

**Third 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**

| <b>Member</b>            | <b>Constituency</b> | <b>Political Affiliation</b> |
|--------------------------|---------------------|------------------------------|
| ALLAN, Nancy, Hon.       | St. Vital           | N.D.P.                       |
| ALTEMEYER, Rob           | Wolseley            | N.D.P.                       |
| ASHTON, Steve, Hon.      | Thompson            | N.D.P.                       |
| BJORNSON, Peter, Hon.    | Gimli               | N.D.P.                       |
| BLADY, Sharon            | Kirkfield Park      | N.D.P.                       |
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| CALDWELL, Drew           | Brandon East        | N.D.P.                       |
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| EICHLER, Ralph           | Lakeside            | P.C.                         |
| FAURSCHOU, David         | Portage la Prairie  | P.C.                         |
| GERRARD, Jon, Hon.       | River Heights       | Lib.                         |
| GOERTZEN, Kelvin         | Steinbach           | P.C.                         |
| GRAYDON, Cliff           | Emerson             | P.C.                         |
| HAWRANIK, Gerald         | Lac du Bonnet       | P.C.                         |
| HICKES, George, Hon.     | Point Douglas       | N.D.P.                       |
| HOWARD, Jennifer         | Fort Rouge          | N.D.P.                       |
| IRVIN-ROSS, Kerri, Hon.  | Fort Garry          | N.D.P.                       |
| JENNISSON, Gerard        | Flin Flon           | N.D.P.                       |
| JHA, Bidhu               | Radisson            | N.D.P.                       |
| KORZENIOWSKI, Bonnie     | St. James           | N.D.P.                       |
| LAMOUREUX, Kevin         | Inkster             | Lib.                         |
| LEMIEUX, Ron, Hon.       | La Verendrye        | N.D.P.                       |
| MACKINTOSH, Gord, Hon.   | St. Johns           | N.D.P.                       |
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| STRUTHERS, Stan, Hon.    | Dauphin-Roblin      | N.D.P.                       |
| SWAN, Andrew, Hon.       | Minto               | N.D.P.                       |
| TAILLIEU, Mavis          | Morris              | P.C.                         |
| WOWCHUK, Rosann, Hon.    | Swan River          | N.D.P.                       |
| <i>Vacant</i>            | Elmwood             |                              |
| <i>Vacant</i>            | The Pas             |                              |

**LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA**

**Wednesday, November 26, 2008**

**The House met at 1:30 p.m.**

*PRAYER*

**ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS**

**INTRODUCTION OF BILLS**

**Bill 212—The Waste Reduction and Prevention  
Amendment Act**

**Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights):** Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the MLA for Inkster (Mr. Lamoureux), that Bill 212, The Waste Reduction and Prevention Amendment Act; Loi modifiant la Loi sur la réduction du volume et de la production des déchets, be now read a second time and be referred to a committee of this House.

**Mr. Speaker:** The honourable Member for River Heights.

**Mr. Gerrard:** I move, seconded by the MLA for Inkster, that Bill 212, The Waste Reduction and Prevention Amendment Act; Loi modifiant la Loi sur la réduction du volume et de la production des déchets, be now read a first time.

*Motion presented.*

**Mr. Gerrard:** Mr. Speaker, this bill prohibits, bans, the use of plastic checkout bags by retailers. The ban on plastic bags is to take effect January 1, 2010. As we all know, plastic bags have a detrimental effect on our environment and wildlife habitat, and there is a general move in this direction. So I hope that the government will support this bill.

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

**Bill 213—The Greenhouse Gas  
Emissions Reporting Act**

**Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights):** Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the MLA for Inkster (Mr. Lamoureux), that The Greenhouse Gas Emissions Reporting Act; Loi sur l'obligation de faire rapport des émissions de gaz à effet de serre, be now read a first time.

**Mr. Speaker:** It's been moved by the honourable Member for River Heights, seconded by the honourable Member for Inkster, that Bill 213, The

Greenhouse Gas Emissions Reporting Act, be now read a first time.

**Mr. Gerrard:** Mr. Speaker, this act will provide for regular reporting every quarter of Manitoba's greenhouse gas emissions and the making available of these reports to the public and conveniently located on the government Web site.

It is interesting that this is consistent with some of the agreements that the government has been signing with other partners in the effort to address climate change issues and to do a better job of reporting greenhouse gases and reducing them.

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

**Bill 218—The Balanced Budget, Fiscal  
Management and Taxpayer Accountability  
Amendment Act**

**Mr. Rick Borotsik (Brandon West):** Mr. Speaker, I would like to move Bill 218, seconded by the Member for Emerson (Mr. Graydon). Bill 218 is The Balanced Budget, Fiscal Management and Taxpayer Accountability Amendment Act, and that it be now read a first time.

*Motion presented.*

**Mr. Borotsik:** I think under the circumstances that we face, ourselves, right now with respect to the fiscal instability and certainly the economic downturns that we're having, that it's important that budgets be balanced on an annual basis regardless of whether they be summary budgets or whether they be annual operating, and this bill speaks to that. The amendment speaks to that, Mr. Speaker, where, in fact, this bill would allow and mandate that the summary budget be balanced on an annual basis and not on a summary basis.

Certainly, Manitobans agree with that, and I do know that the members of the government would like to support this bill.

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

**Bill 221—The Crown Corporations Public Review and Accountability Amendment Act**

**Mr. Rick Borotsik (Brandon West):** I would like to move, seconded by the Member for Portage la Prairie (Mr. Faursehou), that Bill 221, The Crown Corporations Public Review and Accountability Amendment Act, be now read a first time.

***Motion presented.***

**Mr. Borotsik:** This is a very valuable act, and I do know that it's going to be soliciting some debate. What it is, Mr. Speaker, is holding accountable the board of directors of the Crown corporations that are, as we know, appointed by the government, and should there be any government involvement or any government influence in a decision that is made by those board members, this act would make those board members liable for those monies on behalf of the board.

So thank you very much for allowing me to put that in place.

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

**PETITIONS**

**Increased School Facilities—  
Garden Valley School Division**

**Mr. Peter Dyck (Pembina):** I wish to present the following petition to the Legislative Assembly.

These are the reasons for this petition.

The student enrolment in Garden Valley School Division has risen steadily for the last 10 years.

Since 2005, the enrolment has risen by more than 700 students, from 3,361 students to 4,079 students, a 21 percent increase.

Since September of '07, the enrolment has increased by 325 students, an increase of 8.7 percent.

Currently, 1,050 students, or 26 percent, are in 42 portable classrooms without adequate access to the bathrooms.

There are 1,210 students in a high school built for 750 students; 375 students are located in 15 portables without adequate access to bathrooms.

Projected enrolment increases based on immigration through the Provincial Nominee

Program reveals the school division enrolment will double in the next 12 years.

Student safety, school security, reasonable access to bathrooms and diminished student learning are concerns that need immediate attention.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To request the Minister of Education, Citizenship and Youth (Mr. Bjornson) to consider providing the necessary school facilities to Garden Valley School Division.

To urge the Minister of Education, Citizenship and Youth to consider providing the Garden Valley School Division an immediate date as to when to expect the necessary school facilities.

This is signed by Laura Penner, Margaret Dudgeon, Karen Giesbrecht and many, many others.

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

\* (13:40)

**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 the 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 regard to the Crocus Fund fiasco.

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 Eugene Kogan, Irene Kogan, Mark Kogan and many, many other fine Manitobans. Thank you.

### TABLING OF REPORTS

**Hon. Diane McGifford (Minister of Advanced Education and Literacy):** Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to table the following reports: Red River College Annual Financial Report for 2007-2008; Assiniboine Community College Annual Report 2007-2008 and the University College of the North Annual Report 2007-2008.

### Introduction of Guests

**Mr. Speaker:** Prior to oral questions, I'd like to draw the attention of honourable members to the public gallery where we have with us today from the R.M. of Elton: Reeve Jon B. Burton, Councillor Ross Farley, Councillor David Mazier, Councillor Harvey Paterson, Councillor Art Penner, Councillor Jim Boyd, Councillor Danny Kowbel, who are the guests of the honourable Member for Brandon East (Mr. Caldwell).

Also in the public gallery we have Doug Denning, councillor of the R.M. of Glenwood, and the reeve and council of the R.M. of Elton, who are the guests of the honourable Member for Minnedosa (Mrs. Rowat).

Also we have in the gallery members of the R.M. of Langford, R.M. of Rosedale, R.M. of Lansdowne, who are the guests of the honourable Member for Ste. Rose (Mr. Briese).

Also in the public gallery we have from the Winnipeg Technical College Pembina Campus, 20 English as an Additional Language students under the direction of Shanne Szabados. This school is located in the constituency of the honourable Minister of Healthy Living (Ms. Irvin-Ross).

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

### ORAL QUESTIONS

#### Municipal Infrastructure Needs Government Co-operation

**Mr. Hugh McFadyen (Leader of the Official Opposition):** Mr. Speaker, yesterday, municipalities, leaders from across our province stood with Manitoba taxpayers by voting down a proposal to increase the sales tax to be levied on Manitobans.

But the reality, Mr. Speaker, is that the needs continue to exist, the need for cleaner water, better roads, new bridges and new community centres around our province. So this morning those same leaders asked for their fair share of provincial revenues that are flowing into this government at record levels.

Will the Premier, in light of this commitment to a new partnership expressed by municipal leaders, today agree that he will sit down with those same leaders and arrive at a new arrangement to meet the needs of our communities while protecting taxpayers and allowing them to get on with creating jobs and rebuilding their communities?

**Hon. Gary Doer (Premier):** Mr. Speaker, we will be sitting down with municipalities. We've been sitting down with them, in fact, all year. We had meetings with them in September. We had another meeting with the Minister of Finance (Mr. Selinger) in their pre-budget presentation in October. We will be meeting with their executive tomorrow morning to go over all of the resolutions that were passed.

I would point out, Mr. Speaker, that the independent reports about Manitoba financial arrangements with municipalities, sometimes confirmed by delegates from other provinces, have indicated the model of municipal tax sharing, with the tax sharing which is unique with income tax and corporate tax, is a very positive ongoing program introduced in Manitoba.

We have increased the highways budget which affects many municipalities. The member opposite talked about highways and roads in his question, and bridges. Today we just announced an increase in that highways budget, includes work that's going on in places like Brandon and other municipalities across Manitoba where the provincial highways department has primary responsibility.

In recognition of the fact that the City of Winnipeg does not have the same consideration for road and highway work, we've taken the \$6-million, \$5-million fund that was there—actually it was one-time only out of the rainy day fund—we, first of all, stabilized it. It was in the '99 budget. It wasn't in the '98 budget or the '97 budget. We stabilized that funding in 2000-2001, and just a couple of years ago we increased it by four times, and now it's over five times more in the budget.

I would also point that there are projects that are helpful to municipalities that are paid for by the

provincial government. The member opposite did not mention the floodway protection. Mr. Speaker, flood protection in Winnipeg now is paid 50 percent by the federal government, 50 percent by the provincial government.

One of the other resolutions of the long list of resolutions is for sewage treatment in Manitoba. We are committed to the one-third model: one-third provincial; one-third federal; one-third municipal for sewage treatment and water protection. That's something we pledged last year. That's something we're negotiating with the federal government as we speak, and we will continue that model of one-third funding.

There was no funding in place in the '90s for sewage treatment. There was no funding in place for water treatment. There was no funding in place.

And it is targeted, I admit, Mr. Speaker. It is targeted. We believe that the unconditional grant combined with targeted investments is very positive, and we certainly will be meeting with the municipalities tomorrow morning.

**Mr. McFadyen:** The backward-looking response of the Premier, which goes over a laundry list of things that happened in the past, is all well and good, but the reality is that municipal leaders and Manitobans across the province are looking at their communities. They're seeing in some places community clubs close. They're seeing in other places municipal lagoons that are not at the standard they need to be thereby posing a threat to water in Manitoba. They see roads and bridges that are not up to standard, and we also see a softening economy.

The Premier, rather than looking backwards and talking about past actions, will also need to add to that list the fact that his revenues are higher today than at any point in history, \$10 billion, Mr. Speaker, an increase that is unprecedented in the history of our province over the last nine years.

So as we look at the fact that he now shares some 2.7 percent of the overall operating budget, never mind the inflated summary budget that they like to talk about sometimes, but 2.7 percent of the operating budget with municipalities today, municipal leaders are putting forward a proposal, which is a reasonable proposal. Take 1 percent of the PST and apply that on an unconditional basis to municipalities to rebuild their communities and create jobs in their communities.

Will he accept that proposal? And even if not implemented within one year, even if it's a phased-in approach, will he agree in principle to sharing 1 percent of the PST, as asked for by municipalities this morning?

**Mr. Doer:** The member opposite can pledge half a percent in the election from re-allocation of other grants to municipalities. Then he can add \$400 million in tax reductions a year ago for purposes of the taxes in Manitoba without explaining where he's going to get the money. Then he can also have a reckless promise to reduce sales tax by one point. So you have—

**Some Honourable Members:** Oh, oh.

**Mr. Speaker:** Order. The honourable First Minister has the floor.

\*(13:50)

**Mr. Doer:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The member then promises to reduce the sales tax by one point some 18 months ago. So you have a \$200-million allocation that wasn't his election promise, a \$200-million reduction in revenue with a tax reduction, \$400 million with the payroll tax, considerable other money in the election campaign in reckless tax reductions that he did not account for. That is over \$1.2 billion in unexplainable money.

On the other hand, areas—[interjection] Well, we hear the Ag critic—

**Mr. Speaker:** Order. We just started question period. We have a lot of guests in the gallery that came here to hear the questions and the answers, and I think they have a right to hear those. So let's have a little co-operation here.

The honourable First Minister has the floor.

**Mr. Doer:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We also recall many questions to support our livestock producers on the spending side. They say on one hand they're going to control spending and inflation in their so-called alternative phony speech, and then they come back with proposals day after day after day on spending. The largest overexpenditure, because of need in livestock, is in Agriculture. It's close to 20 percent dealing with the issues of the Interlake in flooding, and Agriculture payments for underpriced livestock products is close to 20 percent of the agricultural budget. We see no accommodation for agriculture in the Leader of the Opposition's question. In fact, I don't think he's asked a question on agriculture since this session has started.

So we have to add all these numbers up. He can write \$1.2 billion, \$200 million here, a reduction here, pixie dust over here, pixie dust over there. It adds up to \$1.2 billion.

Mr. Speaker, we just had his Finance critic talk about finances and balancing the budget. We are going to work in partnership with municipalities. We're going to work on highway capital. We're going to work on sewage and water treatment. We're going to continue to have the fairest funding formula in Canada, but we're not going to have monopoly money and come forward with disingenuous promises that the member opposite has made at municipal conventions that are totally different than what he made in the election campaign 18 months ago.

I think it's important. What people say in the election campaign should be their platform for the people of Manitoba today, Mr. Speaker.

**Mr. McFadyen:** Mr. Speaker, there's nothing in that response that speaks to the 1.2 million Manitobans who are out there who see their communities not keeping up in terms of the basic infrastructure, the hundreds of municipal leaders who are looking for a new and fair deal. He can make all the partisan, cheap-shot comments that he likes in the House today about the fact that we talked about 4.5 percent in budget adjustments over 10 years, when he's got a budget that's grown by 67 percent over nine years.

So he can manipulate the numbers any way he likes, Mr. Speaker, but it won't change the fact that Manitobans know what's happening in their communities. The municipal leaders who are gathered at the Convention Centre today are closer to the ground than this Premier who spent the last 12 months travelling the world. They know what's going on in their communities, and they disagree with the fact that he's got a million dollars for his own political party out of taxpayers' funds, \$30 million for a new headquarters for health-care bureaucrats, \$640 million to throw away on the west-side power line, and millions and millions of dollars for polling and advertising for NDP-connected polling and advertising firms.

Why can't he sit down with municipal leaders and make a fair deal with them, Mr. Speaker?

**Mr. Doer:** I would point out, Mr. Speaker, that, in the 1990s, when the recession hit across Canada, there was a municipal welfare system in place. Since we've been in office—and this is documented by third

parties, not by the member's own research. But, by third parties, there are two things in terms of municipal financing that are very important.

Number 1, we have the highest-highest-unconditional grant to municipalities in Manitoba of any province in Canada. The second assessment, Mr. Speaker, is that we have not downloaded services onto municipalities as we saw with his friends in the Harris government. We have uploaded those services to the provincial government.

We will continue. We talked about moving forward last year with some of the detox centres and some of the unfair funding formulas for ambulances in some communities. We talked about adding more police officers, which is a resolution at the convention. We talked about more library money, which was condemned in some editorials but also something that we are moving forward. There are resolutions to have more rec centres in rural Manitoba. We're putting more money in rec centres all across Manitoba. There are recommendations to have more money in highways as part of the AMM recommendations. That is also something we're doing. We have the most generous funding formula with income tax and corporate taxes being shared. We have also increased money for roads. We have decreased downloading onto municipalities with more uploading.

