuit against him then for his mishandling of affairs. It was something that was settled out of court. The taxpayers put up an awful lot of money. We never were given the reasons why

or what the settlement was, but that's the way this NDP government and the previous Howard Pawley government dealt with scandals. What they did is they just settle these things in secrecy, pay out a lot of taxpayers' money and nobody is the smarter for it.

Besides the Crocus fiasco, we've seen all kinds of other fiascos. For instance, we've seen the Seven Oaks School Division which we have—now it's been termed as the tale of two financial statements. Never before in the history of this province have we seen where a school division—and yes, you heard it correctly, this is a legal entity that is supposed to be an overseer of the education system in a certain jurisdiction—appoints itself as a developer, and then, when gets caught, runs two sets of books.

* (14:40)

They were quite unabashed, quite open about it. What they did is they put them up on the Web site so when the Auditor went in, the Auditor audited it and said, well, on the development side it looked—on the development side, financial statements, the first set of books, it looked like they made money. Unfortunately, on the second set of books, the property that was retained, there was a significant loss.

We've gone on and on in this House with the minister, taking up a considerable amount of time and have asked who should be held accountable. Should it be the Public Schools Finance Board who, Madam Acting Speaker, was chock full of individuals on that board who, surprisingly enough, gave an incredible amount of money to the NDP? The chairman of the board, Ben Zaidman, \$1,500; Mary Annes, \$412; Glenn Nicholls, \$1,330; Howard Mathieson and another individual from that household, \$3,725. An awful lot of money was given by that Public Schools Finance Board.

Interestingly enough, they find out that there's a scandal. There were documents sent and not received, that there were motions made and not recorded. Oh, sorry. They were recorded afterwards. Nobody remembered the motion having come forward. Nobody remembers it being seconded. Nobody remembered it being voted on, but it still, somehow, made it into that set of minutes.

We asked this minister, we asked this government: Is no one going to be held to account?

Then there was the school division. You have the disgraced former campaign manager of the Premier, the Member for Concordia (Mr. Doer), and

his government, Superintendent Brian O'Leary. He donated to the NDP \$1,492 in 1998; \$1,400 in '99; \$915 in 2000; \$415 in 2001; \$815 in 2002; \$315 in 2005; \$300 in 2006. Here's an individual who is clearly a contributor to the NDP, who was clearly in charge of this absolute disastrous campaign by a school board to get involved in a land development which lost an unbelievable amount of money on behalf of the taxpayers. Then you have that school trustee, who had the forethought to step off the board, who in 2002, Ross Eadie, gave \$335; 2003, he gave \$323; 2004, he gave \$627.

Here we have a school board chock-full of New Democrats, big financial donors to the NDP, who have clearly, clearly mismanaged money, who have had all kinds of investigations. We asked this government, we asked this minister: Who is held accountable? They all sit, in the case of the minister stands, shrugs his shoulders, says, well, there were two sets of books, but that's common practice under New Democratic governments, that two sets of books are run. In this case, surprisingly, something I have never seen in my many years of business that you would run two sets of books to cover the losses, but nobody, nobody's held accountable.

In the case of Ross Eadie, a big donor to the NDP provincially, who should have known better on the board, who should have had the foresight to have pointed out to the board that there was something wrong, that it was illegal, it was contrary to the Public Schools Finance Board. In fact, we've now put forward legislation in the last session, and it's on the Order Paper again, that's going to have to deal with that. Not that it isn't laid out in legislation, it would be an assumption that that would be common sense. You are a school board. Your whole role, everything that you're there for is the education of children, and to be a land developer is outside of that scope, way outside of that scope. Individuals, trustees, former trustees like Ross Eadie should have known that, should have known that it would take common sense, that you wouldn't get yourself sucked into this kind of thing, that you would have the fortitude to withstand it.

So we look at the Throne Speech. Does it deal with any of these issues? Does it deal with problems that have happened in the past? It basically jumps over that period of time and deals with the 1990s. I pointed out that the Member for Elmwood (Mr. Maloway) had been here five years before our pages had even been born, and a chunk of Manitobans weren't even cognizant of what was going on in the

'90s. But we have a government that lives in the '90s, forgets all its scandals from 2000 to 2006, and it gives a Throne Speech in 2007 with no vision, no plan, a lame-duck Throne Speech the likes of which is disgraceful.

I mentioned in my comments that I made yesterday, before I ran out of time, that here you had a party, here you had a Premier (Mr. Doer), the Member for Concordia, who had—has political capital, unbelievable political capital, and he won't spend it. He won't give us a vision, even a vision that potentially we wouldn't agree with, but something that moves the province forward. Instead, they've decided to be a lame-duck government. Do they deal with the sins of the past? Have they dealt with the crisis that's facing this province with the whole lawsuit of Crocus?

Walking in this morning, an individual walking through the parking lot stopped me, and he said, don't give up on that Crocus thing. He works downtown. He said, there is such a loss in confidence in money management. We're seeing the flight of capital out of this province. The right thing would have been to have called a public inquiry. Do we get anything? Is anybody held accountable? We know that from the front benches of this NDP government, the Member for Concordia is the Premier. We know that all around him, all through him, Cabinet ministers, staff, have fingerprints all over the Crocus file. Nobody is held accountable.

But they harp about the '90s, the '90s where many Manitobans have no idea and wouldn't know if they're telling the truth or not telling the truth. The thing is that we wanted this government to look forward. In fact, they have this slogan, forward not backward, and then promptly, upon being elected, their entire mantra, whether it's speeches, whether it's policy, whether it's the Throne Speech, doesn't seem to be what it is. It's all backward, not forward. How shameful.

I asked a question yesterday in my comments: What kind of a province are we going to see in 2010? What kind of a province are our children going to inherit in 2015, 2020? Tell us. Tell us where this province is going to be and what it's going to look like. Give us a grand design. Don't feed us lame duck. That's what we've got.

I don't believe there should be one member, there shouldn't be one member in this House that should stand up and defend this pathetic Throne Speech. This isn't a minority government. This isn't a

government on its last legs. This is a government that had a lot of political capital.

I know my time is running out. It is not a document we can support. This government has three and a half years left in its mandate before it's kicked out. They had the time to put up a Throne Speech that looked forward. Instead, it looks backward, and that's how come this Throne Speech does not deserve the support of this House.

Ms. Erin Selby (Southdale): Madam Acting Speaker, I am rising today to talk about my support for our Throne Speech and, of course, to mention that I also will be voting against the amendments. But I want to speak first a little bit about this process because, unlike some of the new MLAs who may be coming in here, I've got a lot of experience speaking publicly and talking in front of people, but I've had a very different experience in my public-speaking life.

One of the big differences is how ideas are shared in this House. Now, in television, the perfect sentence—do you know how long it is, Madam Acting Speaker? It's just three words. That was a perfect sentence right there: Just three words. The longest a sentence should ever be is seven words. Very, very different from what we do in here.

* (14:50)

So I was trying to think about how do I write a speech that different, when I normally think about doing something quickly and precisely and as simply as possible, and now I'm allowed to speak for 20 or 30 minutes, perhaps longer if the House grants me leave. But I thought a little bit more about this process, and I have half an hour to speak with no commercial breaks, no floor director telling me to wrap it up, no one in my ear giving me some counts, and, other than your authority, Madam Acting Speaker, then I have—well, I can't say your undivided attention, but whether you pay attention to me or not, it's my turn and I get to speak.

I'm taking some of my inspiration from the honourable Member for Minto (Mr. Swan). He, of course, spoke about his football and his love of football and how he related what happened in the Throne Speech to a football game. I appreciate, although I don't always understand his references when he explains the House in terms of football, but I appreciate that that was his reference from what he speaks. So, taking his inspiration, I won't be talking football, but instead, I'm going to spend the next few minutes talking about my children.

My three daughters are growing up with a generation of young girls, soon to be women, probably sooner than I'm ready for, who believe that women can do anything they want, that they can hold any position and have any job that they choose. I actually overheard them telling someone the other day that their mom is the prime minister. Now, I explained that I'm not quite. Not quite. So they have settled on boss of the house. I'm okay with that, too. So is my husband, so that works out just fine.

But it shows me that their generation is going to see absolutely no limits to their potential. I'm really proud that it's because of things such as electing a record number of women to the Legislature this year that my daughters have that feeling that women can do anything. We've also got a lot of new initiatives announced in the Throne Speech that are going to support women and improve particularly women's health initiatives.

I'm really, really proud to say this government is investing in upgrades to the Women's Hospital at Health Sciences Centre. Now, not only are we investing in it, but we're doing something that I'm particularly interested in. We're talking to people. There's a consultation process that goes along with this. Now, it would be understandable that we would speak to health-care workers and doctors and medical professionals, but women and the community at large and men as well will be consulted in this process to determine what it is that they best need, what will best serve them in this new hospital. I can't think of a better way to include the community than to actually consult with the community before making large decisions with much of their money.

It also means that women in my south Winnipeg constituency will also have more options when it comes to health care. I'm excited to see investments in the south-end birthing centre. That's going to mean more choices for women at a very exciting but stressful time in a woman's life when she's planning the birth—if you get a chance to plan it, sometimes it comes by surprise, which also means I'm very happy to say that the women in my constituency won't have far to go with the redevelopment of the maternity ward at St. Boniface Hospital, yet another option for women. Now, I've gone a little bit off track. I stopped talking about my kids and I promise you stories and stories and photos, if you choose to look at them afterwards, as well.

Now, a sad thing about having kids, a little unfortunate thing, is you, at least in my experience, get to know the health-care system really quite well, quite intimately and, along with our fantastic pediatrician who makes herself incredibly available to us at all kinds of off-hours you wouldn't expect, I've also visited a number of walk-in clinics around Winnipeg. I even visited more than one emergency room, both in the city and outside the city on camping trips as well, and at least one specialist that I can think of offhand.

Now, before you start questioning my parenting skills, granted, I understand that, when I talk about visiting the emergency room often, I'm actually at most of these visits with my daughter Avery. I don't know if that gives you more confidence or less confidence in my parenting skills. Well, the good thing for me is that we have increased the numbers of doctors and nurses that are working in Manitoba and, at the rate I'm going, I'm probably going to get to know a lot of them. Those increases are because of our commitment to increasing the number of doctors or nurses through education spaces in universities and colleges. Now, doesn't that make sense? When you want to see more nurses and doctors, you've got to educate them. You've got to have more spaces for them. I think that's a good place to start.

We're also making investments in children's health, another thing that I see too often with my daughters and their accident-prone lifestyle so far. Children's health care is being improved with important measures like the cardiac catheterization lab at the Children's Hospital. Also, we've just developed and announced the new asthma clinic and allergy clinic for children, the allergy clinic that I'll be happy to be inspecting first-hand at the end of January with my daughters once again.

I have always, always received excellent care in Manitoba hospitals both inside and outside of Winnipeg, and in a timely manner. Manitoba has lowered wait times. I want to share with you some of those wait times that we can be proud of. Radiation therapy: one week. All so important for people to have the comfort and the security to know that they will get in for that important treatment. MRIs: six weeks. We have the lowest wait time in Canada for non-emergency cardiac surgery. Now, I say non-emergency cardiac surgery because if you've got an emergency, there won't be a wait, you will get in immediately.

