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of the
Legislative Assembly of Manitoba
DEBATES
and
PROCEEDINGS

Official Report
(Hansard)

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MANITOBA LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
Thirty-Ninth Legislature

Member	Constituency	Political Affiliation
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.
BOROTSIK, Rick	Brandon West	P.C.
BRAUN, Erna	Rossmere	N.D.P.
BRICK, Marilyn	St. Norbert	N.D.P.
BRIESE, Stuart	Ste. Rose	P.C.
CALDWELL, Drew	Brandon East	N.D.P.
CHOMIAK, Dave, Hon.	Kildonan	N.D.P.
CULLEN, Cliff	Turtle Mountain	P.C.
DERKACH, Leonard	Russell	P.C.
DEWAR, Gregory	Selkirk	N.D.P.
DOER, Gary, Hon.	Concordia	N.D.P.
DRIEDGER, Myrna	Charleswood	P.C.
DYCK, Peter	Pembina	P.C.
EICHLER, Ralph	Lakeside	P.C.
FAURSCHOU, David	Portage la Prairie	P.C.
GERRARD, Jon, Hon.	River Heights	Lib.
GOERTZEN, Kelvin	Steinbach	P.C.
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.
JENNISSSEN, 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.
MAGUIRE, Larry	Arthur-Virden	P.C.
MARCELINO, Flor	Wellington	N.D.P.
MARTINDALE, Doug	Burrows	N.D.P.
McFADYEN, Hugh	Fort Whyte	P.C.
McGIFFORD, Diane, Hon.	Lord Roberts	N.D.P.
MELNICK, Christine, Hon.	Riel	N.D.P.
MITCHELSON, Bonnie	River East	P.C.
NEVAKSHONOFF, Tom	Interlake	N.D.P.
OSWALD, Theresa, Hon.	Seine River	N.D.P.
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REID, Daryl	Transcona	N.D.P.
ROBINSON, Eric, Hon.	Rupertsland	N.D.P.
RONDEAU, Jim, Hon.	Assiniboia	N.D.P.
ROWAT, Leanne	Minnedosa	P.C.
SARAN, Mohinder	The Maples	N.D.P.
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SELINGER, Greg, Hon.	St. Boniface	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

Monday, December 1, 2008

The House met at 1:30 p.m.

PRAYER

MATTER OF PRIVILEGE

Mrs. Mavis Taillieu (Morris): Mr. Speaker, on a matter of privilege.

Mr. Speaker: The honourable member rising on a matter of privilege.

Mrs. Taillieu: Mr. Speaker, I understand there are two conditions that need to be met to form a prima facie case of a matter of privilege, the first being that the matter must be raised at the first opportunity and, secondly, that my rights as a member of the Legislature have been breached.

Mr. Speaker, my matter of privilege is in response to statements made in this House by the Minister of Labour and Immigration (Ms. Allan), the MLA for St. Vital, in question period last Friday, and I will conclude with a motion for this House.

On Friday, Mr. Speaker, I indicated to the minister that I was in receipt of a letter suspending the employer-application process in the Department of Labour and Immigration until further notice. I asked her why the program was suspended and she answered to say, and I will quote from *Hansard*: "Well, Mr. Speaker, there are no programs being suspended at the Immigration branch."

Since this occurred in the most recent question period on Friday, I had the opportunity to review *Hansard* to confirm the exact words of the Minister of Labour and Immigration, the MLA for St. Vital. As you can appreciate, Mr. Speaker, sometimes it's difficult to hear in the Chamber, so it's important to consult and confirm with *Hansard*. Therefore I submit that today, being Monday, is the first opportunity to raise this matter in the House.

Mr. Speaker, I'd like to table a letter dated November 19, 2008, from the Department of Labour and Immigration. I will quote from this letter: "In preparation for the implementation of The Worker Recruitment and Protection Act, Manitoba Labour and Immigration is undertaking a review of its Employer Application process to ensure that its procedures are consistent with the requirements of this legislation." It continues to say: "As a result, we

are temporarily suspending the Employer Application process and will not be accepting any additional employer applications until further notice." Yet the minister said there are no programs being suspended at the Immigration branch.

Mr. Speaker, I believe it is clear that the Minister of Labour and Immigration, the MLA for St. Vital, has once again brought false information to this House. I also had to raise a matter of privilege on the minister on May 5, 2008, on another matter.

When a minister brings false information or makes misleading statements in the House, it compromises our ability to perform our duties. As the opposition critic for Labour and Immigration, it is my duty to seek information regarding the workings of the department and to demand transparency and accountability from the minister.

In this particular case, I was contacted by a concerned Manitoban who was curious as to why the program was suspended with no notice. Indeed, a pre-approval in this program had just gone through the previous day. Seeking an answer as to why this program had been suspended, I'm told the program had not been suspended was an intentional attempt to discredit me in the performance of my duties in this House.

To illustrate further how the Minister of Labour and Immigration, the MLA for St. Vital, tried to intentionally mislead this House, she later said, and I quote from *Hansard*: "The employer-direct stream in the Provincial Nominee Program is the most successful stream because that's what makes our workers come to Manitoba, get employed and participate in our economy."

While that is true, Mr. Speaker, the minister said this knowing full well the program had already been suspended for nine days and until further notice.

Yet, she deliberately misled this House into believing it was still accepting applications.

Mr. Speaker, there are many instances when we come to question period seeking information to relay to Manitobans. When we are intentionally given wrong information to relay to Manitobans, it breaches my right as a member of this Legislature.

Mr. Speaker, I believe I have brought this matter to the attention of the House at the earliest possible time, and I believe it is clear that the Minister of Labour and Immigration, (Ms. Allan), the MLA for St. Vital, has knowingly and willfully brought false information to this House.

I believe this has compromised my ability as a member of this Chamber and as the official opposition critic for Labour and Immigration to effectively perform my duties and subsequently impart information to Manitobans.

Indeed, when false information is brought to this Chamber by a minister of the Crown, it is an infringement on the rights of all of us as members, Mr. Speaker. We deserve to hear the truth in this House.

Therefore, I move that this matter be referred to the Standing Committee on Legislative Affairs for review. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: Does the honourable member have a seconder for her motion? Does the honourable member have a seconder for your—[interjection] Order.

Mrs. Taillieu: Yes, Mr. Speaker, the motion is seconded by the Member for Arthur-Virden (Mr. Maguire).

Mr. Speaker: Before recognizing any other members to speak, I would remind the House that contributions at this time by honourable members are to be limited to strictly relevant comments as to whether the alleged matter of privilege has been raised at the earliest opportunity and whether a prima facie case has been established.

Hon. Steve Ashton (Deputy Government House Leader): We have a clear precedent in this House, we have a clear precedent in terms of *Beauchesne* as to what constitutes a matter of privilege.

Fundamentally, as *Beauchesne* 31.(1) points out: A dispute arising between two members, as to allegations of facts, does not fulfil the conditions of parliamentary privilege.

In fact, not only would I suggest this is a clear example of a dispute over the facts, but I think if you read the exchange from which the member is now purporting to raise a matter of privilege, you'll see, Mr. Speaker, not only is there not a privilege, but I actually believe that the member opposite actually should be apologizing to the Minister of Labour for her comments today in what was said because what I

would note, and I quote here from *Hansard* from this past Friday, November 28, on page 203, the member opposite asked the question, and she started by saying she had a letter saying that the Immigration branch of the Department of Labour and Immigration, that indicates the branch has temporarily suspended the employer-application process until further notice to review the employer-application process. That was the letter she quoted from.

She's now saying that the Minister of Labour had clearly indicated that the program had not been suspended. What's interesting is the little flip that the member does in her question. She starts by reading a letter talking about the process, then in her question says: Can the minister indicate why it's taken until now to conduct a review? Why did she wait until it's necessary to suspend the program?

She asked a question based on a letter that talked about suspending the process. That's the paperwork whereby you apply, you have somewhat admitted, and, in this case it's very clear, the Minister of Labour said—[interjection]

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Matters of privilege are a very serious matter. You expect me to make a ruling, and I need to be able to hear every word that is spoken. Matters of privilege and points of order are to be taken very seriously, and I need to hear every word.

Continue, please.

*(13:40)

Mr. Ashton: In the exchange that came afterwards, I'll quote what the Minister of Labour said: ". . . there are no programs being suspended at the Immigration branch."

She was asked if the program had been suspended; she answered that it had not. So, clearly, to be generous—because I understand we have to say in this House, Mr. Speaker, accept individual MLAs in terms of what they say—I don't know how the member opposite can stand here on a matter of privilege when, clearly, the Minister of Labour was asked a question about whether the program was suspended and answered it by saying the program was not suspended.

The problem was in the construct of the question that the member opposite asked, nothing to do with anyone in this House on the government's side misleading members of this House. I would suggest,

if she reads the *Hansard*, she may ask herself the question as to who misled who in this exchange in question period.

Mr. Speaker, this not only does not satisfy *Beauchesne*, citation 31, I would say that this is one of the weakest attempts I've seen at a matter of privilege. In fact, I would suggest the member opposite withdraw it. Clearly she asked a question; she received an answer. She could play games with memos; she can play games with the questions, but our Minister of Labour did the right thing in this House. She answered the question that was asked.

If there's any problem here, it's with the member opposite who clearly took a leap of logic from a letter, asked a question, got the answer and didn't like the answer. That's not a matter of privilege, and we should not be wasting the time of this House on this kind of supposed matter of privilege.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Inkster): Mr. Speaker, I think that I would like to be as clear as possible on this particular issue. My understanding is that if there is a clear indication that a minister has intentionally misled the House, they would, in fact, be in breach of a member's privilege. I believe that the member of the opposition is, in fact, in order in terms of a timely fashion, bringing it forward. I don't think that's in dispute.

What is in dispute, Mr. Speaker—and I can somewhat relate because I was interested when the member posed the question last Friday, because I, too, was approached about an issue with the employer-direct stream in the Manitoba Provincial Nominee Program.

I listened to the minister's answer, and I'll quote because it was just provided through *Hansard* on page 203. The minister stated, quote: "... there are no programs being suspended at the Immigration branch." That's what I had thought I had heard last Friday. I thought the issue was dead, but the call that I had was someone with just bad information.