I don't know what the future will be entirely with the economy, Mr. Speaker, but I do know that municipalities with a one-tier social assistance program and much of the money being spent on social housing coming from the provincial government instead of being downloaded onto municipalities will not be perfect, but we'll be in a lot better shape than most provinces and municipalities anywhere in Canada.

#### **Teachers' Retirement Allowances Fund Performance Report**

**Mr. Rick Borotsik (Brandon West):** Obviously expenditures are all about priorities, but I don't recall that government in their election platform talking about a vote tax either.

It's obvious the Finance Minister is not going to share with Manitobans what our financial picture is. He's not going to give us an economic update. That's obvious.

I wonder if he will share with us one little piece of information. The minister is responsible for the pension assets fund. It's the trust account that holds

the \$1.5 billion that he borrowed last year to fund the Teachers' Retirement Allowances Fund or TRAF.

Mr. Speaker, in that budget, there is a net investment earnings of \$170 million budgeted. Can the minister tell us now in this House if that fund is, in fact, performing as budgeted?

**Hon. Greg Selinger (Minister of Finance):** All pension funds everywhere virtually in the world are underperforming what they expected in the budgets that they put down last spring, and the TRAF fund is no different.

### **Economy Financial Statement**

**Mr. Rick Borotsik (Brandon West):** I appreciate that answer. It was the one that I expected. It's underperforming.

Why will the Minister of Finance not then put a financial statement before this House, give us an economic statement, tell us where we stand not only with the teachers' retirement fund, not only with other investment funds we have, but with the revenues that are being expected in the last budget?

And, Mr. Speaker, the expenses, are they going up or are they, in fact, being curtailed?

**Hon. Greg Selinger (Minister of Finance):** The Throne Speech and economic update last week indicated we would balance the budget in '08-09. We were quite clear about that, barring, of course, some unforeseen major disaster that we haven't been able to see. We all know that there's tremendous volatility in the marketplace these days which is starting to have impacts on the real economy globally. We know that there's a recession taking hold not only in North America but in Europe, and there are predictions of a recession coming in Canada.

We will balance the budget in '08-09. That's the plan. We will report in the normal course of events within the next few weeks our second quarterly report and give information about the variations on both expenditures and revenues. The pension funds will report after their year-ends which is December 31.

### **Manitoba Public Insurance Corporation Injury Benefit Rates**

**Mr. Hugh McFadyen (Leader of the Official Opposition):** Every year in Manitoba, tragically, two or three people are rendered quadriplegic in serious motor vehicle accidents. Eight or nine Manitobans

every year are rendered paraplegic in such catastrophic accidents, and there are many more Manitobans every year who are left with permanent and life-changing head injuries as a result of car accidents.

I just want to ask the Premier whether he thinks that section 138 of the act, which talks about the objective of ensuring that people who are injured in such a way, in serious car accidents, have every opportunity to participate fully in society is an objective of his government, or are these just words in a piece of legislation.

\* (14:00)

**Hon. Gary Doer (Premier):** Mr. Speaker, there are two issues dealing with one of the cases in the media. One, is there any capricious behaviour on the part of the Crown corporation, and that, of course, has been dealt with by the courts in terms of, no. I think the quote was, in the lower courts: nothing untoward.

In terms of the legislation, it was written in 1993. It contained an escalator in the legislation that we have respected since we've been in office. Does this case before the courts—notwithstanding the merit of interpreting the existing legislation—represent real, legitimate questions on the adequacy of MPI and the legislation that it's implementing, that was passed in this Legislature by a previous government and maintained by us in terms of the escalator; does this legislation adequately deal with the dignity and independence for people that are disabled?

The Minister responsible for MPI has said that he has asked to review that. I certainly support his decision to do that. When the courts were reduced in their role in tort in 1993, there was the claim made in this Legislature that individuals—first of all, families dealing with people that are killed in car accidents would be adequately compensated. There was also the assertion that people living with disabilities or losing income would have adequate compensation.

There are some serious questions that obviously arise from this court case, not on the application of the law or how the individual's being dealt with, but on the issue of just using the escalator, and we are definitely and seriously looking at this, through the minister, in terms of what improvements can and should be made.

**Mr. McFadyen:** I thank the Premier for that answer. There was a report many years ago that he will know well, prepared by Sam Uskiw, a former member of Cabinet under the NDP, who looked at the issues



under the act, as it then was, and made some recommendations. For nine years, the government has failed to move forward. There have been calls by advocates within the disabled community, including the Member of Parliament for Charleswood-St. James, for a review, all of which has been ignored to date, Mr. Speaker.

The Chief Justice of the Manitoba Court of Appeal, Chief Justice Richard Scott, stated in his judgment, and I quote: The financial limit under section 131 is wholly inadequate to provide the essential level of personal assistance for the victim of an injury such as Mr. Fletcher who decides to make something out of his life despite his catastrophic physical injuries, but this is a matter for the Legislature, not the courts.

Mr. Speaker, we will be tabling a private member's bill to bring justice for victims of catastrophic automobile injuries, to rectify the problem that has been ignored for the past nine years by this government. Will the Premier support it?

**Mr. Doer:** Well, Mr. Speaker, I've already indicated our minister is going to review all of the issues from the court and also beyond the court in terms of the existing legislation. I do believe that Mr. Uskiw was hired by the former government and reported to the former government. I don't believe he reported to us in office, but I do believe that we've carried on. We didn't follow every report that the former government received. There are some reports we didn't agree with.

In terms of Mr. Uskiw's report, we have maintained the law and the escalator provisions in it. Obviously, there are questions we have. We're not going to agree to pass any law that we haven't read, but we have agreed to look at changes that should be made.

The goal, obviously, in 1993, the assertion was there would be adequate compensation for individuals that did not have the right of tort. The assertion in this House, made by the former Premier and the former minister responsible for public insurance was that there not only would be a compensation package in place for people that are disabled or people that lose their income or people that are paraplegic, there would be not only adequate income, but there would be an escalator that would deal completely with maintaining that income. Obviously, not only this case, but I think there are cases of brain injury that concern us. We have to look at this law, and I accept the fact that it's going to

have to be improved and the minister is working with MPI in this regard.

So, as I say, the report was not submitted to us, but the minister will be reviewing it. We are prepared to change the legislation to more adequately deal with the issue of taking away a person's right to tort and having a compensation system in law—in '93, with an escalator—and how it can be more adequate for people that want to work and live with independence in a dignified way.

**Mr. McFadyen:** The history is right. The Uskiw report, I believe, came down in the early part of 1999 and has contained some useful comments and recommendations. When the Premier gets time, I know it's been a busy nine years, but if he gets time, it would be, I think, a good report review to look for for inspiration.

Manitoba Public Insurance, over four years, spent \$780,000 on golf shirts and promotional items. They spent \$500,000 administering the election-timed rebates, which came out during the election last year. I'm just wondering why the Premier thinks that those should be a higher priority than providing dignity for people of catastrophic injuries.

**Mr. Doer:** I think this is a very serious question. I think that the issue of rebates ordered by the PUB, the member opposite would be the first one to say, don't interfere with an independent process called the Public Utilities Board. So the timing of the cheques went out this last spring, the same time as they went out the previous spring. They went out the same time as the previous spring before that.

For Manitoba motorists, it's meant that they have paid less for public insurance than probably every other jurisdiction in North America, and that is the cheque and the ruling are made by the PUB, not by the government of the day. So to suggest that is partisan and preferable when it's a PUB ruling, I think is completely—

**Some Honourable Members:** Oh, oh.

**Mr. Speaker:** Order.

**Mr. Doer:** —is beneath the dignity of the question that was raised first, and that is the whole issue of dealing with dignity of victims of car accidents, severe victims of car accidents.

I do believe that the member opposite raises legitimate issues. We think that those are legitimate issues, Mr. Speaker, in terms of the 1993 act and the inadequacy in some case, not all cases, of the

escalator for individuals in terms of bodily injury. The purpose of tort, as it was introduced in this House, was to be to replace money going to lawyers and having that go to victims. If it's gone so far that victims of car accidents or people who are family members that have lost lives, if it's gone so far the other way where the tort has been replaced with an inadequate payment system, based on this Legislature, then we have an obligation in this Legislature to change that. That's what the minister's asked MPI to look at and we respect that he's going to do that.

### **Health-Care Services Nursing Shortage**

**Mrs. Myrna Driedger (Charleswood):** Nursing vacancies in Winnipeg's ERs, ICUs and dialysis units have gotten worse under the NDP, and, today, they are the worst they've been for three years. Under this Minister of Health, vacancies in all three areas have spiked considerably and they are now at dangerously high levels. Over the last three years, ER nursing vacancies have doubled from 29 to 62 today. According to the WRHA, nurses are now forced to work overtime, double shift or to work short in our emergency rooms.

So I have to ask the Minister of Health: How could she have allowed the nursing shortage in our ERs to have grown so dangerously high?

\* (14:10)

**Hon. Theresa Oswald (Minister of Health):** Mr. Speaker, certainly we know that we are working diligently to increase the—

**Some Honourable Members:** Oh, oh.

**Mr. Speaker:** Order. The honourable minister's trying to respond and let's show some courtesy here. The honourable Minister of Health has the floor.

**Ms. Oswald:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm very happy to put information on the record about work that's being done to increase the complement of nurses. Members opposite remain a little sensitive about any discussion of nurses. It's clear in this House. We know what our record is on nurses. We've made a commitment to bring an additional 700 to Manitoba. We're going to do this, of course, through extensive recruitment, repatriation of nurses that fled the province in the 1990s and, of course, by educating, today, three times as many nurses as were educated during the previous administration.

We know we need more nurses on the front line and we're working to do that.

**Mrs. Driedger:** Mr. Speaker, this government should have been working on this for the past nine years. Instead, this nursing shortage is growing under their watch.

The nursing shortage in Winnipeg's ICUs is even worse. In the last two years alone, the ICU nursing shortage has more than doubled from 43 vacancies to 87. Most alarming, the Health Sciences Centre is short 50 ICU nurses, 50.

So I have to ask the Minister of Health: How could she have allowed the nursing shortage in the ICUs to have grown so dangerously high?

**Ms. Oswald:** Mr. Speaker, to put some factual information on the record, I can let the member know that the total Winnipeg Regional Health Authority nursing vacancy rate has indeed decreased by 6.4 percent from June of '08 into March of '08. We know, in addition, that the total R.N. vacancy rate has decreased to 10.5 percent from 12.4 percent.

So in addition to building our complement of nurses and in addition to the fact that we have added well over a thousand positions across Manitoba, we also know that we're working on building, with the WRHA, additional adult intensive care nursing programs. Seventeen students graduated in March of 2008 and are working in Winnipeg hospitals. Another 23 graduated in August, and the next class of 31 will be coming forth very shortly.

**Mrs. Driedger:** Mr. Speaker, a year ago this Minister of Health said that in this year they were going to be graduating 75 ICU nurses. That did not add up to 75 ICU nurses.

The nursing shortage in the three dialysis units is equally staggering. Just in the three units, they are short 39 nurses. This NDP government got elected in 1999 by promising to fix the nursing shortage. In fact, this Premier said he has a viable plan. All of this information we are presenting today has come from Freedom of Information documents. In the areas of the hospitals where the patients are the sickest, we have dangerously high nursing shortages. This will put patients at risk.

I'd like to ask the Minister of Health: How could she have allowed this to happen under her watch?

**Ms. Oswald:** Mr. Speaker, as a point of clarification, we know that during the time that the previous government was in place there was a net loss of

1,573 nurses in Manitoba. A thousand of them got fired and another 500, close to 600, were driven out of the system.

We know that we have turned that ship around and that today there is a net increase of nearly 1,800 nurses more today than in 1999. We also know that in the last year alone there were 200 more nurses working in Manitoba than there were a year ago. The member opposite asks me where they are. I can tell you that there are 10 more nurses working in the ICU at St. Boniface than there were in December of 2006. I can tell the member opposite that we continue to increase the funding and support for nurses studying ICU nursing.

We're educating nurses and paying for it, not firing them, Mr. Speaker.

### **Gage Guimond Report Implementation of Recommendations**

**Mrs. Bonnie Mitchelson (River East):** Recommendation No. 47 in the section for review of Gage Guimond's death states and I quote: That any decision to move a child when there are no child protection concerns contain a written reason for this decision, including reference to the impact on the child, the appropriateness of the move in accordance with the child's stage of development and the degree of attachment to the caregiver.

Mr. Speaker, has this recommendation been implemented by all Child and Family Services agencies?

**Hon. Gord Mackintosh (Minister of Family Services and Housing):** Mr. Speaker, the member has the other day asked a question about a particular recommendation in a special case review about training. There are about 300 recommendations that are part of the Changes for Children agenda in terms of an overhaul of the child welfare system.

The member knows full well in this Chamber about some of the actions that have rested with this Legislature. In fact, I believe the enhanced powers for the Children's Advocate were voted against by the members opposite. I believe the budget increases, Mr. Speaker, have been voted against by members opposite. Thankfully, they voted for the safety is job No. 1 legislation, but there are many, many recommendations going to work.

**Mrs. Mitchelson:** But the Changes for Children agenda came out—the progress report came out before the Gage Guimond report. So this is a new

recommendation that has nothing to do with Changes for Children. So maybe the minister could be honest and open and forthright with Manitobans.

**Some Honourable Members:** Oh, oh.

**Mr. Speaker:** Order. All members have to be careful when making implications of another member. All members in this House are honourable members, and I think you came very, very close. If I was the honourable member, I would withdraw that comment there.

**Mrs. Mitchelson:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'll withdraw that.

**Mr. Speaker:** Thank you.

**Mrs. Mitchelson:** Mr. Speaker, the minister knows and all Manitobans know that Gage Guimond died because he was removed from a safe and loving foster home and placed with relatives who were not capable of caring for him. This should not happen to any other child under this minister's watch.

Can the minister tell the House: Are all decisions to remove a child from a safe and loving foster home accompanied by a written reason that considers the impact on the children, as recommended under recommendation 47 in the Gage Guimond report?

This is a simple request. It should be simply implemented by the minister.

**Mr. Mackintosh:** Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the member's newfound interest in improving child welfare.

Mr. Speaker, there have been shortcomings identified in child welfare for decades. We certainly know the member opposite was presented with—and she knew full well, of course, that there was a crisis in child welfare under her watch, and she did nothing. They continued to make cuts. We're continuing to make new investments.

I can assure the House, Mr. Speaker, that there were I believe 50, 60 or so, recommendations made in the report into the tragic death of Gage Guimond and an action plan—

**Mr. Speaker:** Order.

**Mrs. Mitchelson:** Gage Guimond died under this minister's watch in the system that he created. It was a system that his government created through devolution, Mr. Speaker, and Gage Guimond died as a result.

Mr. Speaker, he has the ultimate authority for all children in the Child and Family Services system. I'm asking him today, because this is a very simple recommendation: a written reason why children are moved from safe and caring foster homes, a written reason that says why that child would be better served in a new situation.

Will the minister today send a directive to all Child and Family Services agencies to implement this recommendation?

**Mr. Mackintosh:** Well, as I said in my earlier response, Mr. Speaker, the action plan is in place and my understanding is that there will be a public reporting in the new year in terms of the status of action on all of the recommendations that, as I recall, are well over 60. The one she relates to the House is indeed important and action is taking place.

On the comment of devolution, I would ask, Mr. Speaker, for a fair assessment to take place. So far this year, there have been 10 deaths of foster children in Manitoba, far too many. The member opposite blames devolution. In her last year in office, there were 23 deaths of foster children. Devolution wasn't here then. Who did she blame then?

\* (14:20)

### **Youth Suicides Reduction Strategy**

**Mrs. Leanne Rowat (Minnedosa):** Mr. Speaker, what members of this side of the House want is to see some action from this government to take care of all of our children in Manitoba.

Mr. Speaker, like all of us in this House, Manitobans are greatly saddened by the loss of our children to youth suicide, but they are also immensely frustrated with this government's lack of action. No mention in the Throne Speech was there a strategy on how they're going to address this increasing tragedy.

In a report issued more than two years ago by the Children's Advocate, it said suicide rates among youth are growing, particularly young Aboriginal youth. Another study of Manitoba youth suicides concluded that there has been a dramatic increase in suicides in recent years with a significant increase among children under 14 years of age.

In May 2008, this government finally promised a comprehensive suicide prevention strategy. It's been six months, Mr. Speaker, and more children have died. Can this minister please indicate what their

strategy is, where their strategy is and when they're going to implement it?