Being a working mom means I'm also familiar with the day-care system. I've been working full time since, well, before my daughters were born and have continued to do so, and so have relied on people and other family members to help take care of the children when I'm at work, along with my husband and extended family. I think it's really important that working parents, mothers, fathers, grandparents, everybody, recognize that you don't just want to park your kids in a space with supervision. You want high-quality, early education with stimulation and activities that engage the children and help them thrive.

I'm proud that this Throne Speech has, once again, talked about our commitment to child care. Our commitment that means, in 2007, our budget increased the provincial investment in child care by more than \$14 million. Even though the federal government decided to axe the national child-care program, we've filled that money that was promised.

We're also making investments in training and in salary. We want to have the people that are working in our child-care facilities to be understanding the best ways to engage and to stimulate children and to keep them active and learning and healthy on top of that as well. We're training more than 700 new child-care workers, 250 of those will graduate this year.

We've also re-initiated our promises for more spaces as we've been doing since coming into government. We will be funding 2,500 more spaces for Manitoba children, high-quality spaces where they will learn and play and interact with their peers.

Just recently, I met with a number of day-care operators and workers in my area. They expressed this need for more trained workers. I think that in Southdale, in particular, we could put in those 2,500 spaces and probably fill them at the end of the week. But that is why we're providing financial help to help those early child-care workers upgrade their qualifications. Many of them are working in day cares now and would like to see further education to their skills, and we are going to help them do that.

Now it's a funny thing about having kids, but sometimes you don't exactly get the full story out of them. Sometimes the story is exaggerated or added to or some things are omitted. When I was working in television, I was lucky, before my children started school full time, that my sister-in-law cared for our children in our home. It was a wonderful opportunity for my children to bond with their aunt and I always

felt good about the care that they were in. At the end of the day when I would be making supper and wanting to be sure that I was offering a balanced meal to my children, I would ask them: what did you have for lunch? So if they had chicken for lunch, I don't want to make it again for supper; you want to balance these things. And they would say—they called my sister-in-law Ja-ja when they were little: Ja-ja didn't feed us today. Well, I knew this wasn't true because Ja-ja, or Jacqueline, as we call her, was very conscientious about making sure the children ate well and played outside and got lots of exercise and interesting activities. But I would hear that story all the time: Ja-ja didn't feed us today.

Well, I was lucky that I had the confidence, and I knew Jacqueline well enough to know that, well, this is just a story that they're telling me, probably hoping that they get a little extra treat of some kind. But I knew that they were in safe care. I think it's really important for all parents to be able to have that trust in their children's caregiver.

New plans announced in this Throne Speech for the development of a Safe Child Care Charter, and this is something that will provide all parents with the confidence that their children are being looked after in a safe environment.

* (15:00)

Now, as a working mom, I can't say that I don't still have some focus on them throughout the day and wonder what they're doing, and, oh, it looks like school's just letting out right now; I wonder how their day went. But at least it's important to know that they are in a safe environment. This safe environment, Safe Child Care Charter, will extend to school-aged children, so that parents will continue knowing that their children are in a safe place, this of course building on the anti-bullying initiatives that are already implemented in Manitoba schools.

I spend most of my Saturdays at my children's dance class. It's actually not a bad thing, I know. I'm not looking for pity right now that I spend the entire Saturday at dance class. My husband might be looking for some pity from you, but I think it's not a bad deal. I get to drop them off at an activity that they're going to learn to love—soon, I'm sure. They get plenty of exercise and, because they don't actually allow parents to watch the class, my husband and I get to go for a coffee. We get to get some shopping done which is how I've managed to get, I think, most of my Christmas shopping done already. It's really not a bad deal to drop them off at

dance class. I highly recommend it for parents with small children.

I think it's also important, though, not only to encourage children to exercise and have a healthy lifestyle, but also to role model that healthy lifestyle for them. I was particularly excited to see that we are banning trans fat from our children's schools. I banned trans fat from my own home back in 1993, actually, when I was in university and I'd heard about some of the studies coming out.

Now that's not to say that we don't eat treats and that we don't have junk food once in a while, but I think it's important to have it in moderation. How can we expect our children to learn moderation and to learn about the best choices for nutrition if they're not learning that in school? I think, as a parent, it's important to be a good example, and I think that's a good role for our schools as well, to be good examples.

Now I am very grateful that we will still be having hot lunch days. One, because I think it's okay to have the occasional piece of pizza or hotdog or even the bag of chips that goes along with it, but I'm particularly grateful as a mother when those hot lunch days come out and I don't have to make three hot lunches in the morning. I would never want to see that taken away from the mothers and fathers and caregivers who are making lunches across Manitoba.

I think it's also important that you model the need for a healthy, active lifestyle and that getting exercise should be really a part of a healthy day. I try to keep that in mind by working out and running and occasionally taking a yoga class. I've even picked up one of the Manitoba in motion pedometers to keep track of my steps, which I forgot to wear today. No doubt I would have made 10,000 steps if I had it on today. But this is something that any Manitoban can do, pick up a pedometer and just try to challenge yourself to go a little bit further each day. I do this to feel better, to stay healthy, but mostly so my children will see what a healthy, active lifestyle looks like.

The nice thing is if you're new to exercise or perhaps don't really know how to get started, any Manitoban can log on to the Manitoba in motion Web site. There are all kinds of tips for people of all ages. There are wonderful games you can play with your family, with your kids, if you're just new to exercise, older, younger; lots of tips for people no matter what level you're at and how to get started. And the best of all, it's free. Maybe have to buy a pair of running shoes to get started, but otherwise

you can just get going on that healthy lifestyle and nutrition tips all on your own.

I know that in Southdale that the bike paths have been growing for some time and connecting and meaning that we can all get out on our bicycles or our rollerblades or even just walk a little bit further, get to know our neighbours. I'm really looking forward to the new Duff Roblin Trail to be built that of course is going to go from Winnipeg all the way to Birds Hill Park. Now I don't think that my family is quite ready for that distance from Southdale to Birds Hill Park, but it's a fantastic goal to have in the future. Someday all of us will ride all the way there. I'm not sure if we'll make it all the way back. That will be our second goal.

Now I know it's still November, at least for a day or two, but my daughters got out the *Nutcracker* last night and we started to read it and talk turned to the Royal Winnipeg Ballet's production of the *Nutcracker*. Now some of their friends are actually going to be in the production this year which was going to be terribly exciting. It's been a part of our house Christmas tradition to always attend either *Nutcracker* or last year it was the world premiere of *Peter Pan* which was also exciting. It's a tradition that I remember from way back. When I was a little girl, we used to do that.

It's so exciting that here in Winnipeg in the middle of the Prairies we have a world-class ballet company at prices that I can afford to take the whole family to, and I'm blessed for that. It's not the only world-class cultural experience that Manitoba offers. I could probably go on for 30 minutes talking about all the fantastic cultural experiences you can have here in Winnipeg and across the province, and I'm proud that this government recognizes how important culture is.

We recognize it through supporting endowments of all kinds of our cultural experiences such as Royal Winnipeg Ballet, Manitoba Theatre company, just to name a couple. It's exciting to take part in all kinds of cultural events, and if you're interested in that kind of thing, you can certainly do it.

There are so many festivals in Manitoba. I was really proud to take part in another cultural event fairly new to Manitoba, the Manito Ahbee Festival, the second year it ran. This year it ran for 10 full days, and it's such a wonderful opportunity to bring cultures together, to get to know neighbours, to overcome—maybe you've had some fear of getting to know your neighbours, or you haven't had a chance

to mingle with them well. Well, here's a good chance at the Manito Ahbee Festival. We also got to hear some really great music. I saw some fantastic dancing. All in all, I'm so glad that this festival will be back every year.

I'm often asked if I miss being on TV, and my answer is, no, not at all. Don't miss it one bit, but I do miss one thing. I miss the fantastic array of local bands that used to come into *Breakfast Television*. Being a mom, I don't actually go out and see bands, ever. I shouldn't say that. I'm sure there are plenty of moms who still manage to do that. This one doesn't, though. So the only chance I ever got to see any of our local bands was 7 o'clock in the morning when they showed up at the studio, and I could almost pretend I was hip because I knew some of the bands in town. I'm sure that some of the names have changed in the little while that I've been out of TV, but it has been interesting to see that our Manitoba recording artists have been awfully busy releasing more than 200 albums, and not only releasing them here in Manitoba but getting recognition outside the province. They brought home 39 national awards this year, something we should all be proud of.

You're probably getting the impression I'm a little partial to the arts, and that's true. I am. My husband and I had a deal when our daughters were born that I was in charge of arts and culture and he's in charge of sports. So far, I'm doing a little better. He needs to pick up the pace if he wants to get them interested in anything other than, well, a little bit of football. Though I have to say he did pretty good back in, I guess, it would have been 2001 when the Bombers went to the Grey Cup in Montréal–Montréal Grey Cup. I was living there then. My daughters were about a year old, and the first word Avery ever said was touchdown. The very first word on Grey Cup day. So my husband started out good but he's dropped the ball since then, and I'm winning with arts and culture so far.

But I do think getting involved in sports is really important for our young people. I think that learning to be a team player—I certainly have a good team here, all people who seem to know how to be team players—is an important thing for kids and, of course, I talked about it earlier, staying active. I'm really proud that this government is supporting programs such as Community Places, which means there are more places for kids to play. Things like safe places for kids to play, and everybody, as I talked about earlier, should know that their children are in a safe place.

Now, the unfortunate thing is, all kids do need a safe place to play. Some kids just need a safe place to go. That's where the Lighthouse program comes into place, and I'm happy to see that we're increasing the number of Lighthouse programs because for those kids who need it, that place can really be a lifeline. The Winakwa Community Centre serves part of my constituency and it, too, has a Lighthouse program. They see about 40 to 60 young people in the evening, and in the summertime, they're open all day long. This can be a place just to hang out—which as I remember as a teenager, that was pretty much all I was looking to do, hang out—a safe place for them to do that. For those who want to get involved in sport or game, there are those opportunities as well.

We're also allowing other kids who do want to focus on getting into sports, we're giving them that opportunity by helping them with some of the expenses, because it's one thing to register for the sporting activity, and maybe you've got the money together for that, but then you get the money together for the equipment needed to do that. It can be a lot for many families, but with First Sports, an initiative that means that more children can get involved in sports by helping to pay for that much-needed equipment.

When we have kids playing more sports, it means we need more places for those kids to play. I guess we have a good problem in Southdale; we've got more kids wanting to get involved than we have space to put them in. We also have a whole lot of volunteers both at the Winakwa Community Centre and the Southdale Community Centre that keep those programs running. This government understands that kids and young people need a place to go, and that's why we've dedicated \$60 million toward community centres and soccer fields over the next four years.

* (15:10)

Well, Madam Acting Speaker, I've got plenty more I could say, but I thought I didn't have a floor director. I forgot about the power of your Chair to tell me when it's time to wrap up.

I do want to say that as a parent I'm looking forward and looking ahead to the future and seeing that my children will have so many opportunities and, should they choose to continue living in Manitoba, and I believe they will, they have choices for universities, they have low tuition rates and a tuition rebate when they decide to plant roots here in Manitoba.

Madam Acting Speaker, I've so many reasons that I support the Throne Speech and so many reasons I'm proud to stand alongside my colleagues, and I'm happy to have chosen Manitoba as a place to raise my family. Thank you for allowing me the chance to share this with you.