Having said that, I now read the letter that the Member for Morris (Mrs. Taillieu) has tabled and, in the letter—and I'll be very specific in what I'm quoting—it states, quote: "... and will not be accepting any additional employer applications . . ."

Mr. Speaker, you can play with the words all you want. What it tells me is that if I'm an employer and I want to submit to get a PNP certificate, I'm not able to do it because it says right in this letter I

cannot. It says we're not accepting any additional employer applications.

So, if you're not going to accept my application, that tells me then the program has been suspended, which contradicts what the minister has said.

Now, in previous rulings, you have made it very clear that—best I can tell—the only way in which we can have a minister be attributed to intentionally misleading the House is if that minister stands in his or her place and says, I intentionally misled the House and I apologize for it.

Without the minister using his or her own integrity in recognizing when they've made a mistake, whether it was intentional or not, Mr. Speaker, it's in essence up to the very nature of the minister to do what's right and to tell the House what actually took place.

I believe the Member for Morris has raised a valid issue, and I believe that the Minister of Labour and Immigration needs to stand up and make the record correct. It's either this letter is wrong, that was sent out by her department, Mr. Speaker, or the minister gave a wrong answer.

I believe that the dignity of this Chamber dictates that the Minister of Labour and Immigration, at the very least, has to stand up and apologize for misleading the House or provide clarification on the issue. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Gerald Hawranik (Official Opposition House Leader): Yes, on the same matter of privilege, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: On the same matter of privilege.

Mr. Hawranik: I would concur with the Member for Morris (Mrs. Taillieu) and the Member for Inkster (Mr. Lamoureux) and their assessment of the facts. It's very clear in terms of what's located within that letter. The letter was, in fact, tabled in this House and let me read it out for you, Mr. Speaker, so that it's very clear. It indicates in the letter that we are temporarily suspending the employer-application process and will not be accepting any additional employer applications until further notice.

When I look at what the minister said in response to the question last week by the Member for Morris, the minister said, in response to that question, that there are no programs being suspended at the Immigration branch. Direct conflict between what the minister stated in this House compared to what the contents of the letter were that were tabled

in this House. There's absolutely no doubt that there's a direct contradiction, and I know that the Member for Thompson (Mr. Ashton), when he spoke on this matter of privilege, in my view, he's just playing with words. The reality is that *Hansard* is accurate and so is the letter that was tabled in this House, and they are in totally direct contradiction with each other.

Now, I know, Mr. Speaker, in the past, when you've dealt with determining whether or not there was an intentional misleading of this House, that past Speakers and yourself, in fact, have ruled that it's virtually impossible to prove intentional misleading unless of course the minister or the person responsible would actually admit that they misled the House. I know that that's the precedent out there, but we have a very clear example between what was tabled in this House and what's on *Hansard*. An extremely clear example—I don't know how much more clear it can get. But it's clear, and it's clear that it's contradictory.

I note that on May 12, 2008, you did make a ruling, Mr. Speaker, with respect to a different matter of privilege. On May 12, 2008, you indicated that you'll not be responsible for past Speakers or future Speakers. You'll be responsible for your own actions and any member who feels that they are hurt in any manner could raise it and you can deal with it. What that means, in context with the rest of your ruling on May 12, 2008, is that you indicated that you will not necessarily be bound by precedent, that there may be appropriate circumstances where intentional misleading could be proved.

Mr. Speaker, the ruling was virtually impossible. That doesn't mean it's completely impossible. There has to be clear examples. There are possible clear examples between something in writing as opposed to what's said in the House. If there's a clear example that, in fact, they're contradictory, I would submit to you that that is a matter of privilege and it ought to be ruled as such, but I await your ruling.

Mr. Speaker: The honourable Member for Morris (Mrs. Taillieu), I'm still waiting for the motion. Could the please—

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Speaker: Order. A matter of privilege is a serious concern. I'm going to take this matter under advisement to consult authorities and I'll return to the House with a ruling.

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

Bill 6—The East Side Traditional Lands Planning and Special Protected Areas Act

Hon. Stan Struthers (Minister of Conservation): Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the Minister of Culture, Heritage, Tourism and Sport (Mr. Robinson), that Bill 6, The East Side Traditional Lands Planning and Special Protected Areas Act; Loi sur l'aménagement des terres traditionnelles situées du côté est et les zones protégées spéciales, be now read a first time.

Motion presented.

Mr. Struthers: This legislation will enable east-side First Nations to develop traditional land-use plans that ensure permanent and interim legal protection and help our Province's plan to work with First Nations to better protect and manage the unique boreal forest, lakes and rivers on the east side of Lake Winnipeg.

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

* (13:50)

Bill 223—The Coat of Arms, Emblems and the Manitoba Tartan Amendment Act (Provincial Soil Designated)

Mr. Cliff Cullen (Turtle Mountain): I move, seconded by the Member for Lakeside (Mr. Eichler), that Bill 223, The Coat of Arms, Emblems and the Manitoba Tartan Amendment Act (Provincial Soil Designated), be now read a first time.

Motion presented.

Mr. Cullen: This legislation will designate the Newdale soil as a provincial soil of the province of Manitoba. It will also serve to recognize the significant role agriculture has played and will continue to play in this province.

On the eve of Farmer Appreciation Day, it is important that we introduce this legislation to acknowledge this important industry to Manitoba.

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

Bill 224—The Regulatory Accountability and Transparency Act

Mrs. Mavis Taillieu (Morris): I move, seconded by the Member for Carman (Mr. Pedersen), that The

Regulatory Accountability and Transparency Act, be now read a first time.

Mr. Speaker: It has been moved by the honourable Member for Morris, seconded by the honourable Member for Carman, that Bill 224, The Regulatory Accountability and Transparency Act, be now read a first time.

Mrs. Taillieu: This bill requires the government to develop formal procedures to make the process for enacting regulations more transparent. It also requires government departments to develop regulatory reform plans to eliminate unnecessary regulations and encourage restraint in making new regulations. Both the government procedures and department plans must be made public.

This bill does not call for no regulation as regulation is important in health and safety, but it calls for smart regulation and reducing the red tape burden for businesses, Mr. Speaker.

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

**Bill 225—The Labour Relations Amendment Act
(Information in Employee's Language)**

Mrs. Mavis Taillieu (Morris): I move, seconded by the Member for Springfield (Mr. Schuler), that Bill 225, The Labour Relations Amendment Act (Information in Employee's Language), be now read a first time.

Motion presented.

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

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

TABLING OF REPORTS

Hon. Christine Melnick (Minister of Water Stewardship): I am pleased to table today the Annual Report for 2007-2008 of the Conservation Districts of Manitoba.

Hon. Eric Robinson (Acting Minister charged with the administration of The Communities Economic Development Fund Act): Yes, Mr. Speaker, I'd like to table the Second Quarter Financial Statements for the Communities Economic Development Fund.

MINISTERIAL STATEMENTS

World AIDS Day

Hon. Kerri Irvin-Ross (Minister of Healthy Living): Mr. Speaker, I have a ministerial statement for the House.

Mr. Speaker, I'm honoured to stand in the House today to recognize World AIDS Day. The campaign slogan for World AIDS Day 2008 is "Stop AIDS. Keep the Promise." Worldwide HIV and AIDS predominantly affect disadvantaged populations, particularly people living in poverty. Manitoba will continue to provide leadership and hope by contributing to global efforts in infectious disease control and diagnosis.

We have committed funding of \$5 million over five years to build upon federal allocations to infrastructure and research in Manitoba, an additional \$250,000 for the Canadian HIV vaccine initiative, and today we announce \$2.3 million in new ongoing funding to strengthen work across Manitoba to address sexually transmitted infections, including HIV and AIDS.

I want to take this opportunity to commend all the dedicated health-care workers, advocates and volunteers, strong community-based organizations such as Nine Circles Community Health Centre and the Manitoba HIV program, and world-class researchers whose invaluable contributions have made a tremendous difference to all people whose lives have been altered by HIV and AIDS.

We can prevent the spread of HIV by knowing the risk factors, taking appropriate precautions, getting tested and having a prenatal HIV screen. In Manitoba, HIV testing is available from any doctor, community health centre, or public health office. This year, Manitoba's theme is "Living Well with HIV/AIDS." Although HIV is 100 percent preventable, it continues to spread in our communities. Stigma and prejudice are often barriers to effective prevention and care of HIV and AIDS. People hesitate to seek testing and treatment or acknowledge their HIV status through the fear of discrimination. We must each confront stigma and discrimination, help in the battle against the spread of HIV and AIDS and encourage friends and families to get tested.

Mr. Speaker, I want to sincerely thank members of this Assembly for wearing the red ribbons, a symbol of caring and demonstration of grief for all of those we have lost to AIDS. I respectfully request

that we further honour everyone whose lives have been directly affected by HIV and AIDS with a moment of silence after other members have spoken. Thank you.

Mrs. Myrna Driedger (Charleswood): I thank you, Mr. Speaker, and I would like to thank the Minister of Healthy Living for her statement today.

I rise today, December 1, to recognize a solemn occasion of World AIDS Day. Partners around the world working towards education and eradication of HIV/AIDS unite today under a banner saying, Lead, Empower, Deliver. In this theme we see identified the need for political, community and individual leadership in order to make progress in the global fight against AIDS through providing support and committing resources to the cause.

We know that we must empower the citizens of our world, equipping them with the lifesaving knowledge of how to avoid HIV transmission. We need to end the stigma and discrimination that people infected with HIV too often face which first prevents prevention and then later impedes access to treatment programs. Mr. Speaker, 2008 marks the 20th observance of World AIDS Day. First conceived by forward-thinking world leaders at the 1988 World Summit of Ministers of Health on Programmes for AIDS Prevention, in the past 20 years significant knowledge has been obtained on the nature of the virus and medical advancements have improved the quality of life for those affected with the condition. In this regard we can celebrate successes.

Still, though, HIV/AIDS disproportionately affects those living in poverty, in positions of disadvantage and in developing nations. In Sub-Saharan Africa, China, India and the Russian federation, AIDS is particularly devastating. Last year alone, there were over 33 million people living with HIV, 2 million people newly infected with the virus and 2 million deaths from AIDS.