**Hon. Eric Robinson (Acting Minister of Aboriginal and Northern Affairs):** I'll allow my colleague the Minister of Healthy Living (Ms. Irvin-Ross) to get into the details of the strategy.

Allow me to bring to the member's attention, however, some of the initiatives that we have going in many of these communities. As the member knows, there has been, regrettably, another suicide that occurred a few days ago in St. Theresa Point. Among them is the work we are doing with Shamattawa that was started by the late Oscar Lathlin, and we're certainly committed to carrying on with that work; the work in St. Theresa Point and the creation of the Island Lake Regional Youth Council that recommends to this government on the areas that we should be pursuing in addressing this unfortunate situation; our dialogue with youth themselves across the province which has resulted in the Cross Lake Cadet Corps, something that we should all be proud of in the province of Manitoba.

**Mrs. Rowat:** As a parent, I want to be proud of my children and watch them grow up and be successful. That's what each parent wants to see in Manitoba. The situation is not getting better. It's getting worse.

This government has promised to address this issue for a number of years and nothing has changed except more children are dying at a younger age. Mr. Speaker, 113 youth committed suicide between 2000 and 2006. It's a sobering statistic and one that demands attention and action. Nothing was mentioned in the Throne Speech on this very tragic issue.

When is this government going to take concrete steps to stop these tragedies from happening?

**Mr. Robinson:** Well, I certainly want to afford the member the opportunity to recommend to us as well, all of us collectively in this Chamber. I don't think any of us feel good about the deaths that are occurring in many of our communities. Certainly that's something I'm not proud of. My own home reserve experienced the highest proportion of suicides in one year during the 1980s.

I recently discussed this issue with the federal Minister of Indian Affairs, Mr. Speaker, and he, like I and everybody in this Chamber, is just as frustrated on how we address this issue. It's something that all of us have to put our heads around. You can't be pointing fingers at one particular group of people.

Collectively, as a society, we have to address this issue.

**Mr. Speaker:** Time for oral questions has expired.

**Manitoba Lotteries  
Scratch-and-Win Tickets**

**Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Inkster):** I would request leave to be able to pose my question and two supplements.

**Mr. Speaker:** Does the honourable member have leave to pose his question and two supplementary questions? *[Agreed]*

**Mr. Lamoureux:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I want to again talk about the tens of thousands of Manitobans every week that participate in the scratch-and-win lotteries throughout the province of Manitoba. They're going there in full anticipation that they have the opportunity to be able to win the top prize. We all know that far too often that is not the case, because the top prize has already been won.

Manitobans want the government to do the right thing, and I'm asking for the minister responsible today to indicate that he will stop, immediately, this from taking place.

Will the minister indicate to the Lotteries Corporation that, once the top prize has been issued, within 48 hours the remaining tickets would be pulled?

**Hon. Andrew Swan (Minister charged with the administration of The Manitoba Lotteries Corporation Act):** I do thank the member for the question about the integrity of the Manitoba Lotteries Corporation. I am very pleased to be the minister responsible for a corporation which really acts with great integrity in every step that they take.

As we talked about the other day, there are tens of thousands of Manitobans, maybe hundreds of thousands of Manitobans, who enjoy playing scratch-and-win games. Certainly they are able to be informed buyers of those products. They're certainly able to get information from the Lotteries Corporation. They're certainly able to get more information from retailers. They can also go on-line for both the Manitoba Lotteries Corporation and the Western Canadian Lotteries Corporation to receive any information they may need.

We have asked the Lotteries Corporation to take this up with the other partners in the Western Canadian Lotteries Corporation and, as I indicated

last week, there will be further discussions about whether further steps can be taken.

**Mr. Lamoureux:** Mr. Speaker, the minister's too-bad attitude for the consumer or the consumer-be-aware attitude just doesn't cut it. These individuals are going to participate in the lottery process in anticipation that they have a chance at the top prize. They're not going home checking the Internet or reading the small print of the details on the back of the tickets. The minister knows full well that that is the case.

I'm asking for the minister to do the right thing here and indicate to Manitoba Lotteries that it is not acceptable to continue to sell lottery tickets when the top prize has, in fact, been won. We are deceiving Manitobans, Mr. Speaker.

**Mr. Swan:** I'll try to explain this again, so that the Member for Inkster understands. The Manitoba Lotteries Corporation is a partner together with the jurisdictions from Saskatchewan and from Alberta, who together comprise the Western Canadian Lotteries Corporation. The Western Canadian Lotteries Corporation issues scratch-and-win tickets which are a very popular item across the three prairie provinces.

Indeed, there will be a meeting upcoming at which representatives from all three provinces will discuss if there are other steps that can be taken to continue to build on the integrity that the Manitoba Lotteries Corporation provides to all Manitobans.

**Mr. Lamoureux:** Mr. Speaker, let me try to explain it to the minister so that he understands. It's a pretty simple, straightforward question. The minister has the ability to stop the sales of those tickets in the province of Manitoba where the top prize has been won. This minister has that ability. I don't know if he's been told that, but he does have that ability to do that.

What we're asking is for the minister responsible to stand up for Manitobans who are going there in good faith, believing that they have the opportunity to win the top prize when, in fact, they don't, Mr. Speaker, because it's already been won. The minister can make a difference here.

Will he take the actions that are necessary to stand up for the consumers of the province of Manitoba?

**Mr. Swan:** Mr. Speaker, certainly we are always striving to continue to improve the products that

Manitoba Lotteries Corporation provides to Manitobans, but the member needs to understand that no system is foolproof. Indeed, because Manitobans have a full year to claim any winnings under a ticket, it is actually impossible to know when the winning ticket for the largest prize has actually been sold. I'm not certain what the member is suggesting be done about that. *[interjection]*

If the Member for Inkster would listen, he would have heard me say earlier and last week that I've asked my officials with the Manitoba Lotteries Corporation to discuss this with Saskatchewan, discuss this with Alberta, and, if there are further steps that the three prairie provinces believe should be taken to improve the system, then that will be done.

**Mr. Speaker:** As previously agreed, that ends question period. We will now move on to members' statements.

\*(14:30)

#### MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

##### **Munro Farm Supplies Ltd.**

**Mr. David Faurchou (Portage la Prairie):** Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank you for the opportunity to acknowledge a Portage la Prairie-based business on 50 years of success. Munro Farm Supplies Ltd. has been an outstanding corporate citizen while serving the farming community of Portage la Prairie and area for half a century.

In 1957, Westbourne, Manitoba resident Vince Munro decided to add a fertilizer sales business to his already established café, barber shop and pool hall. The fertilizer business was intended to complement the family farming operation, which had been established in 1882, and to quell area farmers' complaints of no competition. So in 1958, Westbourne area farmers started having their fertilizer needs met by Munro Farm Supplies Ltd.

Vince, along with his wife Helen and his son Glenn, continued to grow the business by expanding operations to Neepawa and Portage la Prairie. Vince left the business in 1990, but the business continued to grow with Dave Falk at the helm, which saw Munro Farm Supplies Ltd. locations established at MacGregor, Oakville and Elie.

The now \$11-million-a-year operation with sales of fertilizer, seed and crop protection products, complemented by equipment rental and custom

application, Munro Farm Supplies Ltd. continues to serve the farming community's needs.

With over 250 long-time customers and employees gathered to celebrate the achievements of Munro Farm Supplies, past-president Dave Falk stated that the company's success was due to face-to-face interactions with customers they serve and was proud to be part of the organization for 33 of its 50 years. Current president Ron Helwer agreed that the company's success was due indeed to the commitment of its employees and their people-first approach to business.

Mr. Speaker, in order to enjoy economic success within the agricultural industry here in Manitoba, we rely heavily on agricultural-related businesses to keep us informed and supplied with the latest in technology. Munro Farm Supplies Ltd. is one of those businesses where I and many others have always felt confident of receiving the very best in products and service.

May I offer congratulations on behalf of all members of the Legislative Assembly to every one who has played a part in Munro Farm Supplies 50 years of outstanding service to the agricultural industry and communities where they are located. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

##### **Peguis First Nation and Area Government Initiatives**

**Mr. Tom Nevakshonoff (Interlake):** Mr. Speaker, I rise today in acknowledgement of many recent announcements highlighting our government's commitment to the Peguis First Nation and surrounding area. On October 16, the Minister of Advanced Education and Literacy (Ms. McGifford) announced that the Province will invest close to a million dollars to provide access to adult education and literacy programs, technical vocational skills and post-secondary education.

The new Red River College regional campus initiative will expand to serve the area by facilitating 12 seats in the Aboriginal self-governance program, 15 seats in Business Administration and 18 seats for future health-care aides. The college's rotating introduction to trades program will also expand to introduce students to eight trades through pre-employment programming, which will allow graduates to enter the apprenticeship system.

The Province also recently announced \$300,000 in one-time funding to the Red River College to purchase equipment for mobile trades labs, which

will deliver training to 16 Fisher River and Peguis students. Other initiatives are ongoing, proving this government's commitment to First Nations on the education and training front.

On the same day, the Minister of Culture, Heritage, Tourism and Sport (Mr. Robinson) announced Manitoba's first independently operated public library on a First Nation to open in Peguis. The opening of the new Peguis library demonstrates the Manitoba government's long-term commitment to ensure public library service to each and every Manitoban. The Province provided \$79,000 in provincial grants in addition to the start-up collection and shelving. Our government will also provide approximately \$27,000 in annual provincial grants to the 3,200-square-foot library. Access to a public library will promote creativity and encourage community members young and old to learn and share knowledge.

Thirdly, on October 27, 2008, the Attorney General and provincial Chief Justice announced the official opening of a new circuit court location for sittings of the Provincial Court on Peguis First Nation. The opening of this circuit court allows the Province to provide accessible and more meaningful justice, and it honours an important recommendation of the Aboriginal Justice Inquiry by providing access to Manitoba's court services enabling the community's needs and local residents to be better served.

I ask the House to join me in congratulating Peguis First Nation on these positive steps toward the future. It is a great honour to work with the community and to support their commitment to future generations. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

#### **Carberry Agricultural Society and Fair— 125th Anniversary**

**Mr. Cliff Cullen (Turtle Mountain):** Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize a momentous milestone in one of the communities in my constituency. A rich history of agriculture and community was celebrated this year as the Carberry Fair and Carberry Agricultural Society marked their 125th anniversaries. Since 1883, the people of Carberry and the surrounding area have gathered once a year to compare the products of their gardens, show off the farm stock they worked hard to raise and train and display their domestic skills.

Over the years, the Agricultural Society, fair and races have been a major attraction in southern

Manitoba. The fair has maintained a strong equine presence, and this year's addition showcased light and heavy horses, chuckwagon and chariot events.

Other activities featured at the Carberry Fair included a ranch rodeo, purebred cattle show, baby animal display and cowboy church service. The fair also had a midway, beer gardens and children's activity tent. Another highlight of the day was the opening of a new 4-H beef barn. This multipurpose facility had tremendous financial support from the entire community. These events give everyone a chance to remember the history of the area and the hard work it took for our ancestors to settle the land that many enjoy today.

Although modern-day participants at the fair bring their cattle and horses in large trailers, people originally drove them to town. One hundred years ago, 350 heavy horses were driven to the Carberry Fair to be shown, something that would be a sight to see today.

This celebration provides a chance for the whole community to keep connected with their past and commemorate their rich agricultural heritage that is still going strong today. I would like to take this moment to recognize the historic occasion and congratulate the Carberry Fair and Agricultural Society on their 125th anniversary. I would also like to acknowledge all the volunteers throughout the years who have spent countless hours making this event successful. Thank you.

#### **Many Voices, One World Program**

**Mr. Rob Altemeyer (Wolseley):** Mr. Speaker, I rise today to acknowledge a breakthrough program for young people. This program, called Many Voices, One World, was developed last year at Gordon Bell High School in my constituency of Wolseley by educator Marc Kuly. It is a cross-cultural storytelling program that unites groups of Canadian-born students with recently arrived students known as new Canadians. These students meet regularly to learn how to tell stories from their own lives and cultures. Through this storytelling, the students use folk tales, childhood experiences and traditions as a way of exploring cultural differences. They learn about the diversity within and across cultures and use these complex viewpoints to develop better options in dealing with the issues they face. This results in a reduced risk for identity group conflict as the students develop a sense of voice, understanding and empowerment.

For Canadian kids, the program enables them to look at society with a broadened view while it also provides foreign students with a pathway to enter Canadian society. Through this cross-cultural dialogue, Canadian-born students are taught skill sets not normally used in western culture, such as the vitality of an oral tradition.

The program received the Manitoba Arts Council Above and Beyond award last year and is recognized and receives funding from UNICEF. It also receives funding from our government through the Manitoba School Improvement Program, Manitoba Labour and Immigration and through the Winnipeg Foundation and the United Way.

The students have performed at Human Rights Day at Gordon Bell High School, at the Winnipeg Storytelling Festival, the UNICEF Peace Conference and the Winnipeg Foundation Youth and Philanthropy Conference. The program is also currently being captured in a documentary by Winnipeg documentary film maker, John Paskievich.

Many Voices, One World is now in its second year and its founder, Marc Kuly is working with the School Improvement Program to bring it to both Hugh John McDonald School and Kelvin High School. I ask the House to join me in congratulating Mr. Kuly, the students and the facilitators of the Many Voices, One World program in their enormous success. It is encouraging to see youth engage in a greater understanding of themselves and each other across different cultural backgrounds. Thank you.

#### **Dr. Larry Reynolds**

**Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights):** Mr. Speaker, yesterday in this Legislature, the Premier said of Dr. Larry Reynolds: I don't even know the person.

I'd like today to introduce MLAs to Dr. Reynolds. The government has been advocating and promoting the development and use of birthing centres for low-risk pregnancies with family physicians and midwives as a central feature in the provincial effort to increase the use of midwives in their role in health care in Manitoba.

Dr. Larry Reynolds was the person who did the research, the research for which he's internationally known and respected, I might add, which showed that birthing centres with family physicians and midwives are a safe and effective specialist care for low-risk pregnancies.

In demoting and removing Dr. Reynolds, the government is presiding over the demotion of the person who laid the foundation for much of the government's own policies in this respect. Dr. Larry Reynolds, as head of the Department of Family Medicine for the university and regional health authority, was the person who did everything he could as head, against long odds, to implement programs to increase the number of family physicians in Manitoba and to improve the role and working conditions for family physicians in our province.

\* (14:40)

In demoting and removing Dr. Reynolds, the government is presiding over the demotion and removal of the very person who's done more than anyone else in the last few years to promote the role and position of the family physician in our province.

Dr. Reynolds has taught many, many medical students and I believe quite a number of midwives. He has seen many, many patients as a family physician in Manitoba, not just in a clinic at the Health Sciences Centre but at community emergency rooms like the Grace Hospital and in places like Thompson. He's been said to be one of the physicians most favoured by patients in Manitoba. He's one of the most dedicated people in our province when it comes to promoting and supporting the role of the family physician.

In demoting and removing Dr. Reynolds, the government is presiding over the demotion and removal of one of the most admired and respected teachers and family physicians in the province. In demoting and removing Dr. Reynolds, the government is saying to all family physicians, never speak up, never be a strong advocate for family physicians in our province. You may as well go elsewhere.

It's a sad and sorry state of affairs when the government and its team of appointed board members to the WRHA are so undermining good initiatives with bad actions.

#### **ORDERS OF THE DAY**

#### **GOVERNMENT BUSINESS**

**Hon. Dave Chomiak (Government House Leader):** I wonder if I could ask for leave of the House to revert to introduction of bills.

**Mr. Speaker:** Is there agreement of the House to revert to introduction of bills? *[Agreed]*



## INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

### Bill 4—The Community Revitalization Tax Increment Financing Act

**Hon. Steve Ashton (Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs):** I move, seconded by the Minister of Justice (Mr. Chomiak) that Bill 4, The Community Revitalization Tax Increment Financing Act; Loi sur le financement fiscal de la revitalisation urbaine, be now read a first time.

#### *Motion presented.*

**Mr. Ashton:** My thanks to the House. I would like to indicate that this is a bill to bring in tax increment financing legislation. It's similar to legislation which was introduced last session. We have very clearly put in the requirements in terms of municipal approval for tax increment finance legislation and consultation with municipalities and school districts. It's based on a very simple premise in terms of encouraging neighbour development and community development. It will ensure that no school district is any worse off and I recommend it to the House. Thank you.

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

### THRONE SPEECH (Fourth Day of Debate)

**Mr. Speaker:** Resume adjourned debate on the proposed motion of the honourable Member for Southdale (Ms. Selby),

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 Third Session of the Thirty-Ninth Legislature of Manitoba.

And the proposed motion of the honourable Leader of the Official Opposition (Mr. McFadyen) in the amendment thereto.