Mrs. Mavis Taillieu (Morris): Madam Acting Speaker, it's with a mild distaste, I guess, that I must stand and speak to this Throne Speech, because there is certainly nothing visionary in the Throne Speech at all.

But, before I get into my comments directly regarding this lack of vision and this lack of bold initiatives at all in this government's Throne Speech, I want to just take a moment to thank Mr. Speaker for his good guidance in the Chamber and the Deputy Speaker and acting speakers, also the table officers, the Chamber assistants and the pages. Certainly, it's a different experience, I'm sure, as you learn as you participate in the ongoings in the Chamber, and we're very pleased that you're able to be here with us. I also want to congratulate everyone who has been re-elected back into this Chamber, and certainly extend best wishes to those newly elected people as well.

Just to follow along what the Member for Springfield (Mr. Schuler) said, I think we also need to recognize the tremendous hard work of our caucus staff here in the building. There's very few of them and they do a tremendous job, Madam Acting Speaker.

I guess at this point it's also very appropriate to congratulate the Bisons on the win for the Vanier Cup last weekend and also say that the Blue Bombers had a fantastic season and did very well in the last game. I know I was at home watching the Grey Cup game in my Milt Stegall-signed jersey.

An Honourable Member: Milt Stegall-signed jersey?

Mrs. Taillieu: Yes, a Milt Stegall jersey. It was a great game, Madam Acting Speaker, and I just want to congratulate the Bombers on their season.

I also, I want to thank the members of my constituency, of course, for choosing to re-elect me again for a second term. I'm certainly very happy to be re-elected, to be the Member for Morris and to represent my constituents. There's a variety of people in the constituency and I'm just very grateful for the opportunity to carry on representing them in this

Legislature. I pledge to work very hard for them, Madam Acting Speaker.

I do have to say, about this Throne Speech, there's really nothing new in it. It's just one of those rehashes of old announcements: no vision, no leadership, nothing bold and innovative for the future. This government are masters, masters at re-announcing things over and over and over again, and then pretending they didn't announce them before and it's a brand new announcement, and putting out another press release and taking another photo op and really never delivering.

You know, the public is not fooled. The public is not fooled. They see it all the time, and you know what? They're not fooled by this: oh, well, back to the '90s when this happened. They're not fooled by that. They want to see a government that's accountable, that is showing some leadership, but a government that does not show leadership is one that just keeps going back, back in history. People are going, well, what are you talking about? Why don't you talk about what's going to happen in the future? They never want to talk about the future because, you know, the future for this group of people that has been elected, sadly for Manitobans, is just to get another election, just to get elected. That's their whole mission is get myself re-elected.

Mr. Speaker in the Chair.

They do not have the best interests of Manitobans at heart. They have no vision, no vision for the future, where to take this province so that we can be a have-province. No, they don't want to be a have-province. It's much more convenient to have my hand out. The hand out, Manitoba's hand out to Ottawa: give me more money, we're poor, give us more money. Then, you know, Ottawa does come through and give lots of money to the Province of Manitoba and then what do they do? They turn around and say, look what we're doing. We're putting more money into day care. We're putting more money into health care. We're putting more money into education. The fact of the matter is, that money's coming—unheard-of transfer payments from the federal government—this money's all coming in huge amounts. Huge amounts coming in—*[interjection]* Forty percent? Up to 38 percent of our provincial budget now is money that's transferred from the federal government. And does this government ever acknowledge that? No. They want to take credit for everything that the federal government gives them, Mr. Speaker. *[interjection]*

Well, let's talk about the day-care program. Let's talk about the \$1 billion more that was announced from the federal government over the last three years. Sure, sure you could—it's great, it's great to announce more day-care spaces. That's just great, but let's give credit where credit is due. It's money coming from the federal government. That's how it's going to happen. We know that. It's just—*[interjection]*

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Mrs. Taillieu: Mr. Speaker, they fail to understand that the money, that they're a have-not province, a have-not government who has their hand out to Ottawa, takes the money from Ottawa and then says, look what we did.

Well, no, that's not how it works and Manitobans see through that. There are unprecedented amounts of money coming in and they put it into programs and take credit. Fine, there's good programs, but let's give credit where credit is due. That's to the federal government.

You know, what's particularly disturbing about this Throne Speech is, let's look at what's not in it. Well, there's no mention of Manitoba Hydro. There's no mention. Well, of course, we know why that is. We wouldn't want to talk about bipole 3 that's going to cost Manitobans millions, if not a billion dollars. It's a legacy of debt to our young people. This government is not being upfront about that. They're not talking about that. There are future generations that are going to be terribly impacted by the debt and the legacy of debt that this government is imposing. Yet this government is not being up front with Manitobans. In fact, really, it's about outside international pressures. It's about the pressures from activists like Bobby Kennedy Jr., Mr. Speaker, who the Premier (Mr. Doer) has caved to and is going to do his bidding because, as we know, the Premier's likely looking for some kind of appointments post-politics. Certainly, as soon as he gets that, then you know, kiss Manitoba goodbye. Who cares about what legacy we leave to the province after that?

* (15:20)

No mention of Conawapa. Last year they mentioned it seven times. Not this year. Not once. So, you know, you wonder if they're actually talking about announcements that they're going to do this, but, actually, announce it one year, talk about it, nothing happens. Now it's just out of the Throne Speech. Well, Mr. Speaker, we have to wonder about

the credibility of some of the things that this government says they're going to do because they say they're going to do it, they say it over and over again they're going to do it, but they just never get it done.

Mr. Speaker, I think that the government has an opportunity to show Manitobans some leadership and some vision and guidance for a long term into the future, but they don't; they don't. Yet our leader, the Member for Fort Whyte (Mr. McFadyen), in his alternative Throne Speech outlined a vision for Manitoba as one people, one Manitoba, strong and proud together, things that resonate with us, as Manitobans, for a long term and not just catering to specific interest groups here and there whenever they need to get their votes. That's just not the way responsible, effective, accountable government should work.

Manitobans want and deserve, I should say, they want and deserve a leader. We know that so many young people leave the province, Mr. Speaker, because they're very disillusioned with what's going on here in Manitoba. I think that speaking to some of the young interns that were here from Ottawa the other day and talking about what engages young people, it has to be something that's relevant to young people. It sort of struck home with me to say that, you know, we have a youthful, young leader, and when you have a youthful, young leader as a leader of a party, young people then say, this person is going to address issues that are important to me and to my generation. So I like the idea of a person that's young and youthful and is going to be here a while so that the policies that they put in place are going to impact on them as well.

I think there's a confidence, if you've got a young leader of a party, and young people are very attracted to that. I know that to be true from some of the data that was collected by us during the last election, that people in the younger categories are looking to us, as a party, looking at our leader as someone that can represent them and their ideas going forward for many years into the future, as they intend to be around for that length of time. So someone that's going to be there for a long term representing the values of youthful people will better serve Manitobans and the youth of Manitoba because, after all, young people want to be with young people. Young people want to be with young people. When young people go to other provinces, they go there, in part, because their friends went there, and, Mr. Speaker, I can speak personally to

that because both my sons went to Calgary, and then they decided to leave Calgary and go further west to B.C.

I want to speak about my own constituency for a bit and the lack of anything reasonable which would be allocated, I guess, to my constituency and other constituencies in southern Manitoba. We have a lot of challenges in infrastructure and transportation, in that department. Lots of challenges with roads in my constituency, and I believe that one of the reeves told me that the Rural Municipality of Macdonald and the Rural Municipality of Morris, both within my constituency, have the most number of unpaved kilometres of any other constituencies in the province. So, certainly, there's been neglect by this government to address these issues, and it's one of the issues that comes forward to me all the time.

I certainly impart my concerns to the minister by way of petitions, letters and questions in the House, Mr. Speaker. I want to talk about the Highway No. 1 through Headingley, or from Winnipeg to Headingley. It's a particularly dangerous stretch of road, and often there are a number of accidents there. Some of them are just minor fender benders, but some of them, as we all know, have been extremely and horrifically fatal. There are certain stretches of that highway that are undivided. I know there are logistics around having to do that, but the minister has said in this House that, oh, it's about the willy-nilly development of going out in Headingley.

I can assure him, as he well knows, that it is the development along that highway that has allowed for the expropriation of property which has been donated to the highways department so that they could twin that section of the road. So he knows full well that the developers are paying the cost, and it is because of development that there are certain sections that have been twinned. He also knows full well that, if he had the political will and desire to do it, he could acquire the other pieces of property and twin that highway very quickly.

He also likes to put information on the record about the reeve calling for increased speed limits on the highway, and that is incorrect information. In fact, the municipality did question the people in the community if they wanted the speed limit increased. There's a reason why they did that, Mr. Speaker, and that is because the truck traffic was diverting from the highway and going down Roblin Boulevard. Roblin Boulevard has a higher speed limit and no lights, so a lot of the truck traffic was trying to avoid

that stretch of highway and avoid lights and be able to travel at a very much faster rate through a residential area. The highways department, under the minister's leadership, did not allow that particular stretch to lower the speed limit. Because you have a higher speed limit, people are trying to go that way. That's not what should happen. We should not have that traffic diverted into a residential area. So the other alternative was, if you raise the speed limit, would the truck traffic stay where it belonged? I just wanted to set the record straight on that for the minister.

But we do know that that highway, if the political will was there, could be advanced into the five-year plan. Certainly, I think that they should be looking at what measures can be taken to mitigate any further accidents that might occur along that stretch, Mr. Speaker.

I want to also speak about a horrific accident on Highway 2 near Starbuck where a brother and sister were killed. Again, that's a particularly bad stretch, and I think that it needs to be looked at as well. I think there's wind sheer involved, there's ice involved, and certainly some signs or some reflectors, as some people from the area have suggested, might be warranted, Mr. Speaker.

Again, the highway through Morris, yes, that main street of Morris is going to be repaired, but at the same time the little town is going to be required to put the infrastructure under the street, and that is a very costly undertaking for a community of 1,800 people. In fact, why should they be paying for all of that when that is a major route, a major transportation route, a major economic and tourist route that impacts on the condition of that street? It's just not a local issue, Mr. Speaker.

* (15:30)

I want to just mention the disaster. I mean it seems like there are a lot of things that go wrong in my constituency: from floods in 1997, a huge flood again in 2005, and then a bigger one in 2006. But we also had the only F5 tornado touch down at Elie and destroy people's homes and some community businesses. It was certainly a sight. I have to say I witnessed it. I was on the highway driving toward Elie and saw this tornado forming and stopped on the side of the highway along with a number of other people who sat there in a hailstorm watching a tornado coming—it looked like it was coming down the highway—in absolute shock and awe of what we were seeing and hardly believing it, but, fortunately,

Mr. Speaker, no one was injured and that, I think, is a miracle.

I do want to say, though, that the Minister responsible for Emergency Measures (Mr. Ashton), they dragged their heels for a little bit, and it took some pressure to get them to get their act together and get some money out to some of these victims who were in temporary shelters and, actually, were without anything. Friends of mine, a girl I know very well, she and her husband and her family, their house lifted off—they were in the basement; the house lifted off them and they lost everything. They had, literally, the clothes on their back, so they didn't have identification, they didn't have money. They didn't have anything.