Here we must renew our commitments towards universal access for care, treatment and support. Today, in South Africa, a 15-minute silence was observed in recognition of the 5.5 million South Africans that have AIDS or are HIV-positive and to remember the many victims that have passed away from AIDS. This recognition is a positive step in the campaign for awareness on the connection between HIV and AIDS and even the acceptance of the existence of AIDS itself, a battle that has been waged in many countries.

It is only through continued leadership that we can succeed, political leadership to ensure research and resources, community leadership to educate on the risks and deliver support and individual leadership in a proactive, personal approach to limiting HIV transmission such as Canada's Are You Positive You're Not Positive? campaign. When it comes to AIDS, we all need to be leaders, Mr. Speaker.

* (14:00)

Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights): Mr. Speaker, I seek leave to speak to the minister's statement.

Mr. Speaker: Does the honourable member have leave? [*Agreed*]

Mr. Gerrard: Mr. Speaker, I join other members of the Assembly in recognizing World AIDS Day 2008, in recognizing the extraordinary contributions that Manitobans like Dr. Allan Ronald and Dr. Frank Plummer have made to understanding AIDS and to the effort to prevent and stop its further transmission. I'd also like to recognize the work that is being done on developing a vaccine and the work that individuals like Terry Duguid are doing to bring to Manitoba a possible vaccine manufacturing site to prevent, in the long run, further development and spread of AIDS.

I know that one of the things we must constantly be vigilant about is making sure we are on top of HIV/AIDS here in Manitoba, preventing and stopping its spread and making sure that it doesn't cause more problems than it already has. We want, at the same time, to reach out to the rest of the world to extend our concern for those who are infected with AIDS, our dedication to help them through support and treatment, as well as our determination to work toward a vaccine or other methods to prevent AIDS.

So as we work together in taking forward the Stop AIDS. Keep the Promise slogan of World AIDS Day today, then we all work together to see what we can do. Thank you.

Mr. Speaker: Is there agreement for a moment of silence? [*Agreed*]

Please rise for a moment of silence.

A moment of silence was observed.

Introduction of Guests

Mr. Speaker: Prior to oral questions, I'd like to draw the attention of honourable members to the Speaker's Gallery where we have with us today Anne Dance,

Timothy Howlett, Brian Innes, Sara Krynitzki, Rhea Laube, Ilana Ludwin, Andrew Perez, Alexander Sculthorpe, Al-Amyr Sumar, Brett Thompson, who are the 2008-2009 parliamentary interns with the House of Commons.

Also seated in the public gallery we have with us today the participants of the Legislative Assembly Second Annual Teachers' Institute on Parliamentary Democracy.

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

ORAL QUESTIONS

Dr. Larry Reynolds

Government Response to Termination

Mr. Hugh McFadyen (Leader of the Official Opposition): I want to acknowledge those teachers who have joined us today in the gallery who were just introduced. As a proud graduate of Manitoba's excellent public school system, I just want to acknowledge them for the great work they do and also acknowledge you, Mr. Speaker, and everybody else who's been involved with the Teachers' Institute on Parliamentary Democracy.

Mr. Speaker, there's another very fine teacher in the gallery with us today, somebody who has dedicated a great deal of his professional career to teaching in the field of family medicine, and that is Dr. Larry Reynolds.

Mr. Speaker, Dr. Reynolds worked in the field of family medicine for more than 30 years; that is, until three weeks ago when his position, his pay and his patients were taken away by this NDP government.

When members asked last week why this decision had been made, we were told that it was a private matter of personnel. Then this weekend the government unleashed the hounds and undertook a drive-by smear on the reputation of Dr. Reynolds while he was away in Toronto, speaking to a conference of some 3,400 family doctors in Toronto, having been invited to Toronto to speak on the topic of leadership in family medicine.

Mr. Speaker, since the government has now flip-flopped on its position with respect to this being a private matter, will the Minister of Health (Ms. Oswald) now explain to the many Manitobans who know and respect Dr. Reynolds what was really behind their decision to target one of Manitoba's top family physicians?

Hon. Gary Doer (Premier): Mr. Speaker, as I said last week, the government of Manitoba does not involve itself in the hiring, promotion of any member of the Faculty of Medicine nor do we involve ourselves in the hiring of doctors under the purview of the Winnipeg Regional Health Authority.

Certainly, if the doctor has any particular concerns that he's been dealt with unfairly, there are courses of action for an independent review. Perhaps the Ombudsman or another source could be useful in this regard. We have no difficulty if people feel they're aggrieved, but I do have a great deal of concern if the government of the day, whether it's Conservative or New Democrat or whatever, would be involved and interfere with a medical school in who gets promoted, who gets their contract extended, and who doesn't.

Dean Sandham was quoted, Mr. Speaker, and I can assure members opposite, we have never, ever told the University of Manitoba who to hire, who to fire, who to promote, who to keep on, who not to keep on, and we will never do it into the future. There is an independence of the academic areas in Manitoba. Whether it was hiring the last president of the University of Manitoba, it was completely independent of this government. Sometimes you have concerns raised about governments being involved in the hiring of very important positions, including presidents of universities. This government has not. We want to applaud the selection process and the hiring of Dr. Barnard, but it's absolutely separate from the government. The dean of the medical school is absolutely separate from the government.

Mr. Speaker, if there are concerns that the dean or the Winnipeg Regional Health Authority—and particularly the dean—abused anything, there is the president of the University of Manitoba who is completely independent from the government, as academic should be in the province of Manitoba.

Mr. McFadyen: Mr. Speaker, that response does not in any way reflect honestly the chain of accountability within the Premier's government. We're not talking about the University of Manitoba. We're talking about the Winnipeg Regional Health Authority which is entirely appointed by him and his Cabinet, which is accountable to his Minister of Health (Ms. Oswald), who is accountable to the Premier of Manitoba.

That very same Winnipeg Regional Health Authority over the weekend is quoted as saying that

the reason Dr. Reynolds was terminated was that he, and I quote: had a tendency sometimes to take his concerns directly to the Minister of Health. That is the reason given by the Winnipeg Regional Health Authority spokesperson who reports to the Minister of Health, who is hired and fired by the Minister of Health and the Premier (Mr. Doer), and who is accountable to the public and the people of Manitoba, Mr. Speaker, who are looking for a government that accepts responsibility.

Mr. Speaker, we all saw the photograph in the paper a couple of weeks ago of the smiling Premier with the eight new doctors that they had hired to work in the area of oncology. He takes credit when doctors are hired. He runs for cover when doctors are fired. That's not leadership; that's political spin.

I want to ask the Premier: After saying last week that the matter was private, they unleashed their underlings at the health authority to attack Dr. Reynolds and say that the reason he was let go was because of concerns about performance. I want to ask the minister: Is it her policy to allow her underlings to target a 30-year family doctor just because he had the courage to speak up for patients in Manitoba?

* (14:10)

Mr. Doer: Well, Mr. Speaker, we have doctors writing us often. We have nurses writing us often. We have the public writing us often. We have people that are positive. There are people negative. There are people quite negative. There are people running for different political parties that are doctors.

I would point out that we do not tell the medical faculty, Dean Sandham—who was also quoted in the article the member talks about—we don't ask or tell the doctors who to hire. Dr. Dhaliwal, for example, the member he cited, was the one recruited and retained, the oncologist at CancerCare Manitoba. We had a role in that by funding it, but we had no role in hiring, recruiting. The incentive package was put in place with negotiations with the MMA, or outside of the MMA in different cases with specialists.

So, yes, the government comes forward with funding, but hiring and firing of doctors, promoting doctors, is not within the administrative purview of the government. Positions at the medical school that have academic independence from the government, that co-exist with the Winnipeg Regional Health Authority, are not going to be determined by this government. It never has. It didn't in the past, it won't

in the future and it didn't in this incident, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. McFadyen: And again the Premier fails to take responsibility for things that are happening under his watch in Manitoba. We have a shortage of family physicians. We have vacancies within the university faculty, and we have a physician with a 30-year track record of success who's been targeted and pushed out, Mr. Speaker.

He's been told to transfer his patients to another physician, Mr. Speaker, which puts in question the ability of the system to meet the needs of those many patients. There is a growing list of Manitobans who know Dr. Reynolds, who are writing in and calling to express their support, to express their indications of respect for Dr. Reynolds in the work he does.

Mr. Speaker, I think it's unfortunate that people that they directly employ came out in the weekend media, and they damaged the reputation of Dr. Reynolds with comments by saying that he had performance issues and made reference to two performance reports, one of which I will table right now. It was done in May of 2005, and contrary to what their government spokesperson said in the media this weekend, the review that was done in 1985, along with another review, is overwhelmingly positive for Dr. Reynolds.

It says, Mr. Speaker, his overall rating, those whom he worked with, 74 percent said his performance was either excellent or good. Over 80 percent, 86 percent said that he was successful at building consensus, and 85 percent said that he deserved another five-year term in his position, an overwhelmingly positive performance appraisal, the exact opposite of what was said in the dishonest smear job that was done on Dr. Reynolds in the weekend media.

Even if the Premier isn't prepared to take responsibility for what is going on under his watch with respect to his firing, will he have the decency to correct the comments that were made on the record about Dr. Reynolds by somebody that this Premier hired to be his underling within the Health Department?

Mr. Doer: Mr. Speaker, I've had nothing but very positive comments about Dr. Postl who was hired before we came into office. He is the medical head of the Winnipeg Regional Health Authority. Dean Sandham, I've heard nothing but good things about his work as the dean of the medical school. These

two doctors have made a decision on the leadership role within a particular division. It is not a decision this government should make, has made or will make in the future. It's a decision made by doctors for a leadership role.

There can be, by the way—

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

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

Mr. Doer: When there were other allegations with another doctor a while ago, we sent it to the former Madam Justice Krindle, and some of the concerns proved not to be correct, even though they were on the floor of this Legislature for some time.