And also the proposed motion of the honourable Member for River Heights (Mr. Gerrard) in subamendment thereto.

Standing in the name of the honourable Member for Pembina, who has 22 minutes remaining.

**Mr. Peter Dyck (Pembina):** Thank you for the opportunity to continue in this debate that's taking place within the House here.

Just to recap a few things that I said yesterday, I indicated very clearly that the part that I was objecting to was the fact that southern Manitoba had been completely omitted within the Throne Speech. I was giving my reasons for that and, of course, in this I was following debate that the Minister of Education (Mr. Bjornson) had put forward. So I want to continue on that today.

However, before I continue, I want to indicate too that the Member for Minto (Mr. Swan) apparently will be following my comments and that he said he would correct the things I said incorrectly. So I want to put one point on the record. I'd like him to explain and possibly fix what was indicated back in 1999 by his Premier who said that he was going to fix health care with \$15 million and in six months. So I think there's something, an area that we could start in correcting and making the points, putting them on correctly on the record.

But I want to continue, and I was talking about education yesterday. It's interesting that, as I was talking about the fact we already have 46 huts—I know that the petition that I read today indicated that we only have 42 but, since then, we've had some more added to the hut situation within the Garden Valley School Division and that we are expecting 14 more next year.

Mr. Speaker, it is absolutely imperative that we do something. I know that the comments that are put out there said, yes, we're working on it; we're working at it. I've heard that actually for a number of years, but, ultimately, something does need to take place.

Last night, I went to a hockey game back in my community. It was interesting how the parents were asking questions about what's taking place, like: Could you give us a date? I know I've talked to the minister about this. He says that, yes, we're working on it, but it would be very helpful if we could put some dates forward as to when this could take place, so that we have an end in mind.

I will next move to health care and the issue again, as I indicated, was that I've have petitions on a daily basis regarding the need for a 100-bed personal care home—Tabor Home—within Morden. It's important that we get this place. We've been asking about this for years already and, yet somehow, it's falling on deaf ears again.

It's not only the fact that we need the 100-bed personal care home, but added to this is the fact that,

in Boundary Trails Health Centre which is a wonderful facility and I know it's being used by people from throughout Manitoba, but 27 of the 80 beds there are being occupied by people who should be in a personal care home. This is not good utilization of those beds. In a personal care home, they would be cared for and the cost would be about half of what it is within the hospital.

So, Mr. Speaker, it's important that we get this 100 personal care home. In fact, it will not address the issues that are out there and the people who are awaiting placement because, in Salem—which is Winkler—there are 50 people waiting placement. In Tabor in Morden, there are 40 people waiting placement and in the Boundary Trails Health Centre are 27 people.

These are all waiting placement; they need a place to stay. Consequently, it's a desperate situation. As I've indicated time and time again, the facility is old. It's unsafe; it doesn't have a sprinkler system. In fact, the doors within this facility are too narrow. Should there be a fire, they could not get the beds out of there. So we need this replaced.

I know that the Minister of Health (Ms. Oswald) has indicated—in fact, she has been out there and has indicated very clearly that she realizes that we need to get a new personal care home. As she says daily—well, almost daily, almost every time she's asked the question—she says, we're working at it diligently. I do appreciate that.

I guess I would indicate to you, Mr. Speaker, that the Minister of Education (Mr. Bjornson) says he's working at trying to get new buildings, new educational facilities. The Minister of Health is indicating that she's in fact trying to get a new facility. So what's holding these projects back?

It must be the Premier (Mr. Doer) who has said, time and time again, that everything that needs to be done crosses his desk. So I would just have to assume that he's the one who's trying to postpone and is trying to hold back on some of the projects that are taking place here.

Mr. Speaker, I would be remiss if I did not add some of the other infrastructure needs that we have in the fastest-growing constituency in rural Manitoba, and that's the whole area of highways. It's a responsibility of the minister of highways to look after the provincial roads within the system, the provincial highways. Again, we have a need; it's been expressed time and time again of the

four-laning of Highway 32. That's within the city of Winkler. It's not a long stretch; I believe it's something like seven kilometres in length, but it's something that is desperately needing replacement.

\* (14:50)

So, with those few comments, Mr. Speaker, I just want to indicate to you that we have huge needs within the area. They were not addressed in the Throne Speech. In fact, as I've indicated time and time again, there was no mention made of things taking place in southern Manitoba. So, if this government wants to continue to pride themselves with the growth within the province, and the growth is taking place within rural Manitoba in the area that I represent, then I would submit to you that there need to be the resources put out there, because the people out there are very resourceful. They are, in fact, creating jobs. They're inviting others to come in to participate in some of the things that are taking place out there, but we do need the resources from the provincial government that they are responsible for in bringing to our constituencies.

In conclusion, I want to thank the people, our employers within the area who are creative, are continuing to expand in order to try and create jobs for the people out there, and also for the employees who are really the success story of what's taking place within my constituency.

And, as the slogan is that we have out there, Where People Make the Difference, I truly believe that this is something that is helping to create the buoyancy, the growth that we are experiencing within southern Manitoba. Thank you very much.

**Mr. Mohinder Saran (The Maples):** Mr. Speaker, it is my honour to rise and speak in support of the Throne Speech that reflects the priorities and wishes of Manitobans. This is my third opportunity to speak in reply to the Speech from the Throne. I must say that I am privileged and delighted to address the Chamber today. Even after these few years, I have not forgotten that I stand here as the representative of The Maples constituency, and I'm still humbled and thankful for that.

I would first like to take a moment to pay tribute to my colleague Oscar Lathlin. I noticed Oscar and I have some common traits. He was a quiet man on the outside just like me, but he was also noisy on the inside just like me. By listening to Oscar I learned about the struggles that Aboriginal people still face today in our society.

*Ms. Erin Selby, Acting Speaker, in the Chair*

I wish to take a moment to share a story with the honourable members of the House today. Some time ago I was on Portage Avenue waiting for the bus. A young man came up to me and made an offensive comment to me, assuming that I was an Aboriginal person. I pretended that I did not understand what he had said, and when I asked him to clarify, he said, sorry, you are from India, and apologized. It was at that point that I realized that if I face discrimination, I have the choice and could go back to my home country. But Aboriginal people cannot go back. This is their country and homeland, and they are suffering under such treatment.

When Oscar spoke in this House because of a comment made from an opposition member, he was showing how he felt throughout his life, subjected to negative comments. When he was speaking, I remembered how I felt when I first came to Canada and was discriminated against in the workplace. The attitude was that if you are a person from a visible minority, you are no good until you prove otherwise. If you are from a major culture group, then you are good until you prove otherwise.

Watching him become a leader and a minister and represent his culture and people in this House inspired me. There is a saying in an East Indian culture: Good people who are needed here on earth are also needed in the next world. I think that's what happened. It applies well to Oscar Lathlin, who was not only my colleague, but also, in my mind, through the adversity, he became a leader and he became a minister. In a way, in my mind, he was my hero.

Madam Acting Speaker, building on Oscar's desire for a better Manitoba for all citizens, the government has led out this hard plan for the future of Manitoba, the directions that open this province up to new opportunity.

The downturn of the economy around the world is on everyone's mind, including my constituents from The Maples. The government's balanced approach to provincial finances over the past nine years has ensured that Manitoba is well prepared to handle any difficult times that may lie ahead. The balanced policies of our long-term growth strategy have seen a steady growth of our province's economy.

We hear from the opposition that we should have accumulated more rainy day funds, but what is the use of this? In order to put more money into the

rainy day fund, we would have to cut services that we have now. This is like bringing out clouds on a sunny day. This approach will have never-ending rainy weather for the poor families. When the economy is booming poor families should also enjoy the benefits. Our government's balanced approach is the best approach.

Their philosophy of greed had its consequences. We have seen this in America with the current state of their economy. A saint once said, this Earth was for the living of saintly people, those who are not selfish, but the thieves took over the world and the Earth cannot take the burden of the greed. That is what we have. We are seeing the economic disaster because a philosophy of greed has taken over the philosophy of sharing. We must keep these words in mind when moving forward in these challenging times and making new policies to stabilize our economy.

The Maples is a neighbourhood of many communities. Nearly two thirds of my constituents are first or second generation immigrants. For them, Manitoba represents a place of promise for work and a better life for their families. They are committed to the work force and help build the economy of this province.

In Manitoba, the Philippines ranks as Manitoba's top immigrant source country. Recognizing this, the government signed a memorandum of understanding with the Philippines on February 8, 2008, to streamline further immigration to Manitoba from the Philippines. A large number of these newcomers live in The Maples, but my constituency also consists of East Indians, Portuguese and many other ethnicities from around the world. We are known for having one of the highest proportions of new Canadians in Manitoba.

The Provincial Nominee Program has been a great success in bringing immigrants to the province. Changes have been made to requirements so as to remove the barrier to those applying to the program from abroad. Individuals are now being assessed through our priority streams and help us better meet our skilled labour shortage here in Manitoba.

For a strong and growing economy, a dedicated work force must be maintained to keep it going. Thanks to our Provincial Nominee Program, our government is committed to increasing immigration by 1,000 additional people every year until we reach our objective of 20,000 people in 2016. This will

ensure a steady flow of new workers for our labour market.

\* (15:00)

The Member for Wellington (Ms. Marcelino) and myself have discussed needed changes to the Manitoba Provincial Nominee Program with the Minister of Labour and Immigration (Ms. Allan). She has listened to us like a caring minister of a caring government, and we have been able to make some progress in improving the program.

With the inland port, goods will be coming from other countries and moving through Canada. The trucking industry will flourish. By removing the requirement of a job letter, we will attract more truck drivers and remove this shortage. Previously, the cost to a truck driver to come to Canada put the cost to \$20,000 to acquire a job letter from Manitoba employers. But now we have created more opportunities for them.

The Provincial Nominee Program also opens the door to bringing in more health-care workers to the province. Currently, foreign doctors are known as international medical graduates and can seek a conditional licence to practise here in Manitoba. Right now, 32 percent of Manitoba doctors are international medical graduates. In my opinion, Madam Acting Speaker, to add to this success, we should also create a voluntary placement system for the foreign-trained doctors where anybody who wants to can get trained by volunteering. This should be an approach for every trade and profession. It will revolutionize the skill pool, in my opinion.

However, that is not where we stop, Madam Acting Speaker. In the Throne Speech, the government committed to expanding skills and apprenticeship training with the target of 4,000 new placements in four years. Based on recommendations from the Apprenticeship Futures Commission, we will modernize apprenticeship training. When newcomers are given the opportunity to become familiar with the workplace environment in Canada, they will be able to establish themselves in their chosen careers here much more quickly.

In addition, Madam Acting Speaker, the Rewarding Work program will increase training and education opportunities with new initiatives that will help low-income, working families with the cost of raising their children and provide ongoing supports to help people stay employed. Training and education are critical components of any strong

economy and the heart of our economic strategy. The Maples has many young people looking to build their future for themselves and this province. The investments made by this government into the University of Manitoba, University of Winnipeg, Red River College, and other educational campuses in the province will bring more opportunities and better education to our students. The people in my constituency who have immigrated to Canada come with the hope that they and their children can have a better life here. Our government is committed to ensuring our future is prosperous and successful. These investments in education will ensure that this is the case.

*Ms. Bonnie Korzeniowski, Deputy Speaker, in the Chair*

Nowhere is the importance of community and accepting more prevalent than in the streets of The Maples. This year, the Unity Group of the Maples Collegiate organized their 12-kilometre walk from the front of their school to the front of this very Legislature. The walk symbolizes the ideals of respect, tolerance and peace, and raises awareness of racial discrimination. These are all ideals of vital importance in the Maples community, where bringing together cultures is fundamental to the success of the constituency.

I also make sure that I represent the whole community, not only one section. That is why I hired people from many cultural groups, hired also from major cultural groups—the Filipino and East Indian community—to work in my constituency office. We are enjoying the mix.

To ensure the strength of our economy, we must also ensure its health. Over the next two years, the government will invest \$85.5 million for specialized medical equipment. In addition, phase 1 of the new emergency department at the Seven Oaks Hospital emergency department is now complete.

*Mr. Speaker in the Chair*

This state-of-the-art department was designed to ensure that we can provide our citizens with the best emergency care possible. This new department will ensure that citizens of Manitoba and The Maples are well taken care of.

Taking care of our citizens is an utmost priority. The Maples has a greater segment of young families. The government has pledged an expansion of child-care options under its five-year Family Choices plan. In the next two years, we will see close to

3,000 funded, child-care spaces open for families, so that parents can work without worrying about taking care of their children during the day. The Nominee Program will bring in more child-care workers to help care for these children.

But we are also focussing on the aging population of our province. Families and maintaining a close family unit are important to my constituents. Having left a family and parents back home, immigrant families in The Maples place a great importance on staying together as much as possible. With the Caregivers Tax Credit, we can now ensure that families can afford to take care of each other and that people can take care of their parents as they age. The tax credit is to help ease some of the financial burden that is placed on the family and will make it easier for families to support each other.

In addition, our government takes pride in tailoring its legislation and services to the needs of seniors. The Aging in Place strategy gives seniors more choices in the kind of care they receive while continuing to live in their community.

We have added nearly 2,000 new drugs to Pharmacare and new personal care homes around the province. I have seen people enter personal care homes where no one speaks their native language. As a result, they die from loneliness before their actual deaths. By building our economy and bringing in new health-care workers from other countries through the Provincial Nominee Program, we can ensure that even those who do not speak English can be well taken care of by someone who understands their language and culture. Together we are focussed and determined to make lives for Manitobans better.

My constituents in The Maples voted for me so that I could represent them on matters of education, health and community to the government. The Throne Speech addresses not only the needs of my constituents, but all of our constituents across the province. The young, the old, the native-born and immigrant-born—the Throne Speech speaks to all Manitobans, just like our Assembly which reflects the make-up of our population.

\*(15:10)

Therefore, Mr. Speaker, I would like to express my support for my government's Speech from the Throne and suggest that all members in the House join us in voting in favour of the Throne Speech to move our province forward into the future.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**Mr. Cliff Cullen (Turtle Mountain):** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, and I certainly thank you for the opportunity to discuss today the government's latest Speech from the Throne. Last week it certainly was a pleasure to be in the House to hear the intent of the government over the next little while. I was certainly happy as well to have a couple of invitations for the day, and happy to have my aunt and uncle, Ken and Marlene Taylor, who reside in Winnipeg here. They certainly treated me very well for the years that I spent in Winnipeg at university, so it was a nice opportunity to repay some of that thanks and they certainly enjoyed the day here and enjoyed the evening at the Lieutenant-Governor's reception as well. I think the thing that—I just kind of get some comments from them and comments from other people around Manitoba—what we were hoping to see in the government's Speech from the Throne was a vision, was a vision for Manitoba and a vision to where this government wanted to take the 1.2 million people in Manitoba, where they could see us prospering in the years to come, and how the government intends to get there.

Now we know, as Progressive Conservatives, that there certainly are opportunities throughout Manitoba, and we believe that the people of Manitoba are willing to accept some of those opportunities and some of those challenges going forward. What we are simply asking the government to do is provide a framework for moving us forward into the future. Instead of seeing a long-term vision of Manitoba moving forward, we saw a host of re-announcements from different programs over the last—going back even as far as eight or nine years, and we didn't really have that vision of the future.

I think, especially in these interesting economic times that we're in not just here in Manitoba and across Canada, but, globally, we're in some significant economic uncertainty. That's where governments have to take a lead role and say to their constituents that, you know, we have a way to provide and see the future and we're going to be here to protect you, protect your pocketbooks, protect your jobs, protect your income, protect your families. That's something that was sorely lacking in this particular Speech from the Throne.

You know, it's good this week that we have the municipal councillors from across Manitoba here and debating quite a number of resolutions. It's a real good opportunity for us as MLAs to get out there and talk with our constituents. I know, in Turtle Mountain, for instance, there are probably about 100

councillors within my constituency that are here representing about 20,000 people. So they have a significant understanding of the local issues in Manitoba, and they're trying to bring those issues on behalf of their constituents to the floor in their discussions this week. They also bring those issues to us as MLAs. So it's our job as MLAs to pass on that information, those issues that they see as important to their constituents to the government of the day.

I just want to bring some of those issues today to the floor that my constituents view as being important. Now clearly we had the discussion this morning over at the Convention Centre in terms of municipal infrastructure and how we fund that infrastructure going forward. Now we know the infrastructure is important to all Manitobans whether it be highways, roadways, whether it be water and those relevant issues, our waste-water treatment, those issues, recreation facilities, town halls, those sort of entities. They're all very important to the well-being of Manitobans, and they're also very important to the prosperity and future prosperity of those individual communities. So the infrastructure can play as a very important backbone of the prosperity of this province going forward, and really what the municipalities are trying to do is get that debate on the floor, and bringing the issue to the Province of Manitoba and saying that we as municipal leaders need some assistance and want to work with the Province of Manitoba and how we move forward in that regard.