So, to get some aid to them in a very quick manner was very important. Fortunately and thankfully, the community rallied around these people and supported them. It was amazing on that next day to be standing in the municipal office and people came in and said, you know what? I have a house that nobody's living in it right now. You're welcome to it, whoever wants it. That kind of community spirit was wonderful to see. The community rallied together and had a social, a fundraising social, and raised a lot of money to help these people. Of course, that's where I bought the signed Milt Stegall sweatshirt jersey that I was talking about earlier, in support of that cause, Mr. Speaker.

But I do want to say as well, health care in rural Manitoba is a shambles. Certainly, people in my area are experiencing the difficulties of getting health care because of the distance. Home care, there are issues around travelling and being paid for travel, that home-care workers are just not interested in putting out their own money to pay and if they're not getting reimbursed, they look for other jobs, Mr. Speaker, and that's a problem in rural Manitoba to be able to get the home care that people need.

As well, Mr. Speaker, we were told this summer that people outside of Winnipeg would not be allowed into personal care homes in Winnipeg. I asked the minister about this in Estimates, and she said: Oh, I don't know anything about that. But interestingly enough, an e-mail came across my desk from a person, and it says, looks like the beds border issue is done. The Winnipeg Regional Health Authority initiated this as a strategy for short term and it is now done. The beds are now open to receive people from outside the Winnipeg Regional Health

Authority. So, in fact, it was happening. The minister claimed she had no knowledge of it, but I would just say if the minister hasn't got enough knowledge of her department to know something like that, then she shouldn't be running that department. She doesn't know what's going on and she answers questions in Estimates saying that she doesn't know what's going on, basically. I don't know what she's doing as head of the Health Department.

Today and yesterday, I brought up a case of a person that had to have surgery. We're not talking about radiation here. We're talking about the initial surgery. The initial surgery that was going to be done just now, he got done a long time ago, fortunately, because that tumour had grown and no one knew it. It was a good call on his part to go and have this done, but if he hadn't, well, we'd have one less person on the wait list, perhaps. I shudder to think if this government is, in fact, using that approach to lowering wait lists, that if people wait long enough, they're not on the wait list anymore, Mr. Speaker.

By the many omissions, Mr. Speaker, the omissions about talking about the bipole 3 line that's going to, as I said before, leave a legacy of debt to our children and grandchildren. The focus that's shifted in Child and Family Services, that is particularly disturbing. When you look at protecting children that are vulnerable, and now we've taken the focus away from taking them from a place that's not safe and putting them to a place that is safe. We've just said, well, we're not going to do that anymore. We're going to focus on keeping them in that place where they were.

Now, Mr. Speaker, we have to remember why we have a child welfare system, and that is because sometimes, for whatever reason, parents and caregivers are unable or unwilling to look after their children, and, for the protection of those children and the safety of those children, they need to be, for a time, placed in a place of protection and safety with the best interests of those children put before any of the interests of the adults in the picture. But to shift away from that just leaves these vulnerable children more at risk.

We have seen an unprecedented number of children that have died under the care of Family Services or just after being released from Family Services over the last six years. We know it was 31 when we had the tragic death of Phoenix Sinclair. Now we know, at least that it's 32, with the tragic death of Gage Guimond.

We need to look at short-term strategies and long-term strategies. Now, I think long-term strategies to deal with proper supports for families is laudable, but let's look at this really realistically. It doesn't happen overnight. Devolution doesn't happen overnight. This government rushed the process, rushed the process, even though they were told and warned many times, don't rush it, get it right. Aren't the kids worth getting it right for? But they rushed it for their political masters, Mr. Speaker, and look what happened. We are cautioning again here: do not keep children at risk. Make sure children are protected, then look at the supports that, over time, will allow for families to be able to maintain those children in their homes, but the focus should never ever stray from the best interests of the child being placed first and foremost.

You know, we talk—this government, as I said before, they don't talk about all of the money that they're going to get from the federal government and, at a time when all this money is coming in from the federal government, what the heck's going on? Why are they spending \$2.3 billion of new debt? What are they using The Loan Act for? To spend, get \$2.3 billion more debt. So, it just defies logic. I mean, when you're raking in the money, that's when you should be saving for the future, putting it in the rainy day fund, putting it into something that's going to pay down the debt, but no. What do they do? We borrow more money, borrow more money. So, again, it's always the same, Mr. Speaker. This government spends, spends, spends, and then finally Manitobans say, enough of that spending; we're going to kick you guys out of there. And what happens then? Well, of course, they elect us to be fiscally responsible and look after the money, and then we get in, we open the books and we find: Oh, my God, look at this. Now we have all this to deal with. All this mismanagement to deal with.

Mr. Speaker, there are many reasons, as I've indicated, that I'm not supporting this Throne Speech. The fact that the government's misguided directive to Manitoba Hydro, to do the bipole down the west side rather than the east side; refusal to call a public inquiry into Crocus; failure to ensure safety of our children; mismanagement of the health-care system; wasteful spending of \$3 million on the Spirited Energy campaign; complacency toward Manitoba being competitive with other provinces. Instead, we're quite willing to continue to be the poor cousin with our hand out to Ottawa.

* (15:40)

We have failed to keep our young people at home, a failure to address the unprecedented number of shootings and criminals in possession of illegal firearms, a failure to address anything agriculturally related in this Throne Speech, Mr. Speaker, the lack of a long-term strategy in education, in advanced education. We know that our universities are suffering, and, when our universities suffer, our education of our young people suffers, and that is very important. Inaction, mismanagement—I can just go on and on about the failure to address such issues as cleaning up Lake Winnipeg. They tinker, but that doesn't clean up the big mess that they're going to leave.

So, consequently, with all of the things that this government has failed to do, I regrettably cannot support this Throne Speech, Mr. Speaker.

Hon. Peter Bjornson (Minister of Education, Citizenship and Youth): I'm absolutely delighted to rise in the House today to speak against the amendment, as proposed by the members opposite, and speak in favour of a very forward-thinking, visionary Throne Speech for Manitobans who have embraced the philosophy and the work that the NDP government has been doing for the previous eight years. Certainly, a historic third majority is something that we on this side of the House are proud of, and we appreciate the support of our constituents as we move forward in Manitoba and certainly not backward.

I'll start by saying how proud I am to represent the fine constituency of Gimli. It is a very diverse constituency representing five different municipal bodies such as West St. Paul, St. Andrews, the Village of Dunnottar, Winnipeg Beach and, of course, the Municipality of Gimli, Mr. Speaker.

It is a very diverse constituency with respect to the agricultural activity, the fishing industry, the tourism and industry that we have within the boundaries of my constituency. It is also one of the oldest, in terms of the population of the town of Gimli itself, the oldest community in Manitoba. Our government's engaged in an age-friendly study, with the partnership of the University of Manitoba, to assess how the needs of our senior citizens in Gimli are being met by both the provincial and municipal and also the federal government, and how we could provide better services and better quality of life for the seniors in my home community, Mr. Speaker.

I must also take this opportunity to thank the table officers, the pages and yourself, Mr. Speaker,

for all that you do in your guidance here in the Chamber and the support that you provide us in this Chamber.

Now, I'm going to move on with why it is that I'm so proud to be a part of this team, Mr. Speaker. Just this afternoon, I had an opportunity to join my colleague, the Minister of Water Stewardship (Ms. Melnick) as Manitoba, once again, led the way in the Dominion of Canada with the introduction of the country's first dishwasher detergent phosphorus legislation. Of course, that piece of legislation is also a part of a strategy that includes addressing issues such as septic fields and tanks in cottage country, but also in rural Manitoba where those of us, such as myself, who live outside of the town proper have a septic tank and field in the property. It's also a commitment in the Throne Speech to \$350 million investing in waste-water treatment facilities, including a significant investment in the city of Winnipeg, but also including significant investment in rural and northern Manitoba.

I'm very proud to be part of a government that was the first to establish a Department of Water Stewardship because we have taken this resource for granted, and it's a resource that I have lived beside all my life as a lifelong resident of the community of Gimli. It's a resource that I have a tremendous amount of respect for. I have a tremendous amount of respect for Lake Winnipeg and all that Lake Winnipeg means to our community and to our province and, I should say, to our country, Mr. Speaker. It's certainly one of the great lakes in Canada. So I was very pleased to be a part of that announcement today and a very comprehensive strategy to deal with the health and well-being of our lake.

Of course, as a member of the rural caucus for the NDP party, Mr. Speaker, I couldn't be more proud of the work that we've been doing to support provincial municipalities. The members opposite like to stand up and point and suggest that we don't have a vision beyond the Perimeter, and that's rather curious, given the line of questioning that I've seen from members opposite. In fact, the questions that I've seen in Question Period since we've reconvened, I thought the comedy writers were on strike, but evidently, there's been some pretty good comedy written in the questions that we've been seeing from members opposite.

But what this government has done for municipalities in Manitoba has been significant.

In fact, at the Association of Manitoba Municipalities, a report that had been commissioned by provincial associations across Canada called *Roles, Relationships, Responsibilities, and Resources*; this is a report on municipal funding and responsibilities. Dr. Enid Slack, the director of the Institute of Municipal Finance at the University of Toronto, had completed this report on June 15, 2007. In that report, Dr. Slack noted that Manitoba is the only province, the only province that shares income tax revenues with municipalities on a per capita basis, also shares fuel taxes, video lottery terminal and casino revenues, and provincial revenues, specifically, 4.15 percent of income tax, personal and corporate, 2 cents per litre of provincial gasoline tax, 1 cent per litre provincial diesel fuel tax, 10 percent of video lottery and 100 percent of provincial fine revenues for municipalities which provide their own policing.

So this is a very significant investment in rural Manitoba. It's a significant investment that continues to grow under our government and of course, it should be no surprise that this was the vision of Ed Schreyer when he was premier of Manitoba, who implemented the provincial-municipal tax-share agreement, Mr. Speaker.

The high level of revenue from provincial grants in Manitoba means that municipalities have the least reliance on property taxes in the country. Here, they represent only 38 percent of total revenue compared to 48 percent in Ontario, 52 percent in B.C., 40 percent in Alberta, 44 percent in Saskatchewan. Over the past year, Manitoba's the only province to see a decline in property taxes.

So we are certainly a government that supports our municipalities. We support it with infrastructure, with the provincial-municipal tax-sharing agreement. I, for one, have enjoyed my commute back and forth to Gimli on occasion on the fine highway construction that's been going on with unprecedented, unprecedented capital support for highway reinvestments in the infrastructure and highways in Manitoba.

So the good news keeps coming with respect to what we've been doing in Manitoba to support our rural sisters and brothers. The good news continues to come with respect to what we are doing supporting the water quality initiatives and to address the problem that we have experienced with respect to the health of Lake Winnipeg and all the waterways in the province of Manitoba, Mr. Speaker.

Now, it's always beneficial to speak towards the end of this debate because you've heard what other members have put on the record. Of course, *Hansard* is a very useful tool. I was reading through some of the speeches that members opposite had made. Many of them referred to what wasn't in the Throne Speech. The Throne Speech didn't say this; the Throne Speech didn't say that. I understand why they would employ that strategy. It's because there was so much good material in the Throne Speech that they couldn't possibly speak against what was in the Throne Speech, but I kept hearing them saying, oh, it didn't say this; it didn't say that; it didn't say this.