Mr. Speaker, I have no difficulty in the doctor going to the Ombudsman if there's been any breach of his privacy, any breach of his reputation, any breach of his employment status in a way that's capricious. I have no difficulty in that being dealt with by the Ombudsman or an appropriate independent body.

But I think it would be wrong for the Minister of Health to hire department heads underneath the dean. So we should go to the dean of the medical school and tell the dean who to hire, who to promote, who to demote, who to extend, who not to extend. If you don't have deans, Mr. Speaker, that can make those decisions, then I think we're really heading in the wrong direction.

So, Mr. Speaker, if there has been any abuse of privacy or reputation, I'd recommend strongly that the doctor take that to the Ombudsman. The individual in that office is independent of this Legislature, independent of politics. If there are any concerns raised, I would stand by the Ombudsman looking at this, reviewing it and giving us an independent opinion.

But beyond that, I'm not going to interfere in the medical school on who they should hire and why, Mr. Speaker.

**Dr. Larry Reynolds
Government Response to Termination**

Mrs. Myrna Driedger (Charleswood): There are a number of health-care professionals, members of the public and patients who are very, very upset about what is happening to Dr. Reynolds.

He was fired by letter with no appeal process. He was told to, and I quote, pirouette out of the way.

His practice and his teaching job were taken away from him and he was told he could not re-apply. He was never told why. He spoke up very passionately on behalf of family doctors and family medicine and he lost his job.

This Minister of Health, last week, said that the buck stopped with her. So I'd like to ask her today: What message is she sending, and her government sending, to doctors, nurses and other health-care professionals who feel they want to come forward to express concerns about the health-care system?

Hon. Theresa Oswald (Minister of Health): I will reiterate points that I made last week and say that the Winnipeg Regional Health Authority, under the direction of Dr. Postl, in partnership with Dr. Wright, Dean Sandham at the Faculty of Medicine, are charged with making decisions concerning their personnel, concerning whether or not contracts will be renewed or not. That is their independent decision to make, and it would be wholly inappropriate for a politician to name who shall get a promotion and who shall not.

I certainly do strongly encourage any individual, the doctor in question, if he believes that this is an unfair decision, to seek guidance from the Ombudsman, to seek clarity on this. Absolutely, it's independent from government.

Mrs. Driedger: I'd like to table an e-mail today and I will read from this e-mail. It comes from a health-care provider: I have recently worked with Dr. Reynolds as the doula of one of his obstetrical patients, and our team shared in a beautiful, gentle birth experience. My previous clients, as well as other birth consumers, have contacted me and we are all questioning the abrupt and harsh termination of a well-loved family physician. The termination of Dr. Reynolds carries substantial impact to all of the patients who were in his care, pregnant or otherwise. Recent government-funded child and maternity reports stated the rise of family physicians leaving the work of obstetrics. Where does this decision by the WRHA leave women and their babies?

I'll ask the question that they ask: Is the Manitoba government choosing what hot topics they will fight for, or does the loss of a dynamic family physician not warrant their attention and action?

Ms. Oswald: I respect the words that the member has read from an e-mail that's been written. I respect the opinions of Dean Sandham and of Dr. Postl and the officials at the WRHA. There are people who

believe that this was a good and appropriate decision, and there are people that believe that it was not.

What I can say to the members is it would be wholly inappropriate for a Minister of Health to tell the dean of the Faculty of Medicine, to tell a doctor making medical decisions, about leadership roles, what they should and should not do.

If there is a dispute on this issue, once again, I encourage the doctor in question to seek guidance from the Ombudsman, and I would respect that decision as well, Mr. Speaker.

* (14:20)

Mrs. Driedger: Mr. Speaker, 1,470 doctors have left Manitoba since this NDP has come into power. This Minister of Health needs to spend more time finding out why she can't retain family doctors here instead of working overtime to manipulate and manage the spin.

So when Dr. Reynolds disagreed with something in Manitoba, he feels he was exposed to bullying and intimidation and then firing, but this David is standing up to this Goliath.

I would like to ask the Minister of Health: Would she be prepared today to meet with Dr. Larry Reynolds, who is in the gallery today, and would she be prepared to meet with him after question period so that he could bring his concerns and his side of the story before her?

Hon. Gary Doer (Premier): Mr. Speaker, I just want to say that I had the opportunity of meeting with the Canadian head of—

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Speaker: Order. The honourable member just asked a question. She has the right to hear the response, and I need to hear it. We just saw a member, when we first started, get up on a matter of privilege because, in her statement, she mentioned that it's very difficult to hear in here so she had to wait for *Hansard*.

As the Speaker, I need to be able to hear in case there's a breach of the rule too, so let that be a message for all members. The honourable First Minister has the floor.

Mr. Doer: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I just met with heads of the family doctors' group at a B'nai B'rith event just a couple of weeks ago, including national people, and they said that the latest agreement with family doctors was one of the best

they've ever had and going to be very important for recruitment and retention of family doctors. To fund those kinds of contracts is a decision that the government should legitimately make under the leadership of the Minister of Health and the Minister of Finance.

On the issue of who should be hired and who should be fired, they would be the first ones standing up if a medical doctor was hired by a senior head of the Winnipeg Regional Health Authority and didn't meet their standards. That's why you have delegated authority to the dean of the medical school and the head of the Winnipeg Regional Health Authority, Mr. Speaker.

Dr. Larry Reynolds

Government Response to Termination

Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights): Mr. Speaker, the Premier has tried to position himself as a defender of academic freedom but he is not. The issue here is that Dr. Reynolds was asked to come here. He was promised he would have tenure. He stepped down, as was appropriate, as head of family practice, but he wants to stay on as a professor being able to teach, do research and continue the practice that he has as a professor at the university.

Now, the major guarantor of academic freedom is actually the provision of tenure so that professors can't be fired for speaking out, but in Manitoba, where professors can be given nil professorship or have their WRHA privilege taken away, tenure has become meaningless.

Why is the Premier not standing up to defend tenure and academic freedom?

Hon. Gary Doer (Premier): Well, Mr. Speaker, I also support the principle of academic independence. So the member opposite wants me to phone the president of the University of Manitoba to instruct the dean of the medical school who to hire, promote, give tenure to or not to. If there's anything dealing with a head of a department—I know there's a collective agreement with different instructors. I don't know whether this applies because the individual is a supervisor, in a supervisory role.

I don't know all those answers to those questions, but I know one thing. I am not going to have a situation where I or the minister responsible for post-secondary education picks up the phone and asks or tells the university president what to do. He would probably tell me what to do because we support the principle of academic independence.

Mr. Gerrard: Mr. Speaker, Dr. Larry Reynolds was invited here to take a tenured position and now that position is being taken away from him. He's been given a nil professorship without the ability to teach and do research and participate as a full member of the university community. On Friday, the Premier said that people shouldn't even write to him on this issue, and yet here the Premier is not standing up to defend tenure which is so important to making sure people have the ability to speak out without being targeted, without being dismissed, without being given nil professorship.

Where has the Premier been, making sure that when somebody is promised a tenured professorship, that, in fact, they get a tenured professorship and not a nil professorship?

Mr. Doer: Well, Mr. Speaker, the member asked me about the privacy of individuals in writing the office, and I said that we would protect that. If there's any abuse of privacy, both in the report that was released or in any other matter, it should be dealt with by the Ombudsman who has that responsibility.

I would also suggest, Mr. Speaker, that the member—and we're more than willing to let the Ombudsman look at the facts. With the last allegation the member made, it fell like a house of cards after former Justice Ruth Krindle looked at the case. All the public issues were dismissed by the judge.

And I would point out, Mr. Speaker, that I'm sure that when the member opposite was Minister of Science with the Chrétien government, he did not go around phoning university professors saying what scientist should be hired, promoted, fired, across Canada. He couldn't do that as a minister of the Crown, and neither can our minister of the Crown do that, nor should they do that with the academic independence of the University of Manitoba.

Mr. Gerrard: When I was in the federal Cabinet, I certainly stood up to defend the tenure of professorships and the academic freedoms that go along with that. The problem here is that we've got people being targeted because they speak out and their positions taken away from them, and this is very detrimental because people within the WRHA or in other areas are saying, look, I cannot afford to speak out. I can't afford to send a letter, even on behalf of Dr. Reynolds, because I, too, might be targeted. I, too, might be dismissed. I might be given a nil professorship or lose my job.

When will the Premier admit that there's a problem here and act to make sure that there is academic freedom, that there is tenure and that it works in Manitoba?

Mr. Doer: Well, Mr. Speaker, everyone now in the health-care field is now covered under whistle-blower legislation—

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Doer: Well, you know, the members howl, but they never had that in place when they were in government.

Mr. Speaker, you can't have academic freedom without academic independence from the government. The government should not hire and fire professors. Professors and instructors should be free to criticize the government, as they do almost every minute, not left enough, not right enough, not this enough, not that enough. That is part of academic independence, because it is crucial to have academic independence so you can have academic freedom. To get politically involved with instructors at university is the death knell for academic independence in this province.

Having said that, there is no such thing as perfection. If the doctor who has got support in the community from some people has any grievance or there's been any abuse, it can go to the Ombudsman so we can have independent eyes and ears and thought going into what happened. We are accountable to whatever the Ombudsman would find. We will certainly implement any independent report, but we're not going to interfere with the independence of the universities to hire and promote who they choose as the best person for their institutions.

Critical Incident Investigations Government Release of Information

Mrs. Myrna Driedger (Charleswood): Mr. Speaker, today we learned about another example of this government's refusal to be open and transparent about patient safety. The *Winnipeg Free Press* reported that between July of 2007 and March 2008, seven critical incident investigations into serious diagnostic errors and botched tests were under way. Yet, in March of 2008, while these investigations were under way, the CEO of Diagnostic Services of Manitoba said that any diagnostic errors were extremely unlikely.

Given that there were at least seven critical incident investigations under way at that time, can the Minister of Health explain why she failed to correct this information when it was first put forward?

Hon. Theresa Oswald (Minister of Health): I can let the member know that during the time in question there were seven critical incidents related to diagnostic errors that were being investigated. I can say that this affected approximately 30 to 40 patients out of approximately 7 million patient samples that were done during that time. I believe, arithmetically speaking, that's less than one one-thousandth of a percent of the patient samples.