I know I have a number of municipalities that are dealing with both water and waste-water treatment and very substantial issues. Talking to one community this morning, they're going to be upgrading their water treatment facility. They're looking at a couple of options. One option is \$800,000; another option is \$8.5 million.

When you look at a community of, in that area, probably a couple thousand, it's a very significant cost to them. So they have to look at other ways to maintain those services.

Probably one of the critical parts of the infrastructure is actually the road and highway infrastructure where the Province of Manitoba has a direct bearing. I know I've spoken with the minister a number of times in terms of Highway 340, but it is a very important piece of road infrastructure that has to be addressed. It wouldn't take much for the province to make a long-term commitment to this particular 13 kilometre stretch of road. We already have an

existing bridge there; it's been there for 20 years now. But what we're having trouble with is the road to connect it, and that's certainly a significant issue for the infrastructure area in my communities.

Another issue that is very important to rural councillors and to some of the city councillors as well, and the population as a whole, is the health-care issue. It's a very significant issue in western Manitoba in particular. We have a number of emergency rooms that have been closed for, going back, several years now, and there was very little acknowledgment of the crisis we have in health care in this Throne Speech.

Again, Manitobans are looking for some kind of a vision. If something is not working, something is broken, they look to the government for ideas on how to fix something that's broken. I know a number of municipalities—there are about, well, between 50 and 60 municipalities—have got together in western Manitoba because they recognize the system is broken in western Manitoba, and they're looking for solutions to the problem.

I know they had a discussion with the Minister of Health (Ms. Oswald) yesterday in regard to health care in western Manitoba. These people are simply asking for the plan. What is the plan for delivering health care in the future in rural Manitoba? The minister's answer was, well, we're not going to close any hospitals in rural Manitoba. Well, that's not a plan, Mr. Speaker. If that's their plan, the plan is broken. I would suspect that is probably the political statement of where the Province wants to be. They don't want to politically close any hospitals. Well, we know we've got close to 20 emergency rooms that have services either closed completely or service is curtailed at this point in time.

These communities, these municipal leaders, are simply asking the government: How can we help you fix the problem? If the government is not prepared to acknowledge there's a problem and not prepared to accept a new vision, how are they ever going to work with municipal leaders to resolve those issues? That is the fundamental question.

You have to admit that there's an issue there before you can actually stop to address it. If you really care about fixing health care, and we know we've got chronic shortages of doctors, nurses, lab and X-ray technicians, it seems to be the minister's plan is just to keep recruiting new individuals into these particular areas. That, at least, was the message

that she was giving these 60 rural councillors yesterday.

Well, quite frankly, the situation over nine years has got worse. So, obviously, if that is the plan, the government is going to have to step up to the plate and redress that plan because it's simply not working. Not only are emergency rooms closed throughout western Manitoba, but we know the waiting lists and all those other issues, services, are getting longer. So there are a lot of issues there in terms of health care.

Mr. Speaker, the other issue, too, that was lacking in terms of the rural issues was the crisis we're facing in the livestock industry right now. We suffered through this Bill 17 and the ban on hog production or expanded hog production in a few parts of Manitoba. We know that's going to have a very detrimental effect to the hog industry in Manitoba. We know with the country-of-origin labelling that's coming forward in the United States, it has already impacted the hog industry there, and it's certainly going to impact the beef industry in Manitoba as well.

\* (15:20)

We know the beef producers are getting out of the industry just in record amounts. Mr. Speaker, I'm hoping the Minister of Agriculture (Ms. Wowchuk) will be looking at some of the industry publications. I look back at *Cattle Country*. This is the November, the current issue of *Cattle Country* dealing with the cattle industry. The front-page headline is "Industry in Crisis."

Clearly, the industry recognizes there is a crisis out there but the frustration they're seeing is, the government that should be representing them does not recognize that there's a crisis out there. Even an acknowledgment in the Speech from the Throne that there's a crisis in the livestock industry in Manitoba would be more than what we saw.

We don't have a plan. The government doesn't have a plan of how they're going to deal with the livestock industry in Manitoba and some of those issues relevant to the livestock industry. The important thing is that you have to remember these industries are very important to the vibrancy of communities across the province. If the industry is in a downturn the communities will suffer, as well. So it's an important issue that the government should be recognizing.

In big terms here, in general terms, I think you have to understand the opportunities that we have

missed here in the province of Manitoba. We have had relatively good years over the last nine years. Economically speaking, we've had record incomes to the Province of Manitoba, certainly from own source revenue and also, probably more importantly, from the federal transfers. We're getting 37 percent, 38 percent of our entire budget coming from the federal coffers. The other thing you have to look at, too, is the provincial budget. We had a provincial budget in 1999 of just under \$6 billion. The current budget is now just about \$10 billion. We've seen a very significant increase in terms of spending on behalf of the NDP government.

Now, with these record incomes coming into the Province, you would think a government that kind of understands the situation, you know, the good times are rolling along here pretty well, maybe it's a good time to make sure we have our financial house in order. Let's stick a few dollars away. Let's pay off our debt if we would. That would be the logical thing to do. But not this particular government. They've decided that they're going to spend every cent they can get and actually spend more than what they've got. So what we've had happen over nine years is an increase in the debt in the Province of Manitoba.

Our total debt in the province of Manitoba, when you count in all the Crown corporations and all the other entities, is around \$20 billion. A very substantial amount of money. If we get talking about that in terms of looking at what that means for every Manitoban, it's a very, very substantial amount of money.

The other thing too, they keep talking about this fiscal stabilization, or the rainy day account, that they've got \$800 million in there. Well, we know there's a couple of hundred million of that has to be allocated to health care and that was a federal transfer from a few years ago. So we only have about \$600 million left in that particular fund. Roughly about \$560 for every man.

You look at the province of Alberta. Obviously, they've had some pretty good times in the past. They've got, by contrast, about \$25 billion tucked away in a couple of accounts there for the rainy days. The Government of Saskatchewan, they're busy paying off their debt. Probably within the next one or two years they'll have their debt completely paid off, whereas, in the province of Manitoba, we're going exactly the opposite way. As a result, we as a province of Manitoba are dependent upon those transfer payments from Ottawa. We know, with the

economy and the downturn in the economy and what's happening in Ontario, chances are things will probably turn around and we might not have those big, rosy transfer payments coming in from Canada. That raises the flag; what is the Province of Manitoba going to do to insulate itself in case there is a downturn in terms of the income?

We were looking forward to having some kind of an economic statement from the government to say exactly where we are and what this potential downturn and what those other circumstances might do to the budget and to the economy of Manitoba. But we're getting very little direction from the Minister of Finance (Mr. Selinger) on that side of things. He uses a certain amount of caveats when he responds to the questions regarding the financial well-being of the province. I guess what we will do as Manitobans, we will have to wait and see how the budget turns out at the end of the day, next March.

Now there are ways, we think, to be fiscally responsible. I just want to pick one example, and it has to do with Manitoba Hydro. We know, when times are tough, we should be looking at ways to make sure that we're investing every dollar wisely. This is every dollar of taxpayers in Manitoba, so every Manitoban has a stake in how we spend their money.

We're into a discussion—not really a debate, but we're into a discussion about where we should put the next Bipole III line. I think we all agree on the principle of Bipole III, that we do need another line for reliability purposes. Hopefully, some day, we will have contracts in place where we're going to be exporting more power so that we can actually afford to put up some more wind-energy generating facilities, whether they be wind energy or whether they be hydro-electric, but we do say that we do need another Bipole III line for reliability purposes.

We maintain that the line should be built down a short east-side route which would make the most sense for Manitobans, instead of spending at least \$400 million and probably more than that on the capital cost of that particular line alone.

We know once we get a line up and running, obviously the longer the line, the more service costs we're going to have to maintain that particular line as well. That doesn't even count the extra-line loss in terms of electricity that we're going to use, with a line that's 400 kilometres longer. It's fairly a substantial amount of electricity that would be lost for resale.

We have Manitoba Hydro on one hand, with the government in their court, trying to convince Manitobans to save hydro-electricity. On the other side, they go out there and just wilfully wasting electricity on a decision that doesn't make any sense.

Mr. Speaker, all we're asking is let's put the two proposals on the table. Let's have an open and honest debate about both options. If the government is really concerned about the environmental implications of running a line down the east side, let's put it on the table, make it open to the public. Manitobans can come and debate the issue.

Hey, we can even bring Robert Kennedy up here. He can even come and tell us why he doesn't want it on the east side of the province—*[interjection]*—yeah, we'll do that.

We would love to have some discussions from some concerned parties, but let's at least put the option on the table. You know we've got the Premier here saying: I don't want to get involved in how a Crown corporation's running, and you know the PUB can do their thing on MPI rates and they can do their thing on hydro rates. I don't want to get involved in what those Crown corps are doing.

Oh, but when it comes down to an east-side, west-side line, the Premier's there—you boys are building it down the west side, no questions asked.

We don't think that's responsible. We, as taxpayers in the province, should have a say at the table in where things are going and why money is going to be spent in certain areas and not the other.

Mr. Speaker, we'd also like to have a real debate on wind-energy production in Manitoba. All the discussions we've had so far are behind closed doors. We really don't know what the real facts and figures are in terms of wind-energy production in Manitoba.

We getting mixed signals on the whole proposals there that have been going on for years and years. There are 84 submissions in the last go around in terms of the requests for proposals, and they come up with a company that looks like it's in financial straits right now.

We do have other companies that are willing to take this opportunity and provide capital. These companies are private companies; they provide capital; they produce the wind farms. All Manitoba



Hydro has to do is make a contract with them, buy the power, sell it to their markets. It's pretty straightforward. It's not rocket science here. Let's have the debate.

The other option is for Manitoba Hydro—and it doesn't have to be Manitoba Hydro. It could be a private company that puts up a dam in northern Manitoba. Let's throw that out on the table for discussion. Why not put that on the table? Or, if Manitoba Hydro wants to commit the capital, again it's us as taxpayers that have to borrow the money to put those particular projects up. So let's put that on the table. Which way are we going to go here?

\* (15:30)

We don't have in Manitoba a clear policy on how we're going to develop electricity in Manitoba. Are there going to be some other opportunities for private investors to get involved in terms of producing electricity? It doesn't have to be from wind energy. There are all kinds of other technology out there, but let's have an open discussion on how that other technology might come to the forefront.

All these technologies can be very positive for the environment as well. You know, the government talks about being green, and whatnot. But, when we look at some of these new technologies, they're not necessarily onside with some of the new technologies. I guess that really gets back to, in my view, the philosophy of this government. We have missed opportunities in the last few years. This government is afraid to take any chance. The philosophy of this government is, nobody move, nobody gets hurt. As a result of that, the people that are getting hurt in Manitoba are Manitobans because we have missed opportunities, Mr. Speaker.

You look at next door, to what's going on in Saskatchewan. Look at what's going on in Saskatchewan. It wasn't very long ago we said Saskatchewan was our famous have-not brother here to the west. Well, Mr. Speaker, the fact of the matter remains that we are the have-not brother. We are one of the few have-not brothers in this great country of ours. You look in Saskatchewan, the economic checklist: they're second in population growth; in terms of economic growth, they're first; average weekly earnings, they're second; trade, on wholesale and retail, they're first; building permits, second; residential building permits, they're first; new vehicle sales, they're second. I mean, good Lord, that's pretty impressive for what was a have-not province not too long ago.

**An Honourable Member:** What changed?

**Mr. Cullen:** Well, what did change in Saskatchewan? The people of Saskatchewan saw the light, put in place a good government that knew how to manage affairs in Saskatchewan. So things can happen that are going to be positive. We look forward to the day when that great thinking comes to the province of Manitoba as well.

Now, Mr. Speaker, there's one other point I just want to discuss here quickly. There are a lot of issues that I'd like to discuss, but I certainly know my colleagues will follow up on some of those. It's in terms of an important asset that we have in the province of Manitoba, and that's water. We have a tremendous asset here in water. The fact is we do not have a plan on how to manage water in Manitoba.

We're so excited about building a big ditch and floodway around the province of Manitoba for that one-in-700 chance that we're going to get some excess water. Well, that's fine. Let's get that thing built and let's move on. But I'll tell you what the real scary part is, Mr. Speaker, is the day is going to come when we're looking at the other side of spectre. We are going to have a drought in Manitoba, and we are not prepared for a drought.

Our communities cannot live without water. Unless we have a plan to manage that resource, we are going to find ourselves in very dire straits in the future. So, Mr. Speaker, we know the conservation districts out there are going through the process of trying to do some local planning in terms of how they handle and manage water. We certainly hope that the government of the day will be onside with those conservation districts to develop a strategy for all of Manitoba so that we actually can use this as a tremendous asset and help develop the communities here throughout Manitoba.

Mr. Speaker, I realize that my time has come to an end, so I just, again, thank you for the opportunity to discuss these few issues. Again, just in closing, there are tremendous opportunities here in Manitoba. I hope the government, over the next three years, will have the foresight and the vision to allow the entrepreneurs and the communities and the people around this great province to develop some of those opportunities and not hold them back and restrict them with regulations that we've seen the government bring forward over the last few years. Again, thank you very much for your time.

**Ms. Marilyn Brick (St. Norbert):** Mr. Speaker, I rise to speak to the Speech from the Throne read by His Honour, John Harvard, at the third sitting of the Thirty-Ninth Legislative Assembly. I would like to congratulate our government for putting forward a balanced and fair Throne Speech during a time of unprecedented economic turmoil and uncertainty.

This summer I attended the Midwestern Legislative Conference, and I had the opportunity to meet a legislator from Kansas who told me a story about a farmer in his constituency who experienced a problem as a result of weather. The legislator told me he had recently met a farmer from his constituency who said that a tornado had hit his farmhouse just before dawn one morning. It lifted the roof off, picked up the beds on which the farmer and his wife slept, and set them down gently in the next county. The legislator explained that as being a gentle and good country woman, the farmer's wife began to cry. The husband was, of course, very concerned about the house, but being married for over 15 years to his wife, he was also very concerned about his wife. When the farmer solicitously approached his wife, he said, don't be scared, Mary. I'm sure the house will be okay and we are not hurt. The legislator said that Mary stared at her husband and continued to cry saying, I'm not scared. I'm happy because this is the first time in 14 years that we've been out together.

I think people in general are feeling a little bit like that farmer, wondering if they're going to be like Dorothy in the famous film, *The Wizard of Oz*, and end up with no house or a dilapidated house that killed the wicked witch of the east.

In the United States, in particular, where Kansas exists in tornado alley, as does Manitoba, the analogy seems particularly apropos. I rise today, Mr. Speaker, to speak to the amendment to the Speech from the Throne as moved by the opposition leader on Monday, November 25, 2008. It goes without saying that I will not be voting in favour of the motion put forward by the MLA for Fort Whyte. I must say his motion inaccurately reflects the situation here in Manitoba, and it is not constructive in any fashion.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to draw attention to the members to an article from one of Canada's most-read newspapers, *The Globe and Mail*. The article was written by Jeff Buckstein, and it is dated December 12, 2007. In the article, in the second paragraph, he states, clear signs of economic turmoil south of the border are creating uncertainty on the

economic horizon. For his article, Mr. Buckstein interviewed four leading economists, including Aron Gampel, vice-president and deputy chief economist for the Bank of Nova Scotia; Don Drummond, Senior vice-president and chief economist at the TD Bank Financial Group; Mike Percy, Dean of the University of Alberta School of Business; and Sherry Cooper, Executive vice-president, Global Economic Strategic Services, BMO Financial Group, for his year-end report titled, "Globe Outlook 2008."

Mr. Speaker, as this article was written close to the end of the year in 2007, Mr. Buckstein provided the economists with the opportunity to prognosticate about the future of Canada's economy in 2008. Quoting Aron Gampel, he said that whereas economic weakness is already manifesting itself in the United States, in Canada, it will probably show up more on a delayed basis in the first quarter and into the second quarter.

Mr. Gampel predicted pre-tax corporate earnings in Canada will be significantly reduced to minus 2 percent in 2008 from 4.8 percent in 2007. In this same article, Mike Percy stated that housing starts in the U.S. bear close scrutiny given their effect on consumer confidence.

The question that occurs to me is if a senior economist and the dean of a prestigious business school were both warning of the potential impact of a slowdown in our economy and of the impact of a slump in the United States housing market that would have on the Canadian economy, how come the federal government decided to reduce its income stream by lowering the goods and services taxes?