Well, let's talk about what it did say. It did talk about our commitment to improve outcomes for Aboriginal learners. Today, I was really fascinated by the questions that were asked by the Leader of the Opposition (Mr. McFadyen) with respect to Aboriginal education because they're a little bit behind the times. First of all, the Council of Ministers of Education Canada has recognized Manitoba's leadership in this particular file, as Manitoba is the lead province on this file with respect to First Nations learners in the Council of Ministers of Education of Canada. We're recognized as such for the work that we've been doing with some of our federal partners and some of the partnerships that we've been able to foster with First Nations leaders in their community schools.

* (15:50)

Now, it's really curious that that was a question today and that the Leader of the Opposition wasn't aware of the work that's been going on here in Manitoba, but I reflect on the first four years that I was privileged to serve on this side of the House. I do specifically recall during the Estimates process when members did ask me, actually, questions about the second-largest expenditure in government, and did ask about my budget for the Department of Education. I do recall my critic at the time, the Member for Tuxedo (Mrs. Stefanson) actually asking about the \$3-million expense that was in the Estimates package with respect to the Aboriginal Education Directorate, and how dare we increase it by this much—\$3 million, it's such a significant amount—without checking to see that that was actually an expenditure and a revenue because it came from a partnership with the Canada Millennium Scholarship Foundation? What was that designed to do, Mr. Speaker? That was designed to fund our Making Education Work projects, working with 38 different First Nations communities in

supporting learning for First Nations learners and assisting with the development of our Aboriginal Education Action Plan.

This plan has been going on from 2004 to 2007. So the leader of the party today talks about this conversion on the road to Damascus as far as First Nations education is concerned. Yes, he did have one, Mr. Speaker. I think he was talking about himself in this case, certainly not our leader because our leader and our government and our members have been supporting First Nations learners through a number of initiatives since we've been in office. We did establish an Aboriginal Issues Committee of Cabinet and somehow I don't think that existed prior to the members opposite. *[interjection]*

I hear one of the members chirping across the floor. It's always, how is that working for you. Well, we continue to work at it, Mr. Speaker. It's a commitment that we made. It's a commitment that we continue to be engaged in.

With respect to the Aboriginal Education Action Plan, this was implemented in 2004 and it has representatives from four departments including Education, Citizenship and Youth; Advanced Education and Literacy; from Competitiveness, Training and Trade and Aboriginal and Northern Affairs. We have worked with a number of partners with respect to this initiative. There's been planning and co-ordination that has taken place and is currently under renewal and we have highlighted the reports showing the progress that has been made under the main objectives of this particular initiative, Mr. Speaker.

Of course, we were a party that supported the Kelowna Accord. We supported the Kelowna Accord because we recognized that more work needed to be done with respect to First Nations learners. There never had been an action plan previously, but we've established an action plan and we are hard at work with that action plan. We recently signed agreements with Lac Brochet and Long Plains to work together to assist the bands with professional development for teachers on reserve. Is that part of our jurisdiction? No, but we have to go beyond our jurisdiction and work with our partners to work towards better outcomes for First Nations learners.

We provided capital assistance for the schools in Norway House and working on an agreement with Moose Lake to assist them as well, Mr. Speaker. Frontier School Division, as the First Minister (Mr. Doer) mentioned early in Question Period, is

expanding the work with bands and most recently Frontier has begun to work with Birdtail Sioux First Nations to provide educational support.

I recently had an opportunity to meet with the Assembly of Manitoba Chiefs, and they informed me that we have a very good working relationship. I already knew that, Mr. Speaker, that we have a very good working relationship with Aboriginal communities and a system to support the education of Aboriginal children in Manitoba.

Ms. Bonnie Korzeniowski, Deputy Speaker, in the Chair

The action plan is a very thorough action plan including Closing the Gap, Manitoba's response to First Ministers' meeting at the Kelowna Accord. We have a northern focus where there's a Northern Development Strategy, and education and training sector group reviews the activities against the Northern Development Strategy goals. We have a Framework Agreement Initiative which is three departments participating in this particular initiative.

The Forum of Labour Market Ministers has increased Aboriginal labour market participation and is one of six consensus priorities. We have the Canadian Council on Learning that is a new national player funded by the Government of Canada, and the Canadian Council on Learning recognizes the work that we have been doing with respect to Aboriginal Education Action Plan, Madam Deputy Speaker.

The self-identification: if we're going to be putting in policies, we need to have research that supports the work that we're doing, and that is something that we as a Province have taken the lead with respect to First Nations learners.

We also have a Community Schools Partnership Initiative which targets low SES communities to assist in their needs and to engage and empower parents to be more part of their children's education.

We have a Building Student Success with Aboriginal Parents fund, and fund a number of programs in support of this initiative, a provincial promotional strategy with respect to First Nations learners. We're getting more First Nations teachers in the classroom, as well, as part of our strategy. That is our commitment, Madam Deputy Speaker.

Of course, what happened when members opposite asked questions in Estimates three years ago about the Aboriginal Education Action Plan? They asked questions as it related to the Aboriginal

Education Action Plan and as it related to Bill 13, Appropriate Educational Programming. Regrettably, members opposite characterized this—and *Hansard* will back this up—as a system of apartheid. I was dumbfounded, Madam Deputy Speaker. I was absolutely dumfounded that they would do so, to characterize these very important initiatives as apartheid. It is in *Hansard*, and I see some of the members looking at me in disbelief, but I will gladly provide that *Hansard* for them to see how the members of their party characterized these very important initiatives.

But we on this side of the House are very proud of the work that we have done. In fact, recently at the Society for the Advancement of Excellence in Education, the director of that particular organization, at a conference held here in Winnipeg, pointed to Manitoba as having a very good example, if not an excellent example, on work that has been done and plans that are to be done with respect to First Nations learners, Madam Deputy Speaker.

Now, the people in Manitoba certainly spoke loud and clear on the 22nd of May, recognizing our party as a party that supports education. Now, I was really amazed, actually, by the platform that was presented by the leader of the members opposite. It was rather curious because when we spoke to school divisions last year and said, why would you be raising taxes when you have significant surpluses, members opposite jumped up and there was such indignation that we should interfere with the autonomy of school boards.

We had meetings with them, and we talked to them about the reasonableness of raising taxes when you're sitting on a 7, 8, 10 or 12 percent surplus, Madam Deputy Speaker. We talked to them. We didn't have to legislate any changes there. The school divisions came forward and said, you're right; we should tweak our budget; we should look at our priorities, and we shouldn't have an unfair burden on our taxpayers. So they adjusted their budgets accordingly, and members opposite stood up in the House with such indignation. How dare we interfere with the autonomy of locally elected school boards? And what did they promise in the election? Well, the leader of the Tories said that they would strip school divisions of their taxing authority. So it was rather interesting that one day they are saying we shouldn't interfere, and the next day they're saying they are going to strip school divisions of their taxing authority.

Another thing that I found particularly disturbing, though, Madam Deputy Speaker, was the fact that during the election the leader made no commitment to increase funding for our schools. What he said in the *Winnipeg Free Press* on May 16 of 2007, what the Leader of the Opposition (Mr. McFadyen) said, and I quote, He thinks the education budget won't have to increase much because enrolment numbers are flat or decreasing, end of quote. Oh, boy, did he ever miss the boat on that one because, yes, enrolment is declining but that does not mean that the costs of delivering education services in the province of Manitoba are going to decline with the enrolment. That's Tory math.

Do they think that if there are a thousand less students in the province, that those thousand less students are all leaving the same school? I don't think so. But that seems to be the impression that the members opposite would have, that, yes, enrolment is declining. Well, it's declining, but you still have to provide the teachers and the resources and the supports for the students. They were planning on stripping the school divisions of their autonomy and making no commitment to increase funding to our schools, which would have jeopardized the funding of our schools while ensuring that school divisions were unable to do anything about it.

Now, during the election, the Tory education plan was also quickly rejected by stakeholders like MTS. Obviously, Tory leader—and I can't name the member, but—obviously, Tory leader has given up on addressing the needs of Manitoba's public schools. That's the smartest conclusion to be drawn from his recent brainwave for K-to-12 education in this province, end of quote. That came from Brian Ardern, the president of the Manitoba Teachers' Society, when the platform for education was announced.

What exactly was the platform other than looking at taxes and how we're not going to give any more money to education, Madam Deputy Speaker? The platform was schools of excellence, the schools of excellence plan which would have created have and have-not schools by rewarding elite schools with additional funding based on student performance, attendance rates and parental involvement. This elite schools plan would have essentially funnelled an additional \$10 million to elite schools, making it more difficult for schools facing socio-economic and other challenges to compete.

* (16:00)

Now, we often talk about the outcomes in our schools, Madam Deputy Speaker. We went from 73 percent graduation rates to 84 percent graduation rates in the province of Manitoba since we've been in office. The thing that I'm most proud of is the fact that, if you look at the performance for international student achievement, or the PISA test, an externally administered test which is one of the most thorough looking-glasses into the education system, one of the things that I am most proud of, Madam Deputy Speaker, is the fact that the difference between students in low socio-economic cohorts and students in high socio-economic cohorts in terms of their achievement is the lowest in Manitoba of any other jurisdiction. That tells me that the programs that we're putting in place to support low SES learners are working. The programs are supporting learners throughout Manitoba. Not elite schools, but all schools in Manitoba are being funded and being funded appropriately with targeted programs specific to the learning needs throughout the province of Manitoba. We believe in giving every child the opportunity to succeed rather than pitting school against school, child against child for a share of a \$10-million prize.

Now I heard the—[interjection] Oh, there's so much more to say.

With those few words, Madam Deputy Speaker, I thank you for this opportunity to speak, and I'm very proud of the work that we're doing on this side of the House. I'm very proud to represent the fine constituency of Gimli. Thank you very much.

Mrs. Leanne Rowat (Minnedosa): I'm pleased to stand today to put my thoughts on the record and give the reasons why I believe that I cannot support this Throne Speech. I also want to speak to the excellent amendment shared by our leader earlier last week.

To begin with, I would like to share my comments on issues facing my constituency, the constituency of Minnedosa. Now, I believe that the best interests of my constituency have once again been overlooked and worse yet, ignored by this NDP government and their indifference to rural Manitoba. Madam Deputy Speaker, the Progressive Conservative caucus recognizes the importance of agriculture and rural development to our communities and to our economy. At challenging times such as these it's important that government provide strong leadership. This Throne Speech fails to recognize the serious issues such as the impact of

the rising Canadian dollar, high input costs, trade matters, traceability programs and country-of-origin labelling.

Recently my colleagues, the MLA for Lakeside (Mr. Eichler) and the MLA for Russell (Mr. Derkach) had the opportunity to meet with the federal Agriculture Minister, Gerry Ritz. They found Minister Ritz very receptive to the concerns they raised. They discussed the CAIS program and spoke to how it is not workable for the livestock producers. They asked that the next generation of business risk programs be bankable to be able to respond to the producers' needs in a timely fashion and to be easy to navigate.

Manitoba cattle producers, or the cattle industry, is watching with interest the developments related to traceability. The Canadian Cattle Identification Agency, who I've met with the representatives from that agency, have built a traceability system that is internationally recognized and supported by producers. I believe that if the provincial government is going to become more involved in traceability initiatives they must thoroughly consult with stakeholders so that the new programs do not duplicate existing programs and also that they are not cost prohibitive for producers. Madam Deputy Speaker, they've made a \$95-million commitment to CAIS, but we know how popular CAIS is and how unworkable it has been. So we need to get moving with the federal government on the next generation of farm programs to ensure they're delivered in a timely fashion and that they're bankable.