Having said that, Mr. Speaker, one error, one man, one woman, one child, that's too many. That's why we're doing these investigations to stop these mistakes from happening again.

*(14:30)

Mrs. Driedger: Mr. Speaker, these are serious issues. We learned that groups of specimens were lost, some patients didn't receive a complete diagnosis, another patient didn't receive appropriate antibiotics and that one woman may have had an unnecessary mastectomy. Yet the *Winnipeg Free Press* had to complain to the Ombudsman before this government would release the information.

I asked the minister this very issue on May 6 of this year and the minister said at that time, and I quote: We'll keep the public updated as we go forward. Well, instead of keeping her promise, why did she allow Manitobans to believe that there was nothing wrong with the Province's pathology program, that her health-care system was stellar?

Ms. Oswald: Mr. Speaker, it affords me an opportunity to correct the record of what the member is referring to. The member asked me some questions during an investigation some time ago into a specific pathologist's performance, and, indeed, we have said that we would, during that time, keep people informed of what was going on. We did just that.

We know that what happened in Newfoundland and New Brunswick, where thousands and thousands of errors of tests were not made public, was a very serious problem. Dr. Andrew Padmos, the CEO of the Royal College of Physicians and Surgeons of Canada, related to that time that we're speaking of, said that there's been many aspects of the way Winnipeg handled this situation that have been exemplary. We went out early; we went out in an

abundance of caution and we ensured that people had information. The member opposite is just—

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Mrs. Driedger: Mr. Speaker, this incident is just one more in a pattern where this NDP government refuses to go public with important information about patient safety. There's a pattern forming here with this government.

The Minister of Health says that everything is stellar. Meanwhile, the death of Brian Sinclair wasn't disclosed until a front-line member leaked it to the media. Manitobans weren't told about the re-use of blood-sampling devices until almost two months after the mistake was revealed. Details about the death of Bailey Esliger following a routine surgery weren't even shared with her family in a timely manner.

So I'd like to ask this Minister of Health: Why does she put media management and spin control ahead of patient care?

Ms. Oswald: Mr. Speaker, the reporting of critical incidents is explicitly clear in the legislation, to whom information shall be given and when it shall be given. The members opposite voted in favour of that legislation, both the official opposition and the members for Inkster and River Heights.

Certainly we want to make sure that we go forward in learning from critical incidents, not behaving as judge, jury and executioner like members opposite. That's how things got swept under the rug out of fear. We need to have a culture of openness, learning, sharing, as Judge Sinclair said, as Mr. Thomas said. That's what we're going to continue to do, Mr. Speaker.

Federal Coalition Government Government Response

Mr. Hugh McFadyen (Leader of the Official Opposition): Mr. Speaker, 48 days ago there was a federal election in Canada. Here in Manitoba, 49 percent of Manitobans voted for Prime Minister Harper and the Conservative Party. In that same election, 43 percent of Manitobans voted for the Liberal Party and the NDP, combined, and not a single Manitoban cast a vote for the separatist Bloc Québécois. There were nine Conservatives elected, four New Democrats and one Liberal.

We've been watching with interest over the last few days and, in particular, at the announcement made earlier today where Liberal and NDP

spokespersons have announced a coalition Cabinet made up of 18 Liberals and six New Democrats, a Cabinet dominated by Ontario and Québec with the purpose of maintaining political entitlements.

Now, I know the Premier is on Jack Layton's speed dial. Jack has been commenting through the weekend about the comments that he's had with leaders past and present across Canada.

I just want to ask the Premier: Did Jack give him a call over the weekend and, if so, what was the Premier's advice?

Hon. Gary Doer (Premier): Mr. Speaker, I probably had more conversations with Conservatives over the weekend. I don't know whether that ruins the member's thinking or not, but the bottom line is what's going on in Ottawa is not what's going on in Manitoba. We have a steady-as-you-go government. That's what we said we would do coming into this session. *[interjection]* Yes, the Member for Thompson (Mr. Ashton) says what goes on in Ottawa stays in Ottawa. Sometimes we've dealt with minority situations in the past and tried to do so in a constructive way. The events that are unfolding, I don't even know what's unfolded in the last 10 minutes, let alone the last hour.

So the bottom line is it's our job to deal with the government of the day and it's Prime Minister Harper. Last Friday I talked about the fact that his economic statement included a recommendation we had made about the registered retirement savings plan. I also talked about the fact that it also had the issue of pension solvency, somewhat contrary to the member opposite, Mr. Speaker.

But the events over the weekend and before that and what will subsequently happen, we're getting ready for a First Ministers' meeting sometime in early January on the economy. We expect to be invited by the Prime Minister to that meeting and we're going to focus all our attention on ideas for Manitobans. The member opposite, I know, loves the back rooms. In fact, I think he came from the back rooms. He came from the back rooms so he—*[interjection]* Oh, I touched a nerve. I touched a backroom nerve. I'm sorry, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. McFadyen: Mr. Speaker, I used to think I knew a lot about Manitoba political history. I was surprised to learn at the federal Conservative convention a couple of weeks ago that not only did the Leader of the NDP at one time want to run for the provincial Conservatives but he actually tried to run for the

federal Conservatives in 1984, but they couldn't arrange a nomination meeting, and so he went to the other end of the spectrum and here we are today.

Now, I know about his conversations with Conservatives over the weekend, but we do note that in the past Jack Layton has made a big deal out of his close relationship with the Manitoba NDP Premier. He said to CBC a couple of years ago, and I quote: I just got off the phone with the Manitoba NDP Leader and he's saying, you know, this narrow, so-called Romanow gap is just not going to wash. We have to go for full support, so he's really encouraging us to stay strong.

On the current Manitoba NDP Web site, it says: The Manitoba NDP is proud to support Jack Layton and tonight I want to reiterate our support for him and the federal caucus and the great work they're doing in Ottawa for Canadians. That was the NDP provincial leader on September 8, 2006.

I want to ask the Premier because it's an important issue for lots of Canadians. We have a major debate going across the country. People are weighing in on this debate. We have a coalition of Ontario and Québec coming together to try to overturn the results of the election in order to maintain political entitlements. I'm sure, based on past comments, that the Premier remains on Jack's speed-dial list, hasn't been downgraded to just the Christmas card list, and we're curious, Mr. Speaker, what advice and encouragement did he give Jack Layton over the weekend on the coalition?

Mr. Doer: Mr. Speaker, there are lots of issues in the preamble, but I would point out—

An Honourable Member: What did Jack promise you?

Mr. Doer: That I can be Premier of Manitoba, and if the members are paranoid, Mr. Speaker—

Mr. Speaker, the obvious fact is I had an NDP sign on my lawn. I assume the member opposite had a Conservative sign, not a Progressive Conservative sign, on his lawn. He only has that for the provincial election. So, yeah, we do have actually the same name, unlike members opposite. I know he didn't take a position when the Reform was running against the Conservatives. You know, that's okay.

Mr. Speaker, let me say that it is important for the Premier of Manitoba to speak for the people of Manitoba. When Minister Dion brought in the Clarity Act, I supported it. The federal NDP didn't.

When I was at the NDP convention 18 months ago, I spoke about Kyoto and other things, and the media scrummed about Afghanistan. Obviously I had a different view on Afghanistan than Mr. Layton.

So the bottom line is we have obviously the view of similarity; for example, on the Wheat Board, letting farmers have a vote on the Wheat Board. We have differences on the Clarity Act, but my job is to call it like I see it for Manitoba, and that's what we'll continue to do as government, Mr. Speaker.

*(14:40)

Mr. McFadyen: I do appreciate that the conciliatory tone from the Premier does contrast sharply with the tone of the comments made by his Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs (Mr. Ashton) in this House about the federal Conservatives and his scathing attack, which has gone down very badly in Ottawa and made it more difficult for Manitoba to represent itself well in its dealings with the current federal government. But I do appreciate the fact that the Premier has adopted—I think, Mr. Speaker, it was even more partisan than the speeches his daughter's been giving in Ottawa, the ones given by the Minister for Intergovernmental Affairs, and she's a federal parliamentarian.

Now I want to ask the Premier, though, because it is a significant issue and a major debate, and the opinions of all Canadians will come to bear on what ultimately happens over the coming days: Do the people of Manitoba have the right to know that the Premier is saying the same thing in his conversations with Jack Layton over the weekend as what he's saying in public today, or does Jack just call him for campaign tips and leave him off the list when it's to discuss major issues facing the country?

Mr. Doer: I would suggest to the member opposite I said we have lots of calls, and lots of people have had lots of calls over the last number of days. It's also important—I was out at volleyball games this weekend enjoying some of the games with my kids, and it's also very important to listen to people in those events. We talk a lot here and we should probably listen a lot outside of here.

Mr. Speaker, there is a lot of concern about where Canada is going right now in terms of the economy. That is not something dissimilar to the United States and to Europe and to Asia. I think that it's important—we've suggested that people don't want—they want steady, predictable government. They want steady decision making. They don't want

partisan—I think you've heard me before talk about the partisanship.

I think that today in the United States you see people from different political parties appointed to the Obama security team. One, Janet Napolitano, the former governor of Arizona or still governor of Arizona, spoke last year at a climate change meeting we had, a person we have a lot of respect for.

I think that's the kind of tone we would like to see in Canada. Hopefully, they can get there in Ottawa.

Potash Development Site (Russell) Investment from BHP Billiton

Mr. Leonard Derkach (Russell): In February of 2007, Energy and Mines Minister in a press release announced that BHP Billiton, a global mining company, would be investing up to \$15 million in potash exploration and potential in the Russell area. Since then the Saskatchewan government and the Province of Saskatchewan has moved aggressively ahead in not only looking at the potential of a mine but, indeed, have started construction of a mine just south of Langenburg.

I'd like to ask the minister: How much of the \$15 million has BHP Billiton spent to date and what is the activity report that the minister could share with Manitobans on the potash development site in Russell?

Hon. Jim Rondeau (Minister of Science, Technology, Energy and Mines): Mr. Speaker, I'm pleased to let all members know that we had a very good year in exploration last year in the mining industry. Actually we were at about \$120 million in exploration which is very good.