The two one-point reductions we saw in the goods and services tax did not receive endorsements by all economists. In fact, many of them warned that the federal government was treading into deep water with its cuts as it was going to face challenges in the future with a much-reduced cash flow to finance its operating expenses and to continue funding the capital projects it had planned.

\*(15:40)

As everyone in this House knows, the current economic crisis began in the United States with the meltdown of the sub-prime mortgage initiative. Although I am a left-leaning politician, I was raised in a fiscally conservative household. I'm the oldest of five children, and I've had to learn how to share my toys, my clothes, and, in particular—many of our members who are women will know that this is a

challenge—my bedroom. This proved to be very, very enlightening for me. It showed me the importance of money and the importance of being thrifty.

For the life of me, I cannot understand why a government would encourage people to purchase houses when they did not have an adequate down payment to invest. The lack of oversight in the financial market in the United States, as we all know, has caused the unravelling of confidence in the financial markets and resulted in challenges for banks who could not get credit from other financial institutions as all banks and financial institutions began to question the number of unsecured loans that were in the marketplace.

The challenges with banks resulted in an unprecedented decline in the stock markets, as we've been seeing lately. For the rest of my life I know I will always remember September 29, 2008 as the day President George W. Bush, a millionaire from Texas and the current Republican President of the United States of America, walked up to the podium with his head hung down in shame and said the \$700-billion bailout plan to assist the financial institutions weather the upcoming economic storm has failed to pass Congress. Here was the most powerful world leader saying we were in big trouble. I would like to quote my mother who used to say, oh, what a mess.

Here in Canada we have watched in dismay as entire countries such as Iceland have been forced to declare bankruptcy. People in Iceland are currently giving their vehicles away to anyone who will take over a loan, which has often been financed through other EU countries. Despite owning equity in their vehicles, they cannot make their loan payments, as the currency for the country has been devalued to the point that they are making payments that they do not have.

In no way do I have a crystal ball, but there are several factors that we must know as reality. We know that the Canadian banking system has been rated as the best banking system in the world. We know that we are not experiencing the same problems as Iceland or the United States but we also know that it is now one big global world with banks, financial institutions, stock markets and companies all connected, trading stocks, bonds and financial debts both at home and abroad, so it goes without saying that we are not an island unto ourselves here in Canada.

So what are we doing here in Manitoba to help weather the storm? The last nine years of slow,

steady economic progress has provided us with a good base to move forward into these choppy waters. The projected growth rate for 2009 for our province is 1.6 percent, in comparison to the overall growth for the country of 0.7 percent. Economists are indicating that our diversified economy should help buffer the impact of this downturn.

This fall, the Conference Board of Canada, in its 2008 report, indicated that our province's high degree of economic diversification provides Manitoba with a level of stability that will aid our province as we move forward into the future. It stated that the construction industry is expected to increase by 8.7 percent in 2008. Our province has benefited from strong growth in both residential and non-residential construction areas.

The Canadian Mortgage and Housing Corporation says, in their fourth-quarter report for 2008, that through the next five years Manitoba home builders will experience the most consistent demand for housing across Canada. By 2012, housing starts will exceed 5,000 units for the seventh consecutive year. Net migration will be a dominant factor driving new home demands. International migration will be among the highest levels on record owing to Manitoba's successful Provincial Nominee Program.

The loss of migrants from Manitoba to other provinces will also remain low by historic standards thanks to a strong economy and low unemployment rates. These factors will boost population growth and household formation, in turn supporting new home demands.

In the beginning of this address to the Legislative Assembly I talked about the United States and how the unfettered growth of the sub-prime mortgage market began the current economic crisis that is unfolding in the global marketplace. A PricewaterhouseCoopers and Urban Land Institute report, *Emerging Trends in Real Estate 2009*, indicates that, although the United States' problems definitely factor into what happens here in Canada, the U.S. housing woes have not had as big an impact as currently being experienced south of the border.

Mr. Speaker, here in Manitoba we've been criticized by Her Majesty's royal opposition for having a methodical, thoughtful approach to development and to planning for the future. On this side of the House our members listened to the questions and wonder whether we will be

encouraged to spend more or whether we will be told that we are poor managers of the public purse.

Having said that, Mr. Speaker, we on this side of the House understand that we need to address the growing need for skilled labour to accommodate the demands by the construction industry. I was pleased to see the Minister of Competitiveness, Training and Trade (Mr. Swan) announce last week a \$4.5-million initiative to address the critical skilled labour shortages in the north. This initiative was developed to address the challenges of labour and skill shortages that could postpone and slow economic growth in the north. The program will provide focussed, industry-driven training for Aboriginal and northern residents interested in entering apprenticeships but who require upgraded essential skills.

In addition to this, our government is also ensuring that the literacy needs of the Manitobans here are being addressed. I really must say, Mr. Speaker, that I was very dismayed to see the federal government cut \$17.7 million from the Human Resources and Skills Development Canada fund in the 2006-2007 budget year. As many members of this House are aware, I have a background in human resources. I have been employed by the City of Winnipeg as an employment officer, as a facilitator for training and development and, while as a volunteer for Red Cross, I received a very prestigious award of excellence for 10 years volunteering as a course conductor for people who are embarking on the career of being swimming instructors. I remember thinking how counterproductive the cut made by the federal government was in relation to moving the country of Canada forward in employability and core competency skills.

On Thursday, November 6 of this year I attended the 30th anniversary gala for LiteracyWORKS at the Inn at the Forks. I was treated to a beautiful dinner and a guest reading by Janet Stewart, anchor for *CBC News at Six*, guest reading by Honourable Jim Rondeau, Minister of Science, Technology, Energy and Mines for the province of Manitoba and, surprise, a guest reading by the Honourable Paul Martin, Prime Minister for Canada in the last Liberal government and two student guest readers, Chris Bellamy [*phonetic*] and Avril Chartrand.

In every way members of this House would be excused if they thought I was most impressed by the readings given by Paul Martin or by my colleague Minister Rondeau. With the greatest of respect—

**Mr. Speaker:** Order.

Mentioning members' names in the House, I let it go the first time, but it's been repeated again, so I just want to let members know to address other members by their constituencies or ministers by their portfolios and not members by their names. Thank you.

**Ms. Brick:** Thank you. I apologize, Mr. Speaker.

With respect to these two individuals, the person who touched me the most was Avril Chartrand. As a child, Avril was mistakenly classified as mentally challenged, and she was institutionalized for about seven years. Her childhood unfolded in a very difficult fashion. She was largely neglected and sometimes abused.

Avril read a speech that she had written herself that spoke to her challenges in life and to the huge impact that LiteracyWORKS had on her current positive outlook on life. Mr. Speaker, Avril is an amazing role model for all members of this Legislative Assembly. She has served as a volunteer with the following organizations: St. Amant Centre; Child and Family Services, where she worked with physically and mentally abused children and children with severe behaviour problems; Seneca House as a board member; Manitoba Network of Mental Health steering committee; Winnipeg Harvest; the Seventh Day Adventist Church; and as a board member for LiteracyWORKS since 2003. Avril is currently employed as a day-care worker and her passion in life is to see children succeed and to encourage their growth and development into healthy contributing members of society.

\* (15:50)

Mr. Speaker, I am so pleased to be a member of this government where the importance of literacy has been recognized. This is demonstrated, as we now know, because we have a minister. The Honourable Diane McGifford is now recognized as the—

**Mr. Speaker:** Order. This is the third time. I think all members will have to concentrate a bit on, when addressing other members in the House, members are by their constituencies, ministers by their titles, not to use names of members in the House.

**Ms. Brick:** I will have to say that it is now known as the Minister for Advanced Education and Literacy.

Mr. Speaker, I think that in every way this is momentous. Although I do apologize for my mistakes in having written this, I must say it is

momentous because it speaks volumes about the importance our government places on literacy.

I know on April 14, 2008, we announced a new strategy to support adult learners and the proclamation of a new literacy act. We have recognized the role that reading and writing represents in employability and the quality of lives people lead. The \$1.1 million in additional funds brings our investment to \$19.3 million of dedicated funding.

The Manitoba government has more than doubled funding for adult literacy since we took government in the fall of 1999. I'm very pleased to see that the minister has been consulting with the public to develop a strategy for the implementation of a new literacy act.

Mr. Speaker, I've mentioned the need to ensure that people have a working level of literacy. In particular, this becomes significant as we move our province forward. We know that the trades are an ever-expanding area of interest for the employers and businesses in our province. We also know that they are requesting additional work-force members.

Our investments in infrastructure at the university and college campuses serve as a focal point for our apprenticeship programs. We are building new campuses for the University of the North in The Pas and Thompson, a heavy-equipment training facility at Red River and a trades and technologies centre at the Assiniboine Community College.

There was a time when living up north in Manitoba meant feeling disadvantaged. We have been working hard to ensure that this is no longer the case. I recently watched a news report that spoke to the need for extra housing units to address the bulging population in Thompson. I think this is a unique challenge that we are facing, and it speaks volumes about the success of our northern development strategy.

Speaking about building new facilities, the federal government is just now catching up with Manitoba's lead as it moves to speed up the pace of their infrastructure renewal program. Our government has been paying attention to infrastructure. We have announced a \$4.7-billion plan for capital projects over the next four years. Included in these plans is the redevelopment of many aging facilities at the University of Manitoba.

This summer, I was thrilled to be in attendance at the University for the opening of Aboriginal House. The intent of this beautiful new building is to offer a home-away-from-home for our First Nations citizens. It will provide services such as counselling and advice on ACCESS programs as well as the opportunity to network. The development and unveiling of Aboriginal House is now a part of the legacy our government is creating here in Manitoba.

I also had the opportunity to attend the opening of Arthur V. Mauro Student Residence, the Engineering Building One, and many other openings at the University of Manitoba.

Mr. Speaker, I know that on the other side they must be somewhat embarrassed that in the '90s engineering students were attending a facility that had a leaky roof. Somehow, it seems ironic that engineers were attending a facility where water was dripping on their heads.

We are committed to ensuring that students attending a university here in Manitoba—our premier university—are provided with modern facilities. On April 10, 2008, we announced that our government will invest \$47 million over the next three years in the historic redevelopment of the University of Manitoba's Fort Garry Campus.

I want to pay tribute to the University of Manitoba, and, in particular, the past president, Dr. Emőke Szathmáry, for the vision that she showed in putting forward Project Domino. The project will see the redevelopment of a new facility to replace the 350-bed Taché residence with the existing space becoming home to the facilities of music and art.

This project in every way is historic in that it ensures that the needs of many facilities are taken care of while also providing for the needs of students with updated technology and making sure that they are provided with the best learning opportunities possible.

As a graduate of the University of Manitoba, with a minor in history, I am particularly thrilled to see that this project preserves and restores the historic integrity of the existing institutions at the university.

I wish the new university president, who was installed on October 28, Dr. David Barnard, best wishes as he undertakes his new role as president of the University of Manitoba. I know he will have the support of our government as demonstrated by our ongoing commitment to the operating budget and to

the development of capital programs at the University of Manitoba.

With the commitment of \$100 million over two years in budget, the Manitoba government will have supported \$562 million in capital investments for post-secondary education.

Mr. Speaker, I want to speak for a moment about health care. When I was first elected, I visited the Web site for the Victoria General Hospital, and I found the following statements: The Victoria General Hospital is very concerned. It spoke about patient safety, about patient health. It also says that it is a 231-bed community hospital located in south Winnipeg. It has more than 1,200 staff and 350 volunteers who provide core health-care services to thousands of Manitobans.

I found it really interesting, Mr. Speaker, that the original Victoria General Hospital was built in 1911, and, as we all know, it sits in the constituency of Fort Garry. I was really so pleased to be able to see the unveiling of the new oncology addition at the Victoria General Hospital. I know that they are working hard on the redevelopment of the emergency rooms and that this bodes so well for the future of south Winnipeg.

Mr. Speaker, at the beginning of this speech, I spoke about the legacy that we can leave behind for future people who follow us. I think we're in unprecedented times. We have a new president, who will be installed in the United States, Barack Obama. I wish him every success.

I just want to speak for a moment about our colleague Oscar Lathlin, who's no longer with us. I feel in every way a loss as I know every member here in the Legislative Assembly does. He was a great individual who stayed dedicated to his principles, and I think he shows us the value of continuing to stay committed to your principles. By being that type of individual, he has left a legacy for The Pas as well as for all Aboriginal people who will follow him.

Mr. Speaker, it's really a pleasure to be on this side of the House. When I first ran, I spoke to many individuals in 1999. I spoke about putting people first, and I think that's what this government does. In every way, I know we will continue to do that even as we face uncharted territory in the economic uncertainty we have in the future. Thank you.

**Mr. Blaine Pedersen (Carman):** Thank you for the opportunity to put some words on the record for the

Throne Speech and, in particular, to speak in favour of the amendment brought forward by the Leader of the Opposition (Mr. McFadyen).

\* (16:00)

The Throne Speech seemed to start out with a description of the world financial crisis. As I listened very intently to it and as I read it over again after to see what I've actually missed, it seems I didn't miss a whole lot because much of it had already been mentioned. But I guess the overriding feeling I got out of listening, reading the Throne Speech, was that this government seems to be very content with a have-not status. It seems to be a lack of vision. Now, I don't know whether they're unwilling or unable to have a vision for Manitoba, but, for whatever reason, it did not come through in the Throne Speech.

Now, to be fair, there were some points in there that even I can agree with. CentrePort, for one, the building of CentrePort. The potential of CentrePort is crucial to Winnipeg, to Manitoba as a whole for our future economic strength and growth of the province. We will certainly support in any means that we can the development of CentrePort.

There were also several pieces of proposed legislation that came through in the Throne Speech, such as the banning of smoking in cars with children, motherhood type of issues that all of us could certainly agree with. I'm not quite sure how they're going to enforce this, but I guess we'll leave that up to see how that will come through in the legislation and in practice how it goes. But certainly it's something that we all should support. Being a non-smoker, I guess, and not having little kids anymore, I guess I should manage to get through on that one all right, except that the next piece of legislation that I was going to mention was the hand-held cellphones and if we're going to ban hand-held cellphones in Manitoba, that's in the interest of safety for all Manitobans and it's something we all have to strive for. However, that will require a lifestyle change for many of us, both within this Chamber and the general public if we're actually going to curb our habits of hand-held cellphones while we drive.

It's interesting to note that it's probably not even 20 years ago that a former constituent of mine, who is actually the same age as I am, Donald Barga was actually the first one to bring cellphones into Manitoba and built the business up from there that has evolved into the MTS Connect stores. So once upon a time we did survive without driving with

cellphones so I guess we will just have to relearn that again.

Another ban of the Throne Speech—what we call the ban-and-spend Throne Speech, but another one was the banning of logging in provincial parks. My constituency doesn't have a logging industry, so I must admit I'm not very familiar with the logging industry, but it just seemed to strike me at a time when the forestry industry is reeling from poor markets, softwood lumber dispute of the years past that I just question, is this the right action at the right time? But, if it is, and it's the government to show us that this is the right action, I can only hope then that this will also coincide with some research into preventing the buildup of dead material, as I understand it. Again, I am not a forestry expert, but I understand that, when you don't have logging, you have dead material building up in there and it increases the fire hazards. We know that provincial parks are a popular spot with Manitobans and other people. So I hope that hand in hand with this legislation to ban logging there are some mitigation efforts towards decreasing fire hazards as the dead material builds up, but we will wait to see what the legislation comes through with.

The purpose of a Throne Speech is really to provide short- medium- and long-term planning and an overview of the goals of where you want to see the province go in the next five, 10, 20 years, and that was certainly missing in this Throne Speech. What I was waiting to hear and waiting to read was how we're going to make the goals that this government would set to make Manitoba a better place to live, to work, benefit from the many advantages that we have here living in Manitoba, and that certainly didn't come through on this. So a lot of re-announcements of programs that had already been announced a number of times, and counting, actually, how many times they've been re-announced. So that certainly didn't come through.

This Throne Speech didn't even come close in a number of visions. Our provincial budget is based on 37 percent federal-transfer fees and equalization payments. We know that our provincial debt is growing.

With this overview of the world financial crisis that the Throne Speech started out to describe, how does this province expect to retain revenues when we know that transfer payments, or at least we expect transfer payments to tail off in the years to come?

The Finance Minister didn't include an economic statement in this Throne Speech. He answers questions kind of betting on the safe side: Well, if things change, I guess the economics will change.

Well, hello. I think things are changing every day and we would like to know as a province, as legislators, how the Finance Minister will handle decreasing revenues if they do come to pass as we expect.

With economic slowdown, there will be slowdown in provincial revenues, in tax revenues, in both private and corporate tax revenues as companies and individuals tighten their belts as they will do without—they don't need the government to tell them to. They're already doing this. So we're going to see tax revenues shorten in the next couple of years here.