The Throne Speech scarcely mentions alternative energy such as the production of ethanol, biofuels and wind. This is very disappointing given the economic opportunities in this industry and the leadership that different communities within my constituency have taken in these areas. They're very disappointed in that the delays in seeing alternative energy projects get off the ground are raising serious challenges and serious concerns, not only for my constituents but the investors who are looking at investing within these areas within my communities. As this has an impact on rural development opportunities, our communities are losing in more ways than just dollars but are losing people as well.

They can talk all they want about the doors on the plants actually opening and being involved in that, but we haven't made progress in creating jobs and opportunities for producers or our rural communities until these programs are moving

forward. Having announcements and having initiatives put forward without any detail or consultation with not only producers but actually with the people who are implementing these programs in the areas is very challenging for the communities.

Souris and area, for example, have shown strong support for establishing a biofuels plant. The stakeholders are in the midst of an equity drive. I would like to see similar enthusiasm and commitment shown from this provincial government. We've been lobbying the Minister of Science, Technology, Energy and Mines (Mr. Rondeau) about the value of such a plant and the response has been somewhat muted. As I told the minister, sometimes this NDP government seems to put the cart before the horse. Without a plant, there will be nothing to market. Without recent announcements of provincial support for the alternative energy industry have left stakeholders confused and unsure if they can access funds needed to move projects forward. I shared that with the minister in Estimates. He seemed surprised, but I'm sure that he has now found out that there is a major challenge in making sure that stakeholders are getting the information that they need to move projects forward. We need a strong commitment from this government that they will offer the types of support and expertise needed to help these projects succeed and, in turn, benefit the larger Manitoba economy.

Having access to modern communications, technology, is critical to help rural and northern businesses and industries thrive. However, the Throne Speech was silent in this very important infrastructure area. The development and sustainability of rural and northern communities could be accelerated by providing greater access to modern infrastructure such as broadband Internet. It was high time, and it is high time, for the government to get moving in this area.

Madam Deputy Speaker, we depend on a fully functional health-care system to care for our families, whether it's a doctor's clinic, an emergency room or in a personal care home. But too often we are met with closed doors and long waits. The ERs in Wawanesa have been closed for a year and a half. Rivers has been closed for over a month and, actually, for the last three and a half years, that ER and acute care has been closed and opened several times. In 2003, the Premier (Mr. Doer) promised he wouldn't close that facility and has struggled to keep that facility open and struggled to keep his promise.

There are now 15 ERs closed throughout Manitoba and most of them in Westman, Madam Deputy Speaker. A number of beds at the Souris personal care home have been sitting empty because there are not enough nurses to staff them. This has been very frustrating for the families whose loved ones are waiting in hospital for placement in the personal care homes.

The announcement by the minister today is a perfect example of how this government operates. It's called crises management, Madam Deputy Speaker. The unfortunate situation is our personal care home situations have been mounting for several years and been unnoticed by this government. For years the NDP have been unable to address the nursing shortages that have plagued our personal care homes. Today they announced they would hire 250 RNs over four years, yet a freedom of information request we received last week shows that the province is short 835 nurses across this system, and that number has been growing since 2003. They also want to hire 100 health-care aides, yet we are currently short 524. The impact of these nursing shortages is evident in our personal care homes. The shortages have reached a point where personal care homes have stopped admitting new patients, not only in Souris, but in other communities like Virden, who have received great advocacy from the MLA for Virden.

* (16:10)

Seniors are among the many patients facing year-long waits to see orthopedic specialists and to receive surgery. This is how the NDP treats our seniors. Seniors are also affected by the NDP's disregard for their need for safe, clean, affordable housing. In many communities there is a serious shortage of available housing. In others, Manitoba Housing blocks that have been designated 55-plus have been opened up to young working families. Seniors on the wait list have no choice but to wait. Violence, drugs and other criminal activity are commonplace in many Manitoba Housing units. Seniors should not have to fear for their safety in their own homes, nor should they be finding bedbugs in their bed or mould in their living rooms. It is unfortunate that the NDP have failed to address these issues in any way in their Throne Speech.

In January 2006, nearly two years ago, the NDP announced a \$98-million long-term-care strategy for seniors called Aging in Place, yet, despite this, we are still short home-care workers and the other

resources we need to ensure seniors can remain at home when they're with their loved ones.

There is also the issue of the need for a provincial Alzheimer's strategy which we on this side of the House have been encouraging the NDP to implement since 2004. Though some progress has been made, it has not been a priority of this government, which is truly unfortunate. Alzheimer's can devastate families and individuals, and it's an issue that requires appropriate resources to be dedicated to research, treatment, assistance, for those who need it.

Madam Deputy Speaker, waiting to see an orthopedic specialist is a major concern in my constituency and I could probably say, in the majority of the constituencies across the province. Many people from our communities are waiting until well into 2009 to see an orthopedic specialist, and they have to wait even longer if they need surgery.

Despite the NDP's promise to hire nurse practitioners in our communities, the sad truth is that some of these fully qualified professionals are unable to find work. The NDP has failed to make employment opportunities available, and it would appear that the Minister of Health (Ms. Oswald) has forced rural RHAs to hire nurse practitioners out of the same funding intended to hire doctors. So, in a sense, Madam Deputy Speaker, she's pitted one profession against another and broken her promise to Manitobans. Ultimately, patients are the ones who will be at loss. Nurse practitioners can provide tremendous benefits to patients as a complement to a physician's practice. Health-care professionals who want to work in our communities are invaluable, so why is the NDP driving them away?

Cervical cancer is the second most common cancer in women ages 20 to 44. Most kinds of cervical cancer are caused by HPV, which is the world's most prevalent transmitted infection. Newfoundland, P.E.I., Nova Scotia and Ontario all began school-based vaccination programs this fall. British Columbia, I believe, is also started, has started or is starting a program shortly. Manitoba, once again, has fallen behind. Federal money has been made available to Manitoba to kick-start this initiative, but what this minister is doing with these federal dollars is unknown, Madam Deputy Speaker.

When will the minister use these federal dollars as they are intended? Make a school-based program available and let parents decide what is right for their daughters. My daughter, Mackenzie, has received the

vaccination. Her friend, Emma, has completed her first vaccination in the series. Our doctor was very supportive of this initiative and has provided excellent background information on the program. He is proactive. When will this government realize that they need to be also? In our alternative Throne Speech, *One Manitoba Strong and Proud*, we committed to implementing an HPV vaccination program and giving Manitoba parents a choice.

Mr. Speaker in the Chair

Distance education is an integral part of the survival for rural and northern Manitoba communities, yet it has largely fallen off the radar screen of this NDP government. Teachers are often left to develop curriculum with little support or guidance from this Ministry of Education, a disincentive for teachers looking at this as an option of instruction and a great disservice to students who deserve quality education regardless of where they live. Recognizing the importance of distance learning and technology, a Progressive Conservative government in the 1990s was the leader in the innovative distance education for all Manitobans and aimed to ensure the necessary tools, supports and students' instructors were in place.

Three separate NDP Education ministers have failed school divisions, teachers, students without a distance education strategy, putting the onus on them to make distance education work. Rather than being part of a solution, the Ministry of Education has erected barriers, left gaps and has become the problem. All taxpayers, regardless of whether they're rural or urban, deserve to be treated equally by this NDP government. By failing to provide the necessary tools and supports for distance education, the NDP government has failed rural and northern Manitobans.

We recently introduced a PMR, or private members' resolution, calling on the government to collect a deposit on all recycling beverage containers which consumers can recoup when these containers are recycled at a depot. Manitoba's landfill sites are needlessly overflowing with waste. The recent Auditor General's report told of a very telling story of how this NDP government is all press releases and no strategy—a common, common thread, Mr. Speaker, throughout the last six years. It should not be surprising that Manitoba is the only province in Canada without a beverage container recycling program. A few weeks ago, we saw the closure of the tire recycling facility in Winkler. Yet the

government seems oblivious to the implications of the loss of this facility.

The Throne Speech failed to mention the government's inability to manage matters such as the development of cottage lots. As we saw this fall, an illegal blockade created tremendous uncertainty for affected cottage and property owners. In addition, why are local communities being left on the financial hook to deal with effluent arising from provincial government cottage lot developments such as being developed on the Lake of the Prairies area? If this government thinks it's going to develop thriving cottage communities in this province, it's going to have to come up with a better management and consultation strategy than the ones they are currently demonstrating.

The deterioration of Highway 2 continues to be a concern in my constituency. I pursued this matter during the recent Estimates with the department of Infrastructure and trade minister and he commented that he would take a look at it. Well, he still needs to take a look at it, Mr. Speaker, because nothing has been done with this. Very soon, the patchwork repairs done on the highway will only continue to deteriorate and continue to look very shoddy. The Town of Souris and the R.M. of Glenwood have indicated that they are extremely disappointed with the work that has been done on that stretch of highway. It's a disgrace to rural residents, businesses and industries who heavily rely on a sound transportation system.

Highway 2 bridge near Wawanesa was closed last winter when a large hole appeared on the deck. We are receiving concerns about the quality and the safety of this bridge. Mr. Speaker, the bridge actually goes in a V-shape if you travel over it. In speaking to a family from Wawanesa, they are very concerned that not only semis, but any vehicle travelling over this bridge would have a problem staying its course. Clearly, this is not the type of quality repair work that was expected on this important highway. It has been in a crisis management mode when dealing with bridges. What is this minister's plan for this bridge? We're hoping that he'll give it the attention that it needs and do what is required to make this highway bridge safe.

Highway 340 running north and south of Shilo is also a disgrace. The military community has, on each and every occasion when I visit, shared their serious concerns with the quality of this road and how it

needs to get this government's attention. If nothing else, to pave the last eight kilometres of the highway.

My leader and I recently visited with the base commander, Schneider Banger, and we discussed many issues, but the one that started our conversation, as it does each time, was discussed at length. This road does require a priority.

Minnedosa and surrounding communities have some very serious concerns with this government's inability to see a major safety issue be ignored at the intersection of 355 and Provincial Highway 10 and 16. The Highway Traffic Board recently turned down the council's other regions request to reduce the speed limit. I was both shocked and confused by this decision as I would think that protecting the safety of both the motoring public and pedestrians would be a priority of this government. Even one accident is too many and anything that could be done to mitigate potential risk in this area is worth analysis.

*(16:20)

In closing, I want to talk a little bit about the Spirited Energy failure boondoggle. We have recently uncovered that all the money that has been made up in the sale of the Spirited Energy merchandise is going into general revenue, or in other words, is being directed into the hands of the NDP ministers who are content to waste it on things like the west side of the bipole line. The government pledged to Manitobans that there'd be no more money spent on the campaign while the Auditor investigated. It turns out that they've spent \$20,000 a month to maintain a Web site on the campaign. They've spent \$90,000 through MPI for initiatives to keep their young people employed in giving out Frisbees.

So why are MPI ratepayers paying for Spirited Energy while the government takes the money that they make on selling this merchandise—which I'm sure they don't sell a lot of, but they do sell some—and puts it into their own pockets? The arrogance of the government to use MPI premiums to subsidize Spirited Energy at a time when they say no more money is going to be going into a campaign is symbolic of a government that is no longer caring about what the public thinks and is only interested in its own self-survival and political agenda.