The other thing is in that area alone we've had companies that have had exploration. They've drilled holes, exploration holes to help to find their product. They also went through, starting to do the amassing of land and moving forward with the feasibility.

So what we're doing, Mr. Speaker, is we're working with our partners, with the companies, to make sure that we have a good mining regime, that we have additional exploration, and what we're trying to do is continue to open new mines. I'd like to invite the members opposite to come and see the newest mine in Manitoba, Bucko mine, open in Wabowden, and it's a good hit. I know they didn't open while—

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

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

Convalescent Home of Winnipeg Christmas Tea

Ms. Jennifer Howard (Fort Rouge): Mr. Speaker, this weekend I was fortunate to attend the annual Christmas Tea and Craft Sale at the Convalescent Home of Winnipeg. It was a wonderful event filled with the spirit and joy of the season.

The recently renovated main floor was filled with residents enjoying seasonal treats with their families in beautifully decorated surroundings. A wide array of crafts and baking were offered for sale. Of special note are the handmade angel centrepieces that adorned every table, lovingly crafted and donated by one of the many dedicated staff members.

The Convalescent Home of Winnipeg is known as Manitoba's first personal care home, founded in 1883 and currently providing care to 84 residents. The home describes its mission as committed to performing small wonders. This was certainly evident in the numbers of staff who cheerfully volunteered to serve tea, run raffle and auction tables and greet visitors.

I enjoyed the opportunity to chat with residents who were clearly thrilled to be part of all the activity. One lady, who introduced herself as Katherine, told me how much she enjoyed living at the Convalescent Home because, in her words: The food is always good and I sleep well.

What better endorsement could there be, Mr. Speaker?

I would like to thank the board, staff and volunteers who spent months planning and working together to make the tea a success. I would also like to thank Sharon Wilms, director of care, for her warm welcome and hospitality. This was my first visit to the Convalescent Home but will not be my last.

Many of us in this Chamber have loved ones who benefit from the wonderful job that personal care homes do in creating a family-like environment for residents. At this time of year, it seems fitting for us all to express our gratitude to these incredible men and women. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Association of Manitoba Municipalities Lifetime Membership Award

Mr. Blaine Pedersen (Carman): Last Wednesday evening, the Association of Manitoba Municipalities presented the Member for Ste. Rose (Mr. Briese) an honorary life membership in recognition of his long and dedicated service to municipal government in Manitoba.

The Member for Ste. Rose served as a councillor for the R.M. of Langford from 1986 to 2006, and, for eight of those 20 years, served as deputy reeve. He served on the board of the Union of Manitoba Municipalities from 1992 to '98. The member served as vice-president, then president of the AMM for three years ending in 2004.

The member was instrumental as a committee member in the formation of the AMM from its predecessor, the UMM. He is also a former director of the Federation of Canadian Municipalities.

The member's dedication to Manitoba municipal issues becomes very evident when the member tells of visiting every municipality in this province and his ability to analyze issues and work to resolving these issues in a co-operative, constructive manner.

Since 1975, the member has operated a farm in the R.M. of Langford. He is the fourth generation to operate the grain and cattle operation.

The Member for Ste. Rose was awarded the Conservation Farm Family Award in 1996 and the prestigious Environmental Stewardship Award in 1997. This man practises what many others can only preach.

The Member for Ste. Rose has served on many committees and boards, including the following: Prairie Grain Roads committee, the infrastructure selection committee, Assiniboine River Management Committee, the Assiniboine delta aquifer board, the Manitoba Tire Stewardship Board and the Manitoba Community Services board.

Of course, the pinnacle of his dedication to Manitoba was his election as the Member for Ste. Rose to this Assembly in May of 2007.

On behalf of members of the Legislative Assembly, I congratulate the Member for Ste. Rose on receiving an honorary life membership from the AMM in recognition of his long and dedicated service to Manitoba municipalities. Thank you.

* (14:50)

Sikh Holy Scripture—300th Anniversary

Mr. Mohinder Saran (The Maples): Mr. Speaker, I rise today to speak about an event important to my heart and the East Indian community. Three hundred years ago, in 1708, the Holy Scriptures of the Sikhs, the *Sri Guru Granth Sahib Ji* was named the eternal guru of Sikhism. The text is regarded by Sikhs around the world as a living embodiment of the Ten Gurus that preceded it.

The *Sri Guru Granth Sahib Ji* was composed over a 200-year period from 1469 to 1708. The final scripture was compiled by the tenth guru, Sri Guru Gobind Singh Ji and contains 1,430 pages. It is written in at least five dialects and is the first religious book which contains the writings of persons belonging to different communities, castes and diverse regions of the country. It incorporates and sanctifies the writings of holy men of different faith with hymns from Hindu saints, Muslim Sufis and Sikhs. This is why the language of the *Sri Guru Granth Sahib Ji* is a mixture of many different languages in India.

Although the anniversary date is in October, the Sikh community in Manitoba celebrated this milestone anniversary with a procession that began and ended at the steps of the Manitoba Legislature on August 13, 2008. Thousands of Sikhs gathered to pay their respects to the eleventh and eternal Guru. It was a remarkable gathering of the community.

Last month was also the birth month of Sri Guru Nanak Dev Ji, the founder of Sikhism. Last year I spoke about his teachings on equality for all human beings. Today I would like to emphasize again that we can all learn from his teachings and those of *Sri Guru Granth Sahib Ji*. It is a sacred source of wisdom and guidance and seeks universal peace and the good of all mankind. The *Sri Guru Granth Sahib Ji* stresses the democratic way of life and equality of all people, all values that we hold sacred in this country, province and Legislature. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Alexander School—40th Anniversary

Mrs. Leanne Rowat (Minnedosa): The Alexander School recently celebrated 40 years of operation. I would like to congratulate the school, its employees and the students on the success over the past four decades.

As one of Brandon School Division's three rural schools, Alexander School has been providing a nurturing environment in excess of the 40 years.

Current principal, Barbara Miller, noted the huge successes that the students, school and community has had. The K to 8 school's TLC, teaching, learning and caring philosophy, has educated many students over the years.

Anniversary celebrations were held in Alexander, which were attended by former and current staff and students. Displays chronicled the building's history. Many familiar faces walked the halls of the close-knit school. The school's anniversary coincided with the R.M. of Whitehead's 125th anniversary weekend.

The first school in Alexander was built in 1886, which was a one-room schoolhouse. A three-room schoolhouse replaced this in 1892 at the site of the present school. In 1911, expansion was necessary and the town built a third school with six rooms. In 1967, Alexander joined the Brandon School Division and the current school building was erected.

Staff at Alexander School are committed to providing the students with a meaningful learning experience.

I had the opportunity to attend an I Love to Read function at the school and I was told ahead of time that it was pyjama day, so I did arrive in my pyjamas and participated in the activities that day.

A partnership between family, school and the community contributes to the success of the school in this rural setting. Many parents choose to send their children to the very school where they themselves were educated.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to acknowledge the 40-year contribution that Alexander School has made towards the community. Congratulations to the present and past Alexander School staff that have educated students and prepared them for the future. Thank you.

William and Shirley Loewen

Ms. Marilyn Brick (St. Norbert): I rise in the House today to talk about a couple from St. Norbert who have given an extraordinary amount of their time and commitment to their community and to the city of Winnipeg.

William and Shirley Loewen have provided leadership, expertise, direction and financial support to the Winnipeg Symphony Orchestra for more than 20 years.

Shirley has been an active member of the women's committee and a participant and leader in many special events and programs over the years.

William, better known to the people of St. Norbert as Bill, has served on committees and as a board member and president of the Winnipeg Symphony Orchestra.

In 1998, Bill was the recipient of the WSO Golden Baton Award for his exceptional contribution to the WSO and to the arts community in Winnipeg and across Canada.

Over the years, the WSO has benefited from his time, wisdom and significant philanthropy. Bill and Shirley Loewen, working through the W.H. and S.E. Loewen Foundation, have also provided generous financial support to the WSO over many years. Their foundation commissioned numerous works for the New Music Festival and their company, TelPay, was the title sponsor for the 2007 New Music Festival.

On September 27, 2008, the board president of the Winnipeg Symphony Orchestra officially recognized these two outstanding supporters with the position of director emeritus of the WSO. Mr. Speaker, Bill and Shirley Loewen have been outstanding supporters of the arts in the province and in the country. Bill is a member of the Order of Canada and both Shirley and Bill have an honorary doctorate from the University of Winnipeg.

Mr. Speaker, the arts is fundamental to building culture. Music is an expression of our soul and who we are as a people. I would say that I'm very proud to commend the Winnipeg Symphony Orchestra on their contributions to the province and to recognize this extraordinary couple who willingly contribute their talents to the community of St. Norbert and to the province of Manitoba. Thank you.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

GOVERNMENT BUSINESS

THRONE SPEECH

(Seventh Day of Debate)

Mr. Speaker: Resume adjourned debate on the proposed motion of the honourable Member for 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 amendment thereto.

Standing in the name of the honourable Minister for Competitiveness, Training and Trade (Mr. Swan), who has 21 minutes remaining.

Hon. Andrew Swan (Minister of Competitiveness, Training and Trade): Mr. Speaker, I was able to put some comments on the record on Friday morning about some of the investments we are making to create a better work force here in Manitoba so that Manitoba workers and Manitoba companies can continue to make this the best possible environment for business.

Now, I'd been speaking, just when time ran out, about the world-class facility we're building, the Len Evans Centre for Trades and Technology at Assiniboine Community College in Brandon. It's a pleasure to drive by and see that site taking shape. Of course, it's taking place next door to the world-class culinary arts program, which was another great investment of our government to build the best work force we can.

As was stated in the Throne Speech, we are making further additions and further upgrades to campuses for universities and colleges across Manitoba. I'm very excited, Mr. Speaker, that we'll be adding new buildings to the University College of the North's campuses in The Pas and Thompson. It's going to be very exciting to see construction beginning on the Richardson College for the Environment and Science complex at the University of Winnipeg, and also a new residence to be built at the University of Manitoba as part of their ongoing project, Domino project.