In spite of this crisis that's happening everywhere else in the world, it seems to be the attitude is everything's okay in Manitoba; don't worry; be happy; we'll be all right. But that really doesn't cut it when we want to plan for the long term.

As I mentioned, there was a re-announcement of many programs with the emphasis on infrastructure. Doing infrastructure during a time of recession is fine if you have the cash, or if you have the ability to raise the cash but, in terms of declining revenues and no spending cutbacks, that only means more debt.

With Manitoba's debt climbing every year, we know that we're not competitive with other provinces. The Member for Turtle Mountain (Mr. Cullen) mentioned Saskatchewan paying down their debt at a phenomenal rate. Alberta has no debt. B.C. just announced a financial statement the other day where they're paying down debt and doing spending. But I can see this province going into deficit.

They say there is \$650 million—whatever it is—in the rainy day fund but, given this government's penchant for spending money, I was just sitting here thinking that rainy day fund is going to disappear faster—it could be compared to a six inch rain down a storm sewer in Winnipeg into the Red River. That's about how fast this rainy day fund is going to disappear.

True to this government's style, this Throne Speech continued feel-good announcements, like I mentioned—some bans and big announcements versus the highway, the floodway, the Hydro building, but they failed to address everyday Manitobans' concerns. They failed to address the pension funds and what's happening in the pension funds

worldwide and investments of Crown corporation pension funds. They failed to recognize or at least address how ordinary Manitobans, everyday Manitobans, how their retirements funds are dwindling and how this will affect them.

\*(16:10)

It's not up to government to save everybody's individual pension fund, but I think what people are looking for is some direction from government. If at least government can manage their own affairs, it will bode well for their own personal funds as well, but we haven't seen any statements out of this government about how Manitobans will have the ability to save for retirement, the job security. It's an uncertain market, so we're faced with job security. Manitobans would like to think that this province is going to move ahead so that it really will have some semblance of job security.

Interesting to note that education wasn't even mentioned in the Throne Speech. We have a cost squeeze on our school boards, on our local school boards. We have the mandatory phys ed program which is good to get young people more physically active. But what they forgot to do was to put some money behind this and it has just caused a squeeze on the school boards. We have a freeze, again, another ban on school closures. Again, and I know from one of my local school divisions that they're facing some real financial constraints because of this freeze being put on. Yet there is no mention of this in the Throne Speech as how schools are going to be able to be fiscally sustainable in the years to come.

There's no mention of new schools in high growth areas where the communities have been asking for schools, they're needing schools. We know that we've had lots of immigration into this province, but we have to be able to work on the infrastructure. It's not just bringing in people, but you also need schools for the kids that come in. You need infrastructure, water and sewer, for these new developments because of the people coming in. So, while you talk about a successful immigrant program, you have to consider the entire program, not just the one facet of it.

Interesting, too, to note that in terms of crime, very little mentioned in the Throne Speech about crime. Well, really nothing about the horrible crime rates that we have in our communities, and not just in Winnipeg, in rural Manitoba also. Again, I was thinking, okay, we're going to ban plastic bags, we're going to ban smoking, we're going to ban logging,

it's too bad we couldn't ban crime. If this government would get so active as to ban crime and really put forward a program that would work on meaningful crime reduction instead of just more press releases and feel-good announcements.

What all our communities were asking for is for a vision of how, in the next number of years, we are going to reduce crime in our communities. This Throne Speech didn't say anything, didn't address that at all. So, again, our communities are left to wonder, well, do we have to do this ourselves? We don't want to see vigilante-type of crime reduction, we need a government that's willing to stand up and say to the criminals, enough is enough, and start protecting the citizens who are the real victims of this crime spree that we're in here in Manitoba.

In terms of health care, we had lots of feel-good announcements. Again, the health system is broken. It's on the floor, it's beyond waiting in hallway medicine; it's lying on the floor it's so badly broken. We have a bloated bureaucracy that doesn't seem to be able to handle the real emergency that we have in our communities. We have 14, 16 and counting, rural emergency rooms that are closed, that are not taking emergency care. We'd like to think that that's between 80 and 100,000 people out there that don't have timely access to emergency health care. I can tell you, if that was within the city of Winnipeg, if you just took a chunk of Winnipeg, 100,000 people in Winnipeg, and said, you don't have timely access to emergency room care, there would be a revolt within the city of Winnipeg. But this is what we're facing in the rural areas. It doesn't take much to feel the frustration that's out there in our rural areas.

It's not just the patients that are frustrated. We have doctors, we have nurses, we have health-care facilities that are just struggling every day to get through and trying to make it from day to day, and yet this government totally ignores them.

I guess what they just don't understand is that making grand announcements and quoting statistics doesn't fix the system. Just yesterday in question period, I again raised the issue of one of my constituents with a Pharmacare deductible rising every year except for last year in an election year, but people, our seniors and others on fixed incomes are being squeezed by this government mercilessly. There is no resolve on their part to fix this system, and it's getting worse. It's going to get a lot worse as money really does start to get tighter, budgets begin to be pared down. It will take some real creative and



thoughtful action on this government if they really can begin to address these.

On climate change, interesting to note how this government touts Kyoto Accord and how they're going to meet Kyoto Accord. There is absolutely no mention in the budget about this in the Throne Speech. So how are they going to achieve? Because climate change is a long-term subject. It's not something that just didn't come up on us overnight. It's not going to be something that's changed overnight, so why didn't this government include that in a long-term plan in this Throne Speech as how they will address climate change? Other than maybe we have to—I really don't know.

Obviously, this government's not interested in, other than just paying lip service to it, they're going to shut down the coal plant in Brandon, they say, within a couple of years. Good for them. So they're going to replace that with non-renewable natural gas to run it. Does that really make sense in terms of affecting climate change here in Manitoba and emissions in Manitoba?

Right now, we have the Association of Manitoba Municipalities, the AMM, conference going on just down the street from the Legislature here, and I will take a quote right out of the Throne Speech that says, and I quote, ". . . municipalities are well positioned financially." I would like to see many of the government members walk through the convention right now repeating that little line and see how they're received by municipal delegates because they certainly don't feel they're well positioned financially. They've had a lot of deliberation over sharing tax revenue. They're struggling with it. They're struggling with restricted budgets.

They have huge issues: roads, drainage, water and waste water. Again, in this Throne Speech, there was no vision as to how the municipalities will be able to cope with the infrastructure deficit that everyone talks about, realizing the financial constraints that they have, and they live with them every day, the municipalities do. What they're really asking for is they're asking for predictable financing because, with predictable financing, it will give them at least the opportunity to plan.

Contrary to this government, municipalities really do start to plan for long term. In the Throne Speech, we certainly would have liked to have seen some measures that relate back both to climate change and to municipalities, drought prevention. In my constituency, the Treherne dam is ongoing. The

Province finally did fund part of the study for it this year to do the geotechnical studies, and we certainly appreciate their input there, but we need long-term planning.

\* (16:20)

This is a huge project, and this project could potentially supply drinking water for most of south-central Manitoba as well as irrigation for a great deal of agricultural land in which we could grow crops like potatoes and beans, which not only just provide income for the farmers, but also provide secondary processing within the province, and secondary processing means jobs. We need a serious commitment out of this government if they are serious about attracting jobs and maintaining the jobs in the agricultural industry, both primary and secondary processing in Manitoba.

In terms of agriculture, the only mention of agriculture was in creating more inspections of food products with no reference as to who is going to pay for this, which makes the agricultural community very suspect on this. There was no mention on the implications of both interprovincial trade or federal inspection overlaps. We will certainly be looking forward to seeing the wording on the legislation on this so that hopefully, the Province will address this. We do have a serious problem of overlaps within the federal regulatory—it's called the Canadian Food Inspection Agency, CFIA—and we could streamline this whole, particularly the meat processing industry in Manitoba and so that we could have both interprovincial trade and a lack of overlap within the province. So we look forward to seeing there.

There was absolutely no mention of the COOL legislation, the country-of-origin labelling issue that is in place in the U.S., the tremendous hit that that's having on both our cattle and hog industries in Manitoba. Why would they not at least mention this in a Throne Speech if they had any vision at all? So it worries the agricultural—we feel in the agricultural industry we're being left out again.

I did notice in the Throne Speech that they were talking, again, re-announcing again, a road on the east side of Lake Winnipeg. My first reaction to that is, is it environmentally friendly? If a road is environmentally friendly, how could a hydro line be not good, or could be so hard or so bad on the environment? Instead of spending an extra—wasting \$640 million—before it even starts, for the west-side hydro line, this government could save that money, run the hydro line down the east side because if you

can build a road down there, I'm sure you can build a hydro line. We know that a road is important, or a rail line, at least, is important to give access to the east-side residents. There's no doubt they need access, but let's think this whole thing through. Unfortunately, that doesn't seem to happen with this government.

You could take that \$640 million and think of all the projects, the infrastructure projects that you could do around the province with that extra money. We also know that in the next four years, the NDP party is going to take a million dollars in their vote tax grab. Absolutely shameful that a government would take taxpayers' money for their own party in a time of fiscal restraint, or should-be restraint.

There were other projects that—the other day they re-announced, again, a wind farm project for the St. Joseph area, with the company—and interesting to note that the company is facing financial—the parent company, at least, is facing financial insolvency and yet we have—there are two other companies within my constituency that have wind farm proposals set, ready to go, that could start tomorrow if there was a real commitment by this government to wind farms. If you ever take a drive through North Dakota—and I realize that's on the other side of the border and maybe some people don't get outside the Perimeter—but if you did go into North Dakota, you'll find that the wind farms are popping up like mushrooms south of the border. So, we're selling into that market and yet we can't seem to get—we've got one wind farm project running in Manitoba and we can't seem to get anything else off the ground.

I keep asking; I have not got any answers yet. If we're going to spend \$1.6 billion on a Wuskwatim dam, that's good, but what I really want to know is what is the cost per kilowatt for that dam, because I believe wind power is actually going to be very much shorter in the long term and I understand about short-term and long-term projects. The dams last much longer, but I think there's room for both, but, apparently, this government has no vision in terms of doing both.

So I just want to reiterate that the Throne Speech lacked vision. It lacked tangible goals to make Manitoba a have province which would make it an even better province than it is right now. We have the ability to do that. Manitobans have always been industrious people and can do that, but I think our biggest holdback right now is this government.

So with that, Mr. Speaker, I certainly support the amendments brought forward by the Leader of the Opposition (Mr. McFadyen) and I just want to leave you with the—it's actually an article that I've written in our local papers and it ends up with, surely a government that has been in power for nine years could show more experience in their projections and offer a better insight in their vision for Manitoba, but maybe they're just tired and have lost sight. New debt, new dependency, New Democratic Party. Thank you.

*Ms. Bonnie Korzeniowski, Deputy Speaker, in the Chair*

**Hon. Christine Melnick (Minister of Water Stewardship):** Now back to reality. With all the information that the member missed in the Throne Speech, I'll just point out another miss of his which was the announcement of a wetlands protection and restoration initiative. This will be launched in the coming months, Madam Deputy Speaker. Wetlands are among the most diverse and productive ecosystems on earth, but they are also one of the most threatened by both degradation and loss.

Canada has about one quarter of the world's wetlands. Manitoba has the highest density of wetlands of any province with 40 percent of our land area covered by wetlands. Unfortunately, at least 70 percent of the wetlands across the prairies have already been lost and Manitoba continues to experience one of the highest rates of wetland loss, losing more with each year. In fact, there was a story that was reported in the spring that responded to the effect of the very dry spring that we had here in Manitoba as well as in Saskatchewan, and I believe that the numbers are that birds throughout North America, including waterfowl that use Manitoba and Saskatchewan as the main migration path every year, have been reduced by 7 to 9 percent.

So we know how important wetlands are; at least on this side of the House, we know how important wetlands are. Wetlands and small agricultural watersheds across Manitoba play a significant role in retaining phosphorus and nitrogen and prevent their downstream movement into Lake Winnipeg as a result of reducing the peak flows, the sediment and the carbon.

A recent study completed by Ducks Unlimited in Broughtons Creek watershed compared wetlands present in 1968 to those remaining in 2005, and the Broughtons Creek story reports that 31 percent more nitrogen and phosphorus released from the watershed

to the downstream environment made its way into Lake Winnipeg. There was an 18 percent increase in peak flows. There was a 30 percent increase in flow volume, a 41 percent increase in sediment transport and the equivalent release of 125 tonnes of carbon dioxide.

Extrapolating these increased export nutrients from Broughtons Creek watershed to other watersheds in Manitoba shows that we must take action and that is why this government is taking action now. Ducks Unlimited has estimated that unless the present rate of wetland loss is halted, phosphorus export to Lake Winnipeg from southwestern Manitoba will increase by another 41 percent by the year 2020.

Now it's a strange thing that wetlands, unless drained in our history, have not been counted as being important in our environment. It's the same thing as when a tree is standing. It's not counted as part of the GDP but when it's cut down it is. This side of the House realizes that the benefits of wetlands are not only environmental, they're economical as well and with a healthy environment we will have a healthier economy.

\*(16:30)

Recently the value of wetlands has been increasingly recognized, and efforts are being made to maintain and preserve these vital ecosystems. I think we need to look no further than the ALUS project. It's coming up to its five-year anniversary. It has been very successful by all accounts. It was a project initiated by Ian Wishart, who is now the president of the Keystone Agricultural Producers. We all know Ian and we all respect Ian, and we respect the initiative that he brought forward to bring the ALUS project to fruition. We are partners in that, the federal government is a partner in that and the local community is as well.

A 2008 study of the southern Manitoba portion of the Lake Winnipeg basin by the International Institute for Sustainable Development has estimated that the value of equal services provided by wetlands to be in the range of \$200 million to \$350 million a year, with those in southern Manitoba ranging from 900 to 1,500 per hectare per year. So this is where we see a good position on the environment is a good position on the economy, and that is why, Madam Deputy Speaker, we on this side of the House are investing in both. The development of a comprehensive wetland protection and restoration policy is a strong commitment under this Throne

Speech. So that's one of the areas that we are moving forward.

When we talk about the economy, it is true that right now we do not know what the full repercussions will be of the current economic system situation, not only in Manitoba, but across Canada, despite claims by the federal government that everything was fine during the last federal election. We're realizing that, of course, there were many, many situations that had to be looked at, and we are now dealing with them. It was very reassuring to know that several forecasters, independent forecasters, have said that Manitoba is in fact well positioned to go through this coming storm, but we must be prudent and we must have the steady-as-she-goes strategy that was brought forward in the latest Throne Speech.

Our balanced and responsible fiscal policies over the last nine years—and I congratulate our Minister of Finance (Mr. Selinger) standing here—have led us to six credit upgrades. We've reduced our net debt-to-GDP ratio by roughly one-third, Madam Deputy Speaker. We have produced a succession of balanced budgets while lowering taxes, and, I think, most importantly today, nearly quadrupling the value of the rainy day fund. So, this is balancing budgets, it's growing our economy, it's making sure that we are getting credit ratings which means our economy will continue to be healthy into the future, but also saving for the rainy day that may now be upon us.

Taxes are always a big issue. I know they're a big issue for my constituents. I know they're an issue for everyone's constituents, and one of the questions that did arise was: Would the commitments that were made previously by this government around tax cuts be sustained in the coming year? Again, my constituents were pleased to hear that we will, in fact, be providing the small but measured business, corporate and personal income tax reductions that we had committed to. I believe that we are doing the right thing by carrying through with our tax relief, and I know that the low- and middle-income families in my constituency are agreeing.

The constituents that I represent in Riel, which is the area that I grew up in—my parents are still living there, so it's an area that I know very, very well—are understandably anxious about what they hear on the news every night, what they read in the newspapers, and the way people talk in work. I know that this is the sort of discussion that is happening around the water coolers.

I think it's important that we announced in the Throne Speech, and I think there will be comfort to many Manitobans to know, that we will be making pension regulations more flexible. I know that's been an issue on a federal level, and, certainly, we have taken hold of this at the provincial level as well.

Keeping tabs on the housing market. I know that daily we hear about houses losing value, and this, of course, is one of the greatest investments that anyone can make, in the home that they live in. Introducing more legislation to strengthen regulation of the mortgage broker industry. Now, this, I think, may not be the biggest headline that we got out of the Throne Speech, but it may, in fact, be one of the biggest steps that we will take as a government. It is widely believed that the lack of regulation, in fact, the deregulation that happened in the United States around mortgages is what led to spark off this latest, now worldwide economic crisis.

So we on this side of the House believe that regulation is important. We believe that regulation, not only in the mortgage industry, but regulation in the financial sector in general, which is why we looked at the money lenders earlier and led Canada in leading the way to regulate the very, very high rates of interest that were being charged by those folks. That's why we continue to work diligently on, again, maybe not headline news, but in the long run, news that will make homes more secure for Manitobans to live in, so more Manitobans can retain their homes, can retain their largest investments in difficult economic times such as these.