The Throne Speech is very short on strategies for the Aboriginal people. As the fastest growing component of our population, and currently

representing almost 15 percent of the population, the Aboriginal community faces significant socio-economic challenges, and we expected the Throne Speech to reflect the demographic reality of our province.

It completely failed to address the location of the bipole 3, and it completely ignored referencing of an all-weather road which would be compatible with the bipole 3, Mr. Speaker, and a UNESCO site. In changing course, our government would be pleased to have the support of eminent Manitobans such as Bob Brennan, former Premier Schreyer, Elijah Harper and countless other leaders, all of whom have spoken out in favour of our east-side route.

The Progressive Conservative opposition believes Manitoba's First Nation communities should have access to the Premier (Mr. Doer) on a regular basis rather than use the current and ineffective patchwork approach to relationships.

So, under this NDP government, rural health care suffered, taxes remain high, highest west of Québec, and wasteful decisions like building our third hydro line down the longer west-side route rather than down the east side of Lake Winnipeg continues to be the order of the day. Unfortunately, Manitobans will have to wait three more years before the sun will once again shine on friendly Manitoba, Mr. Speaker.

Hon. Nancy Allan (Minister of Labour and Immigration): Well, it's a pleasure today to stand up and say a few words about our Throne Speech, to welcome all of my colleagues back after the recent election campaign. I'd like to thank the constituents of St. Vital for their confidence in me in representing them. St. Vital is a wonderful community, and it certainly is an honour to be back here in the Legislature representing my constituents of St. Vital.

I'd like to congratulate everyone who is back here and working hard, and it really is terrific to see so many new women in our caucus. I know that we're very, very proud of the fact that we have the most number of women elected of any jurisdiction in Canada. We're also very, very proud of the fact that we have some new MLAs that are diverse, and we believe, on this side of the House, that we represent all Manitobans. We also represent all Manitobans from all regions of the province, Mr. Speaker, in contrast to our colleagues across the way.

I would like to mention my mother. I always love telling everyone in this House about my mom

who paved the way for women to run. She ran before the party was the NDP, when it was the CCF, and she ran in the constituency of Lakeside. She ran in 1953 and 1958, and she ran against Premier Douglas Campbell. So, obviously, she didn't win, Mr. Speaker, but she gave it a pretty good run. It's always neat to mention her in my speeches because she really was a pioneer for women in this province, and I want to just mention her once again.

I also want to welcome my critic across the way, the MLA for Morris (Mrs. Taillieu). I was born and raised in MacGregor and, interestingly enough, my critic was born and raised in Austin, seven miles down the road. She also was influenced by her mother, except it was a different party. I know her mother, I believe, worked with the former Premier Sterling Lyon. But I do look forward to working with the MLA for Morris because I believe that we have ushered in a new era here in Manitoba in regard to harmonious labour relations. I think that we have 10 unanimous pieces of labour legislation—

An Honourable Member: The minister of harmony.

Ms. Allan: The minister of harmony, as my colleagues like to call me. We have a great relationship with the employer community and the business community. I think that's very, very important. So I look forward to continuing on in that vein in regard to making sure that we keep harmonious labour relations in the province because that's how we benefit everyone, Mr. Speaker.

I would like to thank my senior management team because they have done an incredible amount of work on all of those pieces of labour legislation, and it's because of their due diligence and their ability to do great research and do great consultation that we have been so successful in ushering in that new era. I certainly want to give them credit for that success.

I would also like to thank all Manitobans for their vote of confidence in us in the last election. We were the first NDP government to win three mandates in the history of the province and, of course, we did increase our number of seats. So that was certainly something that we were proud of on election night.

The other day I had the opportunity to meet a group of students from Dakota Collegiate who were here on a tour, and I was talking to them about how beautiful the building was, and I was able to communicate with them how proud I am of our

building and how wonderful it is to work here in this building, and how proud I was on the day of our Throne Speech that we were able to have people, with disabilities, who've never been able to come into this building before through the front doors for our Throne Speech, Mr. Speaker, come through the accessible ramp. Certainly, I think it was an important day for Manitobans. This is a first in Canada, and I really think that it was important.

There were many areas in the Throne Speech that I know will help my constituents in St. Vital, and I'm really, really not sure where to start, Mr. Speaker, but I would like to start, of course, with minimum wage. Minimum wage is just one of the tools that we use in regard to reducing poverty. You know, we have increased the minimum wage eight times since we got into government, and we have brought back the purchasing power of low-income earners in this province. We think that that is one of the ways that we can have low-income people fully participate in our economy.

Another thing in the Throne Speech that's very important for my constituents is the whole issue of child care, Mr. Speaker. We are the government, I believe, that is the child-care government. We have made huge strides in our child-care policies since we got into government. We have 6,000 new spaces, and we made a commitment in this Throne Speech to have 2,500 more. That is absolutely critical to people in my riding that want to work and make a living and participate in our economy. A lot of single parents, one of the biggest barriers for them getting into the workforce is child care. We have also trained 700 more workers in the child-care system, and we have increased their wages. I think that that is one of the things that is probably one of the most important things that we can do for women and people in our constituencies who want to get back to work and want to get on their feet and want to participate in society.

I'm also very pleased to be the Minister of Immigration. We've done a lot of work in that area, Mr. Speaker. We have increased our funding, our settlement services. We have increased it from \$8 million to \$17 million over the last year. That is funding that helps all of those newcomers that come to Manitoba and who want to learn a new language and live in a new culture. They're very courageous people, and we want them to come here so that we can continue to grow our province. We have the most successful provincial nominee program in Canada, and we will continue to do that.

One of the other things I would just like to mention, and I know that I'm getting very, very close to being cut off, Mr. Speaker, but this next year in February I just want to wish all of my colleagues in the Legislature a happy Louis Riel Day. I think this is very—this is Manitoba's new holiday in February.

* (16:30)

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

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

Some Honourable Members: Agreed.

Some Honourable Members: No.

Voice Vote

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

Some Honourable Members: Yea.

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

Some Honourable Members: Nay.

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

Formal Vote

Mr. Hawranik: Mr. Speaker, we request a recorded vote.

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

Order. The question before the House is the motion of the honourable Leader of the Official Opposition, that is, the amendment to the motion for an Address in Reply to the Speech from the Throne.

Division

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

Yeas

Borotsik, Briese, Cullen, Derkach, Driedger, Dyck, Eichler, Faurshou, Gerrard, Goertzen, Graydon, Hawranik, Lamoureux, Maguire, McFadyen, Mitchelson, Pedersen, Rowat, Schuler, Stefanson, Taillieu.

Nays

Allan, Ashton, Bjornson, Blady, Braun, Brick, Caldwell, Chomiak, Dewar, Doer, Howard, Jennissen, Jha, Korzeniowski, Lemieux, Mackintosh, Maloway, Marcelino, Martindale, McGifford, Melnick, Nevakshonoff, Oswald, Reid, Robinson, Rondeau, Saran, Selby, Selinger, Struthers, Swan, Wowchuk.

Madam Clerk (Patricia Chaychuk): Yeas 21, Nays 32.

Mr. Speaker: I declare the amendment lost.

* * *

Mr. Speaker: We will now proceed with debate on the main motion.

Mrs. Heather Stefanson (Tuxedo): It's indeed an honour and a privilege for me to rise in the House today. First off, I'd like to start by thanking the pages who are new to the House. I wish them well in their jobs. I know from time to time we can be somewhat demanding, and we apologize beforehand for that, but I hope you will get as much as you possibly can out of these jobs. I think it's a tremendous opportunity, so good luck with your jobs.

Mr. Speaker, I'd also like to take this opportunity, as this is the first opportunity I've had to spend a little bit of time and thank those that helped me vigorously in the last election campaign. I want to thank all the volunteers. I'd like to thank all the volunteers who helped out in my last election campaign. I would particularly like to thank all of the constituents in the Tuxedo constituency for electing me into my third term, actually, as the Member for Tuxedo. I'm very honoured. I feel that it is a privilege to represent them in the Manitoba Legislature.

Last Wednesday, November 21, marked the seventh anniversary of me being an MLA in this Chamber, and I'm very proud of that fact. It also marked the sixth birthday of my daughter, Victoria, who was born one year to the day after I was elected into this Chamber. So I want to take this opportunity to wish her a happy birthday and to also take this opportunity to thank my family, who have stood by me in my efforts to represent my community and, in particular, my children, Victoria and Tommy, who I've had the honour and privilege of bringing down here to the Legislature and spending a little bit of time up in the gallery and seeing what it's all about, what Mommy does on a regular basis. I think it's one

of the privileges that we have as parents, to be able to bring our children to the Manitoba Legislature to let them see what it is we do on a regular basis and, hopefully, encourage some of their friends to come down and see what it is that we do here as well.

I think many Manitobans out there are maybe not, do not necessarily understand or know what we do here on a regular basis. I know, Mr. Speaker, you have set up a committee to ensure that, within our schools, teachers take the opportunity to teach within the school system what it is we do on a daily basis here in the Manitoba Legislature, and I want to congratulate you for that. I know it was the first year for the Teachers' Institute here at the Legislature and I thought it went very well. So congratulations to you, Sir, for that.

I'd like to get back to, just with respect to my constituency, and take this opportunity to thank a few individuals who have been with me for quite some time, the first being Carol Loader, who was my assistant when I was first elected back on November 21, 2000. She was with me for seven years, which is a long time to spend with someone day in and day out. She helped me so much on a daily basis, just being in touch with my constituents, keeping in touch with them, making sure that I get out to all the events and arrive on time. She was always there by my side. So I just want to take this opportunity to thank her very much for everything that she has done for me and for our family and for our constituency over the last seven years.

I want to congratulate her on her new position with Manitoba Theatre Centre, where she is going to be working to develop a fund-raising strategy for MTC. So congratulations to Carol, and thank you, Carol, for everything that you've done for me and our constituency.

I also want to take this opportunity to thank Judy Matias, who actually retired before the last election, but was with me from the very beginning as well. She and her husband, Bob, have sat on my executive for many years and also sat on the executive of the former MLA for the Tuxedo constituency, the Honourable Gary Filmon. I just want to thank them both so much for everything that they have done for our constituency and wish both Judy and Bob very well in their future endeavours. We look forward to continuing to have them involved with our party.

* (16:40)

Mr. Speaker, I also want to pay special thanks to the president of my constituency association, Wells Peever, who has been with me from the very beginning and took some time off. We had another president there in-between, but he's always acted on my constituency. I just want to thank him for everything he's done throughout the last number of years to help keep my constituency association vibrant and healthy and making sure that they're holding my feet to the fire, making sure that we are representing our constituency very well. So I just want to thank Wells and his wife, Carol, and their family for everything that they have done for our constituency to make it a better place for all of us to live and raise our families.

I also want to pay a special thanks to the people who ran my campaign: to Michael Blue [*phonetic*], who was just an excellent help on the campaign. He was in the office every day, along with Carol Loader, just helping out to make sure that the campaign was run and run well, and to Tracey McConachy [*phonetic*] for helping out, and her father, Jim Moore [*phonetic*], throughout the campaign.

I also want to pay a special thanks to my official agent, Gestur Kristjansson, who helped out a great deal on the campaign, who continues to be an incredible resource to me and an incredible constituent who's done a lot of work. I think many members in this Chamber have had—certainly, when it comes to the official agent, the official agents go above and beyond doing the work in the call of duty to ensure that we run our campaigns in the most efficient, effective manner possible. So I want to thank Gestur and Liz and their family for their help.