Of course, at Brandon University, construction will begin soon on a new physical plant. In addition to making a true investment in our workers, we're also putting forward capital investments to improve universities and colleges across the province.

Now, I'm very pleased as well that we'll be placing special emphasis on Aboriginal training programs. This was recommended by the Premier's Economic Advisory Council's Summit on Aboriginal Business Development and Increasing the Aboriginal Workforce. In response to a key recommendation of this summit, I was very pleased, immediately following the Throne Speech, to be able to announce the northern essential skills initiative which is being launched this year.

The Northern Essential Skills Training Initiative is a \$4.5-million program which will support readiness for two tracks. First of all, for apprenticeship, employment as an apprentice, or trades qualification, assisting workers to challenge the national Red Seal exams. This initiative will place strong emphasis on promoting four occupations that northern industry has told us are in very, very high demand, those being electrician, industrial mechanic, welder, and instrumentation. It's our goal, Mr. Speaker, that 300 people will be trained through the initiative. People interested in training will be able to work with the northern companies as well as other partners to make sure they get the best training they possibly can.

Indeed, there are challenges in the north in terms of getting enough workers to satisfy the growing needs of northern firms as they continue, whether it's mining, whether it's forestry, whether it's hydro, and all the great things that are happening in northern Manitoba.

This year, I was very pleased that a new Northern Manitoba Sector Council was created to address this situation in Manitoba's north. In the coming year, of course, the Northern Development Strategy will be refocussed with strong advice from the Northern Manitoba Sector Council, with advice from First Nations, with advice from labour, with advice from communities on how we can best focus our efforts to improve the status of the north as much as we possibly can.

*(15:00)

I'm also very excited, in the Throne Speech was mention of a dedicated Métis Economic Development Fund which will be set up in partnership with the Manitoba Métis Federation. Again, we'll be working in partnership with the MMF, with businesses, with our universities and colleges and, of course, with communities to make sure that our investments are targeted for the best possible results.

I'm also very excited, of course, that the new UCN training program for the mining sector will be established in Flin Flon. There'll be other announcements coming forward on what we can do to assist the mining sector as it continues to expand and build in Manitoba.

So certainly, in terms of investments in our work force, there's a lot, I think, to give all Manitobans joy from this Throne Speech, that we're continuing to move ahead.

We also are working to make Manitoba the most competitive place we can for the establishment, for the expansion, for the retention of businesses. I was very pleased, Mr. Speaker, the Throne Speech confirmed a number of issues our government is working on to make sure that businesses in Manitoba are as competitive as they can be and to make sure they've access to credit for new or ongoing ventures.

I'd already mentioned on Friday that the top issue for businesses that I've spoken to, for sector councils I've spoken to, is work-force development. With events in the world, we are also hearing from businesses that access to credit is a concern. Although some companies are reporting no difficulties at all, there are others saying that credit may become tighter. So we've taken a number of steps in the Throne Speech—and we will in the year to come—to make it easier for businesses to attract capital.

As the first step is the down payment—if I could call it—to promote investment and innovation and productivity, I was very pleased that our government eliminated the capital tax for manufacturers this year. In fact, as of July 1, 2008, there was one less tax for manufacturing firms in Manitoba. Of course, we are proceeding with the next stage in our multi-year phase-out of the capital tax for other businesses.

I'm also very pleased that the Throne Speech spoke to direct provincial support for innovation. Manitoba currently supports development and implementation of new technologies through the feasibility studies and technology-commercialization programs. In 2009, our government will increase the provincial share of these programs from 50 percent up to 75 percent and, in recognition of credit-access challenges, will now provide the funding up front.

I'm also very pleased that our government will appoint a Manitoba council and innovation to develop new commercialization strategies for Manitoba and for stronger relationships between researchers, the investment sector and entrepreneurs.

So, truly, we're bringing together the government, we're bringing together industry, we're bringing together our universities and colleges as, here in Manitoba, we look to the future and try to promote the best possible ability for companies to come up with new ideas and to bring them on to the markets.

Last year, we introduced the very successful Community Enterprise Investment Tax Credit.

Indeed, it was so successful that the program was oversubscribed with really very little advertising on the part of the government. I'm very pleased that the Throne Speech confirms that, in 2009, the budget of this tax-credit program will be doubled.

In 2008, the first year of operation, the \$5-million program leveraged almost \$17 million in share-capital for Manitoba companies. The Province will contribute \$10 million to the credit program this year, which we believe will leverage over \$33 million in share-capital for good projects across the province as we move into the future.

I'm also very pleased with the support we're able to provide to entrepreneurs. The maximum loan guarantee under the Business Start Program will be raised from \$20,000 to \$30,000 and the guarantee will be made available to firms that have been operating for up to one year.

In addition to these supports currently available, Mr. Speaker, we'll also be providing additional supports to farmers under the Operating Credit Guarantee program, a new credit-guarantee program to assist non-agricultural rural enterprises.

I'm also very pleased, Mr. Speaker, that we've been able to take meaningful action to reduce tax rates for Manitoba businesses. Of course, when this government took power in 1999, the corporate income tax stood at 17 percent, the highest in the country. As of January 1, 2009, that tax rate will drop to 12 percent, making Manitoba's corporate tax one of the lowest in the entire country.

For small businesses, again when this government took power in 1999, Manitoba unfortunately had the highest small-business tax in the entire country. We've increased the threshold for this small-business tax to \$400,000 of after-tax earnings and we've decreased the small-business tax rate from 8 percent down to 2 percent. I'm very pleased that, on January 1, 2009, the Manitoba small-business tax rate will drop to 1 percent, making this the most cost-effective place to do business for any small business in the entire country.

So, certainly, there are many other things that I've been very pleased to be involved with as minister. I look forward to the signing of a new economic partnership agreement with the federal government, whoever that federal government may be in the weeks and months ahead. Certainly, the previous economic partnership agreement has been very worthwhile. It's been good for the federal

government, it's been good for the provincial government, and it's been great for Manitoba companies. I look at some of the by-products of that agreement, such as the Composites Innovation Centre which is bringing together skilled researchers, it's bringing together great Manitoba companies, it's bringing together great young researchers, engineers, others who have expertise to develop new products whether it's in the aerospace industry, whether it's in the manufacturing industry. I know my friend the MLA for Radisson speaks very passionately about the need for Manitoba to pursue futuristic, modern industries and modern products, and I'm very happy to have the Member for Radisson (Mr. Jha) with me as we move ahead and we bring Manitoba forward with the development of great projects out at the centre.

Ms. Bonnie Korzeniowski, Deputy Speaker, in the Chair

As well, the Vehicle Technology Centre is another great enterprise. Again, a partnership between industry, between the universities and indeed, government, as companies are able to work together to form consortiums to work together to build better products, have better materials and make Manitoba that much more effective.

As I've said in this House, and as I've said in many events with the business community, I'm very pleased that Manitoba companies, as the manufacturers and exporters advertising campaign says, they truly do dare to compete and I'm very pleased that Manitoba companies do compete on the world stage and, indeed, they do win.

Just this morning I had a chance to be out at the new EDS customer service centre with the honourable Minister of Science, Technology, Energy and Mines (Mr. Rondeau). Of course EDS looked at the entire world and in deciding where to place their new centre, picked Winnipeg as the most effective place where they could be guaranteed a solid and strong work force. They could be guaranteed a competitive environment, and I'm going to be very pleased to see as many as a thousand jobs come to EDS in the next three or four years.

Certainly, there are other places where Manitoba businesses are competing and winning. As I look around the province—of course I had the chance to tour the 3M plant in Morden which, again, is competing not just against other factories from other businesses, but is competing internally against all of the 3M plants in the world. Again, Manitoba was

chosen as a site for a major expansion of that plant which is up and running and, indeed, in Morden, and Winkler and the Pembina Valley, the difficulty isn't in winning the work, the difficulty is making sure we have enough workers to do the work.

I can also speak to the great things that are happening out at aerospace companies such as Boeing. You know it wasn't that long ago, Madam Deputy Speaker, that a company like Boeing, their role was to build whatever it was Seattle sent them. They'd receive the blueprints from the head office in Seattle and workers here would go ahead and build the parts. That facility in Winnipeg is now a design-and-build facility. Boeing internationally recognizes not just the cost effectiveness of carrying on business in Manitoba, but the knowledge expertise that we have here in Manitoba. It's very exciting as Manitoba engineers, Manitoba engineering technologists, Manitoba workers build the new 787 Boeing Dreamliner. It's a very exciting thing for this province as we move forward.

I also want to put a few words on the record on another major initiative that is going to be very exciting as we go forward. I'm very pleased that Manitoba is moving forward with the vision developed by our business leaders, supported by our labour leaders, supported by our community leaders in establishing CentrePort Canada, Manitoba's inland port. Our government, along with our federal government partners and our municipal partners, is committed to investing in an infrastructure plan for a 20,000-acre inland port area and upgrading the transportation corridors that connect Manitoba to export markets around the globe. Certainly, I'm very pleased our government is taking all steps we can to ensure the competitiveness of CentrePort, and beginning July 1, 2009, Manitoba will reduce the aviation fuel tax for cargo flights from 3.2 cents per litre to 1.5 cents per litre and also expand the tax exemption for international flights to include all cargo flights to and from the United States. You know, Madam Deputy Speaker, I think all members in this House, whatever their political stripe, are supportive of CentrePort. I expect that we'll continue work together to make sure that CentrePort is a reality, that as many businesses as possible relocate or locate in CentrePort. It'll be a very, very exciting thing for Manitoba as we go forward.

*(15:10)

I want to speak, finally, on Manitoba's population. I was very proud to host an event at

Sargent Park School in the great constituency of Minto, as we celebrated Manitoba passing the 1.2-million population mark earlier this year. Indeed, Manitoba is enjoying its greatest population growth in 30 years, and, finally, after many, many years, population growth which is exceeding the overall growth of Canada. So it's very exciting. Manitoba actually has one of the youngest populations in all of Canada, fuelled by immigration from people coming from all over the world as well as our youthful and dynamic Aboriginal population.