Also, I think a very creative and very positive move will be the consumer finances education program that we have also promised. You know, finances can be a weird and wonderful world for many of us, but to understand the basics, to understand how money moves around, is accumulated, and to understand how even lower-income folks can sometimes put a little aside for the rainy day—again, the rainy day that is upon us—I think will also pay off in the long run for Manitoba.

Now, in balancing the budget, in planning for difficult economic times, in being fiscally prudent, we are still maintaining our commitment to our core goals. One of our core goals, of course, is education. Again, we know that the best investment for a good economy in the future is an investment in education today. Our investment in campuses across the province continue, and I congratulate the Minister of Advanced Education and Literacy (Ms. McGifford)

for her vision and her long, long support and sustained commitment to developing the University College of the North.

We know that the Golden Boy looks north; we know that the future looks north. We know that we have a minister who understands that and has guided our government, and has guided our province and our advanced education system to make sure that the future for the people of the North is in their neighbourhood, so that people are no longer having to come down to Winnipeg to a completely foreign environment, to a completely foreign culture where the family supports are not there, the community supports are not there. Sometimes people get lost in these environmental jungles, but our minister had the foresight and the strength to carry through with the development and now the functioning of the University College of the North.

But her vision didn't end there. Her vision didn't end with simply delivering programs. She is making sure that there are new buildings for University College of the North, that there are campuses in The Pas and Thompson. She is also supporting, here in Winnipeg, the Richardson College for the Environment, of the University of Winnipeg, which, again, is a very, very positive development, and one, again, when we're blending economy with the environment, knowing that this is the way of the future, will help us get there in a successful way.

I understand there's a new residence for the U of M, a heavy equipment training facility at Red River, and a trades and technology college at Assiniboine Community College. So, we're also looking at rural Manitoba. And, as we also know, there is a dirge in skilled worker demand, not only in Manitoba, but across Canada. So, during the last election campaign, there was a commitment for many more training apprenticeship spaces, and it's also very encouraging to know that we are aiming, we continue to aim for the 4,000 new spaces over four years. Now, that's going to be a challenge. Educating workers here in Manitoba is one part of the challenge, but making sure that they stay in Manitoba means making sure that there are opportunities for them at good wages, at liveable wages, dare I say at union wages that will keep Manitobans here.

This is where our commitment to infrastructure plays in. The announcement of the \$4.7-billion plan for capital projects over the next four years by my colleague, the Minister of Infrastructure and

Transportation (Mr. Lemieux), has shown that we're not only investing in the education of skilled workers, but also giving them opportunity, again, where they live, which is also very, very important.

\* (16:40)

The \$4.7-billion plan will focus on medical facilities. Instead of just promising repeatedly, we're actually building medical facilities, and I compliment the Minister of Health (Ms. Oswald) for her announcement on the new women's hospital, which is receiving very, very positive responses, again, in my constituency.

More upgrades to public housing. Again, we are still continuing to recover from the federal government walking away from public housing in the 1990s, and the then-government of the day in Manitoba, the Filmon government, walking with them.

Highways are very important. We have a vast land. We have a lot of space to cover, and we have people living throughout Manitoba. To ensure that rural and, most importantly, northern communities are well serviced, we're not taking money from the north and putting it into the south. We are taking from the general pot and spreading it through the entire province and making sure that, no matter where you live in Manitoba, you are able to access roads. We are building more permanent roads. We are working with communities to find out what designs they need, and that, I know, is also being very welcomed across the province.

Modern sewage facilities. Now I know members opposite are having a lot of trouble with the fact that we are, in fact, upgrading sewage facilities around the province, but this is also very, very important. It ties back not only to quality of life in communities but, again, the environment. We know that by making the commitment that we have made—and, by the way, we are the first government in Manitoba to make a commitment of a third and a third and a third of funding—federal, provincial and municipal. This was a recommendation by the Lake Winnipeg Stewardship Board. We have put our money on the table, and we will continue to put our money on the table. I encourage members opposite to encourage the federal government to put their money on the table so that we can make the real investments that we need in infrastructure.

I'm quite pleased actually that the previous federal Minister of the Environment is now minister

of infrastructure because I know that he understands waste-water treatment. I know that he understands the need to improve this across the country, and I know that we look forward to working with him in his new capacity, knowing that he will bring the knowledge from his last portfolio into his new one.

Well, it's also important to give some boost, to do not only the infrastructure-focussed initiatives but also to look at how do we boost our economy. I know that all of Manitoba is very excited around the major inland port, the CentrePort Canada, which was announced, I believed, about a month ago. It has really caught the imagination of investors. It has caught the imagination of companies. It has caught the imagination of communities, and it is another way that this government is working with all of Manitoba, and all of Manitobans, to make sure that we are looking with the eye to the future, looking at how strategically positioned we are.

*Mr. Speaker in the Chair*

We are the center of this tremendous continent. We look from Hudson's Bay, from James Bay, all the way down to the 49th parallel. We know that there are trade routes. These are not always new trade routes. In fact, they're well-travelled trade routes from the north to the south, and we know that there is great interest not only within Manitoba but beyond Canada, far beyond Canada. In fact, I think the Premier (Mr. Doer) talked about the CentrePort Canada plan in China, and I believe there was quite a positive reception to that. I know there have been discussions with other countries that are a little closer, but they all see this as a great way not only to bring their products into Canada and North America, but also as a travel route, as a trade route to move out of Manitoba.

Of course, the Chinese, with the Silk Route, know all about trade. They know all about travel. They know about the benefits of having good relations. I think we can look forward to a very positive response and a very good use and a very good economical result from CentrePort Canada.

The tri-level Winnipeg Partnership Agreement has been a very big success, and I know that, as a Minister of Family Services and Housing and persons with disabilities, I saw a lot of improvements. I saw a lot of housing improvements. I saw a lot of community development around initiatives that we brought into that area. One of the greatest improvements that I saw was communities moving from the despair of the 1990s, when we were

the arson capital of North America, to the hope, to a different kind of flame, the flame that burned within their hearts and burned within their minds of what could be, now that they had a provincial government that was really working with them, and that was really seeing what their vision was, and helping them to achieve that vision.

One of the greatest programs, I think, that we've invested in was when we signed the national child-care agreement with the former government. I cannot tell you how my heart sank when I read the letter from the current administration that they were cancelling that agreement. I realized that we would be going it alone, so I'd like to again give my compliments to the current Minister of Family Services (Mr. Mackintosh) for his vision in continuing to grow one of the best child-care systems in this country. He announced that there would be even more fully funded and newly funded spaces just a few days ago, and we continue to embark on recruitment and retention for child-care workers because this government knows that investing in workers is investing in the quality of the whole system.

Tray fees on publicly insured services will be eliminated as of April 1—no joke, Mr. Speaker—2009. Again, many of my constituents will benefit from this, and I know that this will be very well received. Of course, we are the government that eliminated the health-care premiums, and I'm proud to say that the Throne Speech promises us legislation banning their re-introduction. So it would be very hard to bring that in again.

I'll close my comments with kudos to the Minister of Conservation (Mr. Struthers). I have long heard on the doorstep concerns around logging in provincial parks, and was very pleased to hear that we are ensuring that there will not be future logging in provincial parks, save one. I must say I was quite shocked to hear that the opposition came out against this move. You know, Mr. Speaker, they can talk about all they want about concern over the environment, but it's the policies that you bring in, it's what you fight for in this House, that really counts. I'm sure that Manitobans can see the difference between our commitment to the economy and their lack of commitment, and our commitment to the environment and their lack of such.

Thank you for this time to put these few words on the record, and I look forward to supporting this Throne Speech. I'm sure that we will move forward

with these many ways of supporting the economy, supporting the environment and helping Manitobans work through the difficult times to come.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**Mr. David Faurshou (Portage la Prairie):** It is a pleasure for me to rise this afternoon and speak in regard to the amendment brought forward by the honourable Leader of the Official Opposition (Mr. McFadyen).

The member has made a number of excellent, excellent resolutions for us in which we have opportunity to debate, as it is glaringly obvious that the Throne Speech that was delivered earlier in this session is woefully inadequate to deal with the challenges that we see before us regarding the economic downturn, which has not just been experienced in Canada or the United States but, indeed, worldwide.

Now I know that some of the figures that I am going to be working with are significantly out of date as this government does not keep honourable members of the Legislative Assembly up to date as to where government expenditures are, and how revenues have been being received, as it relates to the '08-09 budget. The last official figures received by honourable members in the Legislative Assembly are dated the end of June.

\* (16:50)

I do want to make a particular focus on the '08-09 budget that this government heralded as one that provided balance between revenue and expenditure and identified that there would be a borrowing requirement of \$2.8 billion, \$1.5 billion of which would be for refinancing, but there would be a requirement for new cash for government expenditure of \$1.3 billion. Now, Mr. Speaker, in a time of crisis, as we are now experiencing, to be recklessly borrowing that amount of money and putting our future generations of Manitobans on the hook for additional debt, I do think, is irresponsible.

Now this government in the Throne Speech wanted to herald a lot of what has been previously announced, and, in fact, there is very, very little within the Throne Speech that is new to those of us sitting here in the Legislative Assembly. The government goes on to say that, even though the economic downturn has gripped the world, Manitoba's growth in their gross domestic product is expected to rise by 2.1 percent.

Well, Mr. Speaker, we just heard this morning that Manitoba is second in the nation as it pertains to the level of residents having to use food banks. Here in Manitoba we are just behind Newfoundland and Labrador with 3.4 percent of Manitoba's population having to rely on food banks just to make their way in the world. That, to me, should be embarrassing to government, as it is a deplorable state of affairs here in the province of Manitoba where the NDP are entering into their 10th year of governance, and came to government saying that they were going to regard poverty here in this province as a priority. To learn that we are indeed going backwards rather than forwards, as the number of persons relying on food banks is a perfect indicator of the true state of affairs here in Manitoba.

Now, Mr. Speaker, I do want to take a moment, though, as this is my first opportunity to speak in the Chamber, to make a statement regarding the loss of the honourable Member for The Pas (Mr. Lathlin). The honourable Member for The Pas was indeed a man of principle, a gentleman that took pride in his community, his family and, most certainly, for his heritage. I came to regard the Member for The Pas as an honourable man, and I will definitely miss him in this Chamber.

I will also miss the spirit of competition that we shared between the two of us—avid fans of our local junior hockey teams. The OCN Blizzard was a team that he rooted for, and, obviously, I support the Portage la Prairie Terriers. The Terriers and Blizzard were always feisty on the ice and carried forward a true spirit of competition whenever they faced each other, and we liked to share that here in the Chamber, when it certainly came to playoffs, and Portage was battling OCN in the playoffs almost every year. Indeed, Mr. Speaker, it was with great sadness to learn of the passing of the honourable Member for The Pas. He will be missed, but The Pas must count themselves fortunate to have had the representation for the past 18 years by the honourable member, Mr. Oscar Lathlin.

Now, Mr. Speaker, returning to the issue at hand, and as the Throne Speech must relate to current affairs, and we only have to look for a moment into the headlines of the paper and on the *Winnipeg Free Press* it indicates that consumer confidence here in the province of Manitoba hits new low. Well, obviously, if persons are feeling that way, then government should be taking heed and making plans to address the upcoming storm, because ultimately when persons lose confidence in the

economy, regardless of what other factors come to play, the economy will take a hit because consumers stop spending, and an economic downturn. Even though government does what it can, if consumers are not willing to venture out with their own hard-earned monies into the marketplace, then there will, indeed, be an economic downturn, regardless of what government is doing.

So we must look to the future and plan to make certain that we do what we can to minimize the effect here in the province of Manitoba, the global-wide economic crisis, but we also want to take the opportunity to make decisions that restore consumer confidence.

Here in the province of Manitoba we do, indeed, have a diverse economy, of which I'm most familiar with the agricultural sector. This government has not addressed the issues within agriculture. In fact, this government, this past fall, it is now known that the information was released in error, but there was a great deal of trepidation within the farming community when we learned that this government was going to prevent us from draining our fields and the small potholes that we normally do each and every fall after harvest.

Now I know it was an announcement made in error. However, it was not until just this past week that it was learned that that announcement was in error. So we've lost a full season that we would normally have been busy making certain that our croplands were levelled and the potholes filled, and that the areas that needed to be drained were, indeed, drained.

Mr. Speaker, this government has to learn to act in a very timely fashion. Making this announcement and apologies, which it can happen to anyone, but once the information was known by the minister's office, of which I attended to personally to ask for clarification, which was back in September, and it's now middle of November before that response was granted. All I would like to leave with the minister is that it's vitally important to make hay when the sun shines.

The information that did go out, as I say, was in error, but, indeed, it still did cause for great concern out there in the farming community.

Also, within agriculture, Mr. Speaker, I will say that the United States has been a major recipient of agricultural production from Manitoba. However, with the changes to regulations in the States

regarding agricultural products to be labelled with the country of origin, there has been a significant downturn in export activity from Manitoba to the United States. Yet this government has not made any plans to address that situation. We should have had in place here a plan with at-home processing so that we could very, very easily have been able to take the production here of Manitoba producers, process it within the province of Manitoba, and make use of the containers that are flowing through Manitoba on a daily basis empty back to Japan, China and India, where there has been a significant increase of products received from those nations.

It's incumbent upon this government to show leadership. Now, moving on into other sectors of our economy—

**Mr. Speaker:** Order.

When this matter is again before the House, the honourable Member for Portage la Prairie (Mr. Faurschou) will have 18 minutes remaining.

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



# LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Wednesday, November 26, 2008

## CONTENTS

| <b>ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS</b>  |     |   |     |
|---|-----|---|-----|
| <b>Introduction of Bills</b>  |     | Economy   |     |
|   |     | Borotsik; Selinger  | 126 |
| Bill 212—The Waste Reduction and Prevention Amendment Act                                 |     | Manitoba Public Insurance Corporation                           |     |
| Gerrard   | 121 | McFadyen; Doer  | 126 |
| Bill 213—The Greenhouse Gas Emissions Reporting Act                                       |     | Health-Care Services  |     |
| Gerrard   | 121 | Driedger; Oswald  | 128 |
| Bill 218—The Balanced Budget, Fiscal Management and Taxpayer Accountability Amendment Act |     | Gage Guimond Report   |     |
| Borotsik  | 121 | Mitchelson; Mackintosh  | 129 |
| Bill 221—The Crown Corporations Public Review and Accountability Amendment Act            |     | Youth Suicides  |     |
| Borotsik  | 122 | Rowat; Robinson   | 130 |
|   |     | Manitoba Lotteries  |     |
|   |     | Lamoureux; Swan   | 131 |
| <b>Petitions</b>  |     | <b>Members' Statements</b>                                      |     |
| Increased School Facilities—Garden Valley School Division                                 |     | Munro Farm Supplies Ltd.  |     |
| Dyck  | 122 | Faurschou   | 132 |
| Crocus Investment Fund—Public Inquiry   |     | Peguis First Nation and Area Government Initiatives             |     |
| Lamoureux   | 122 | Nevakshonoff  | 132 |
| <b>Tabling of Reports</b>   |     | Carberry Agricultural Society and Fair—125th Anniversary        |     |
| Red River College Annual Financial Report 2007-2008                                       |     | Cullen  | 133 |
| McGifford   | 123 | Many Voices, One World Program                                  |     |
| Assiniboine Community College Annual Report 2007-2008                                     |     | Altemeyer   | 133 |
| McGifford   | 123 | Dr. Larry Reynolds  |     |
| University College of the North Annual Report 2007-08                                     |     | Gerrard   | 134 |
| McGifford   | 123 |   |     |
| <b>Oral Questions</b>   |     | <b>ORDERS OF THE DAY</b>  |     |
| Municipal Infrastructure Needs  |     | <b>GOVERNMENT BUSINESS</b>                                      |     |
| McFadyen; Doer  | 123 | <b>Introduction of Bills</b>                                    |     |
| Teachers' Retirement Allowances Fund  |     | Bill 4—The Community Revitalization Tax Increment Financing Act |     |
| Borotsik; Selinger  | 125 | Ashton  | 135 |

|                        |     |           |     |
|------------------------|-----|-----------|-----|
| <b>Throne Speech</b>   |     | Brick     | 144 |
| (Fourth Day of Debate) |     | Pedersen  | 148 |
| Dyck                   | 135 | Melnick   | 152 |
| Saran                  | 136 | Faurschou | 156 |
| Cullen                 | 139 |           |     |

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are also available on the Internet at the following address:

**<http://www.gov.mb.ca/legislature/hansard/index.html>**