I also want to thank David and Catherine Filmon and their family for everything that they did in helping out on the campaign, and the hundreds of volunteers, quite frankly, that have come out over the last seven years and who have helped me over the years to maintain my position of being the MLA in the constituency.

As we all know, in this Chamber this is not a one-man job or a one-person job. It is the result of countless hours of effort by so many volunteers within our communities. That's what really makes us the strong members that we are within this Chamber. I just want to take this opportunity to thank all of those people for everything that they have done, the numerous volunteers and supporters who helped out on the phone banks and canvassing and putting up

signs and all of the things that it takes to bring us here to the Manitoba Legislature.

It's a humbling experience, Mr. Speaker. I just want each and every one of the individuals to know how much I appreciate wholeheartedly all of the work that they have done and how they have helped bring me here. It's truly an honour to have been given the privilege to serve the constituents of Tuxedo.

Our borders go beyond just Tuxedo. We also take in part of Charleswood. About a third of my riding is in Charleswood and part of it is in River Heights, too. I think sometimes when we talk about a Tuxedo constituency, it's not just Tuxedo. It is Charleswood and River Heights as well. I think to those people who do live in Charleswood, I do respect the fact that they are from Charleswood, and they like the fact that they are from Charleswood. Maybe it doesn't necessarily reflect in the name of the constituency, but Charleswood is a very vibrant community. I just want to thank all of those people within those areas of the constituency who helped out as well, Mr. Speaker.

Having said that, I do have to put a few words on the record with respect to the Throne Speech. As I, regrettably—and this has been my eighth Throne Speech since I was elected to the Manitoba Legislature—but, regrettably, I will have to vote against this Throne Speech once again. I think each Throne Speech I've sat through—you know, it's regrettable, but they get more and more pathetic as the years go by because more and more promises are made where the promises are broken. I think it's incumbent upon a government, when they make election promises like they're going to end hallway medicine in six months with \$15 million, that they actually follow through on their commitments to Manitobans. I think more so that they shouldn't be making those kinds of commitments that they know they cannot keep to people in Manitoba. I think it's regrettable, because time and time again members opposite, as they come into an election, make promises that they know they can't deliver on.

I think one of the ones that I want to mention is their talk about greenhouse gas emissions, Mr. Speaker, and the fact that they made a commitment to meet Kyoto targets by 2012, a commitment that, if they were so sure that they could meet, why have they only announced in this Throne Speech that, over the next three years, they're going to cut greenhouse gas emissions by 0.4 percent of overall greenhouse gas emissions in Manitoba? That represents only

5 percent towards meeting the Kyoto target. If they can deliver 5 percent in the three years and they're still on target for Kyoto in five years, that leaves 95 percent in order to meet Kyoto targets that need to be met within two years.

If they feel that they can do that 95 percent in two years, why don't they do it now? I think, Mr. Speaker, it's just another one of those election promises that they made that they know that they can't keep. But what they do is they come in in a Throne Speech; they make it sound like they're doing something great for the environment, but, I think, and it's regrettable how I did have to mention Marge Simpson the other day who said, aim low, kids; aim so low that no one will ever notice if you succeed. That's exactly what they did in this Throne Speech is that, over the next three years, they've got that minuscule reduction of greenhouse gases. I mean, if they can't meet that, you know, it's rather pathetic. But the fact of the matter is they've set their targets; they've promised in the last election to meet Kyoto targets by 2012. They are not on track. I think it's time that they come clean with Manitobans and let them know that they have no intention of actually meeting Kyoto targets. It's time to come very clean with respect to this issue.

Mr. Speaker, with respect to Water Stewardship, I'd like to just talk about Lake Winnipeg for a few minutes. Certainly, this past summer I know that we had many friends who went with their children up to the beaches in Lake Winnipeg who wanted to have the opportunity to swim in the lake. They got to the beach; they arrived and there's a warning sign on the beach saying that the E. coli levels are too high; don't swim; it's dangerous; don't swim. I think that what we need to do is there needs to be a plan in our province to develop a strategy towards making sure that that doesn't happen to people who want to enjoy our lakes and have a clean water system to be able to enjoy for recreational activities, but also to enjoy, to have safe drinking water.

I think this is a government that lacks the plan and the vision towards achieving that goal. They have yet to set targets when it comes to phosphorus reductions in Lake Winnipeg. We've seen nothing from this government of that respect. They talk the talk, Mr. Speaker. There's a lot of talk, another bill on the Order Paper about reducing phosphorus. Well, we applaud any action that would go towards the reduction of phosphorus and nutrients in Lake Winnipeg. The problem is that this government is all talk and no action. They put in The Water Protection

Act years ago, and yet we have seen no tangible results as a result of that. I think what we need to see from this government is stop with the talk and start walking the walk; we need to see results.

* (16:50)

Manitobans need to see real results in order to understand, in order to be able to understand what the plan and the strategy is of this government. Mr. Speaker, it's because they have a lack of a plan, a lack of a vision with respect to our waterways in creating clean water for our children to swim in, clean water for people to drink in communities all across this province. I think that the lack of a plan and lack of a vision is reflective of what this government really is all about. It's really a government that—what I have learned over the last seven years is, quite frankly, just a government of smoke and mirrors. They like to say a lot of wonderful things, but they know that they can't deliver on them. They have yet to deliver on them. I think it's unfortunate because there's such a huge opportunity in this wonderful province that we live in to make a real difference here for all of Manitobans, not just Manitobans of special interest groups here and there that members opposite seem to stickhandle. We need to represent all Manitobans and have a clear, true vision as to where we need to go as a province.

I think the lack of a vision with respect to this government is really why we are where we are today. With respect to our waterways, we have no tangible results. With respect to greenhouse gas emissions, things are getting worse under the watch of this government. That's because they like to say what's popular out there to Manitobans, but they're not prepared to put their money where their mouth is and come up with a true plan and a true vision towards achieving those goals. There are so many other things that I would love to go on and say with respect to how this government is—we're the last have-not province in Canada practically, Mr. Speaker, certainly in western Canada. We're high-taxed, heavy debt; the debt goes up and we're mortgaging our children's future in this province under this NDP government.

Mr. Speaker, I think it's incumbent upon this government to develop a plan and a strategy that we can create a strong Manitoba for all of us. Unfortunately, we don't see that under this Throne Speech, which is why I would have to vote against it. Thank you very much.

Hon. Jim Rondeau (Minister of Science, Technology, Energy and Mines): I'm very pleased to speak after the members from Tuxedo and Minnedosa so that I can encourage them to read the plans that are on the Web sites and see where we're moving forward. It remains a wonderful thing to be part of a government that does actually represent all areas of the province. It does represent all demographics from the province. We're not a party that represents people of one demographic; we're of all demographics.

I look across the way and what I see is one demographic. It's nice to see that. Because of that, their party was less successful in the past election. I know that we do look forward to increasing the margin of victory, to increasing the amount of seats we have. I hope that the members continue the trend that they did in the last two elections.

I'll explain to some of the members about the plan. If you look at the green and growing strategy, it's talking about growing and growing with green and environmental awareness. I'll tell you some of things that are happening.

One of the things I'm very proud of is our Kyoto target. You look at the Kyoto target. We're working to achieve it. We're working on many, many programs. I look at the hybrid car rebate program. Right now you have a lot of taxis that have become hybrids; there are hundreds out there, a lot of the fleets changing and becoming greener. What's neat about it is that it saves energy, saves money, less greenhouse gases and it's a win-win. I encourage the member to take a taxi sometime; try it out and see where we can go.

Other examples are the coal plant. When the members opposite were in government, when they were running the economics, they had a Selkirk electricity plant. It was spewing greenhouse gases and pollution all across their ridings. What's nice is that we took the initiative to work with Hydro to close that plant, reduce that.

I also encourage the member, maybe, to go to St. Leon. During the 1990s, there were no windmills; there were no wind farms. What's interesting is that we as a caucus, I invited the members opposite to go with our caucus. I know one member did join us from the opposition. I appreciate his coming out to St. Leon, his constituency. What's interesting about it is we went on a nice tour of the first wind farm in Manitoba. When was it built? Under an NDP government. It was built by us in co-operation with

the private sector. That is an economic plan. I look forward to building more and moving forward on more wind energy.

We also have plans on how to be more energy efficient. Clean Energy's Energy Efficiency Alliance actually gave us a rating of A, an A rating for our energy-efficient policies. Now, this is, I know, a slight contrast from the members opposite, which were ninth best out of 10. We rate the best in the country because we do have a demand-side policy. We do look at energy efficiency, and we do invest in it.

Now I know the member opposite from Tuxedo said, look low. I know that she must have got that many years ago because Marge Simpson must have looked at the former government, looked at the Cabinet of the former government, and aimed low on energy efficiency to get nine out of 10.

I look at, also, the case of geothermal heat pumps. We have actually worked with industry, governments working with industry and growing the industry, where we now have about 5,000 heat pump installations or heat cooling and air conditioning and heating. What's nice about these things is there are some in commercial buildings, some in apartments, some in houses. What's nice about it is we've not only got the installations, but we now have two manufacturers in Manitoba. We have two heat pump manufacturers that are working to save people money, create energy efficiency and create jobs. Part of why they're here is our government's green tax credit, our government's changes to the manufacturing stuff processes.

Then, when we're talking about other things, having an economic plan, I'm pleased to say that the Fraser Institute, which is not a bastion for socialism, has said that we are the best jurisdiction in the world for mining. We have had hundreds of percent increase in the mining productivity. In other words, we had between 6 and \$800 million of mine production when the members were in power. Now we have gone way over \$3 billion, quickly approaching \$4 billion, plus the oil industry is also at record levels. That is part of a plan, a plan to do it sustainably and efficiently.

I'm pleased to see where we went up from the former government, where we weren't working in

co-operation with industry; we weren't working as partners. Under their watch we were not No. 1. I'm pleased to say that we're No. 1. I'd like to compliment the staff in the department. I'd like to compliment the people who spent years working in the mining industry and in working in co-operation with the First Nations, with the colleges and universities to make sure that we have this wonderful industry that's continuing to grow.

I look at other things that we've done on energy efficiency. As far as Centennial neighbourhood, we have an initiative. We're working with a number of the foundations in Winnipeg, the Centennial Neighbourhood association, Hydro, the government, to create energy efficiency. We also, at the same time, are taking 60-year-old or 80-year-old houses, updating them, making them energy efficient. We're training core area workers who are typically unemployed in a small cohort. What we've done is we've trained them to become contractors to install insulation, fix up houses and do renovations. Now they're employed, so it's a win-win-win situation.

I also look at what the Tories' records are. Look at Maple Leaf. In Maple Leaf, when they started Maple Leaf there were no environmental hearings. Then they have the audacity to criticize us because of our water regulations. Please, look in the mirror, Mr. Speaker.

I look at programs like the Advanced Manufacturing Initiative, where what we do is we worked with the federal government, with industry. The Province has worked on the Advanced Manufacturing Initiative to take processes, take lean manufacturing, take technology and make sure that companies are more efficient. That's one of the reasons why we've been able to maintain our manufacturing employment.

Look at the Composites Innovation Centre. It's a wonderful program that works with industry again and has done wonderful things.

Mr. Speaker: Order. When this matter is again before the House, the honourable minister will have 22 minutes remaining.

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

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Thursday, November 29, 2007

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