Just last Friday afternoon, as is often the case for me when I go to my constituency office, I had the pleasure of meeting with nine families, all of whom have their wishes to bring their family and their friends to Manitoba under Manitoba's terrific Provincial Nominee Program. Indeed, our new Canadians are sometimes our best ambassadors in terms of promoting our province as a place of hope and a place of opportunity.

Finally, I know there have been many speakers more eloquent, more articulate than I about the loss of Oscar Lathlin, our leader—a terrific member of the Legislature for The Pas, a leader within the Aboriginal community. Certainly, Oscar Lathlin was a man who cared deeply about the north, who cared deeply about Aboriginal people and cared deeply about the province of Manitoba. Indeed, we will miss Oscar. I think all of us, on our side of the House anyway, will pledge to do whatever we can to continue to fulfil Oscar's legacy of providing more opportunities for Aboriginal people, for northerners, for all Manitobans to get the best education they can, to get the best employment they can and to be part of Manitoba moving forward. Every part of this province is entitled to share in the economic benefits that we are enjoying in this province, and I do promise to do what I can to make sure that Oscar Lathlin's memory is a big part of that.

So I do thank you, Madam Deputy Speaker, for the chance to put some comments on the record. I will certainly be voting in support of a Throne Speech which confirms the great things going on in this great province.

Mrs. Leanne Rowat (Minnedosa): Madam Deputy Speaker, I'm pleased to stand here today to put my thoughts on the record with regard to the Throne Speech but, more importantly, to put my comments on the record with regard to the excellent amendments that were shared by our leader last week with regard to ways to improve the Throne Speech

that was presented by the Lieutenant-Governor a week and a bit ago.

To begin, I wish to express my sincere condolences to the family of the late Oscar Lathlin and especially so to his wife, Leona. The days ahead will continue to be difficult for the family but as time goes by I wish that the memories that the family have will work in comfort for them as they've relied on the presence of his strength and friendship over the years.

So, as the advocate for Aboriginal and Northern Affairs on this side of the House, I wish to indicate to the family that I'll miss the debates and the discussions that I've had with the Member for The Pas. I believe that the issues that we both agreed upon such as education, Child and Family Services, youth suicides, will continue to be important issues that we will debate and bring forward in this Legislature. I believe that these very important social and economic issues will see strong benefits move forward and that we can see a stronger future for all Manitobans but specifically for First Nations, Aboriginal and Métis families in the future.

Today is World AIDS Day, and I also want to pay tribute to a special person to the family that I've married into. On April 19, 1986, at the age of 30, Scott Rowat passed away from complications from AIDS, or HIV. On that day, the family was by his side and Scott was very strong and spoke of what he did miss and what he has missed in watching his nieces and nephews come into this world and grow. At the time, there was only Jenna with us as a niece, but as years went by, the family grew, and with that came Kailly, Savanna, Tess, Cameron, and Mackenzie. I think that we often reflect as a family on what Scott has missed, because the Rowat family, as the Member for La Verendrye (Mr. Lemieux) knows, he knows the Rowat family and the years past. He knows that this family loved life and played hard, and Scott was one that did that tenfold.

Scott travelled Africa in his late 20s and kept a journal. We have all read his notes and his thoughts during that period of time. He spoke of this disease that was still very unknown to the world. He spoke of this disease and spoke of it if and when it infected humans, it would be deadly, not realizing that he himself would be taken from this world by that disease.

Scott loved sports. He was a strong football player. Scott's memory came to us this fall when my son, Cameron, had the opportunity to play football

for the Souris Sabres. He had the opportunity, as a grade 9 student, to be the so-called backup quarterback for the senior high or the varsity football team. For reasons that sort of developed, he actually quarterbacked a whole three-quarters of a football game and did very well. Through the whole game, my husband said that he kept thinking of Scott and Scott's achievements in football and how proud he would have been of his nephew during that period of time.

So I want to say that today, World AIDS Day, is a day that in the Rowat family is a very sad day. It brings back a lot of what ifs and too bads and unfortunates, and gives my children a very keen understanding of what this day is about and how sad this is that a young person, just at the beginning of his life, would be taken, and how my children have missed the opportunity of knowing Uncle Scott. So I think that the dedications that were provided today do speak volumes to many of us in this House.

Madam Deputy Speaker, back to the debate of the Throne Speech. I would like to speak to the issues that are facing many of the communities in Westman and, in particular, the Minnedosa constituency which I represent. Speaking again with regard to rural Manitoba, I was very disappointed at the lack of significance that was placed by this government on rural Manitoba.

In the midst of a global financial crisis, this government has actually gone on a tangent of ignoring what is in front of them. I think that this government could have done what other provinces have done, like British Columbia and Alberta, and other provinces, and provided a very clear economic strategy. I feel that what this government has done through their Throne Speech were a lot of repeat press releases, repeat initiatives that have been on the table for a number of years.

I had four students from Souris School attend the Throne Speech. I had given them a copy of the Throne Speech from the year past. So one of the first things that they had said to me when I met them out of the Chamber was a lot of that was said last year. They said it was all in the same document. I said, that's true and that's what our concern is, that there doesn't seem to be a vision from this government about moving forward and creating new and bold ideas.

*(15:20)

So I think that not only do we see that as legislators, but the public, who have taken an interest in where this government is going in the future. It failed the youth, in my school anyway, in Souris, and failed to show that there was going to be some exciting and bold ideas coming forward.

Agriculture. At challenging times like these, it's important the government provide leadership, and what the agriculture producers have seen from this government in the years that I've been an MLA have been programs that play catch up, evade the issues, put out releases but don't follow through, and I think that agriculture producers were very interested in hearing what the government would be saying in their Throne Speech. Especially with a competitive global marketplace for their product, they were really hoping that this government would outline a strategy that would ensure Manitoba producers that they could remain competitive.

We've been asking the government for months to provide some type of a strategy for the livestock producers, especially the cattle and pork producers, and show that this government really does have a vision and does support that industry. But instead, what we heard was silence from this government. The Throne Speech spoke not a word on the ongoing trade challenges affecting the livestock sector, and the silence was deafening on the issues of the country-of-origin labelling. So does this government not know or care about the disturbing facts being shared by the agriculture industry?

There was an article in the *Brandon Sun* on November 29 and the headline read: "More stressed farmers forced to sell cattle" and it talks about the warnings that, by the end of this year, we're seeing a shrinkage of 20 percent in the industry. We just continue to see farmers, young farmers getting out of the industry where there doesn't seem to be any hope left for a lot of these young farmers. So they've actually decided to try living away from the farm and this has taken away from the young people staying in the communities where they love to be and staying on the land which they love to steward. I think that this government has again failed in so many ways with regard to rural and agriculture sectors.

Trade issues. There seems to be not a lot of comment or direction given from this government in that area and it continues to impact a number of industries. We heard on the radio today that Colombia is really looking at working with our producers, and I think that if this government really

cared about this they'll make sure that they're front and centre on that. I know the minister says that he's been down there, but we know that it takes more than press releases, it takes action. I think the producers are wanting to see some clear action from this government in making sure that this industry does receive the support that it deserves from this government. Our farm families need assurances that the provincial government is taking steps to exploring all possible options to help minimize the impact of this economic crisis, so we want to see a strong plan. We want to see a strategy, and we want to see some strong outcomes, not just press releases, but some real, real strategies that will pay dividends for our Manitobans.

I heard on the radio and I've been talking to people in the province of Alberta with regard to a strategy that they recently initiated which talks about a significant rural strategy. So they're looking at skills, they're looking at development and they're looking at creating jobs and promoting economic diversity. I think this is an area that the government should really be paying a stronger attention to.

In the areas of biofuels and wind power, Madam Deputy Speaker, there just doesn't seem to be a strong desire by this government to make things happen. You can have one ethanol plant which is, you know, nicely set up in Minnedosa. It was there before and this government did very little in supporting that initiative. I think that if it wasn't for that one industry already being set up there, I'm not sure whether this government could speak to it having an ethanol plant in this province.

I think that this government has dropped the ball in that area. There are a number of communities that have looked at ethanol as an alternative fuel source but also as a marketing source for grain. I think that, again, government was playing catch-up and just failed to follow through in its commitment to getting things done.

With regard to wind energy, I think that the re-announcement in St. Joseph sent very angry, shock waves through a lot of communities throughout Manitoba, who have put forward wind proposals and have heard three or four or five months ago about the St. Joseph project. A re-announcement by this government on that project—it is like opening up old wounds, Madam Deputy Speaker.

This government has to realize that, with 84 wind proposals being presented to this government

and to Manitoba Hydro, it was a missed opportunity. I think that this government has a lot of opportunity here to right a wrong. I think that we need to be looking outside of the box and, instead of looking at it in a monopoly sense, we need to be looking at the opportunities that can be shared throughout this province with a number of communities.

We need a government that's going to provide strong policies and workable strategies in this area. We need to engage the business community, but we also need to engage the rural communities, communities like the R.M. of Elton who have an excellent community wind-project concept.

I know that the Turtle Mountain area has Sustainable Ventures, has seen how things can go terribly wrong but I do believe that they are very optimistic and believe that they do have an opportunity to be a part of any future developments in the area of wind power.

So I encourage the government to really be proactive and work with the community and make sure that we see more than just press releases on past approved projects and actually see some development.

In my area in 2003, when I ran for the Minnedosa constituency as the Conservative candidate, the Premier was out in the R.M. of Odanah. There's a picture in the *Brandon Sun* and it's in one of my books. He's standing there, saying that Odanah is going to be the site of a future wind-power project. You know that didn't develop, Madam Deputy Speaker.

I know that Rolling River First Nations have said the same thing, that the Premier indicated to them that, yes, you have a great site. There should be no reason why that wouldn't be considered a possibility.

So again promises made, encouragement made with no follow-through, and all it does is create false hope and again some very serious concerns for my communities, Madam Deputy Speaker.

I do know that, even in the R.M. of Glenwood, the same type of thing where the community was meeting with government staff and the next day the announcement comes out that it's going to go to St. Joseph. Communities were being led along, even to the point where the announcement was within 24 hours—were led to believe that something was going to happen when that wasn't going to be.

So I really encourage the government to be more respectful of the communities that are making a concerted effort to do better economically and socially within their communities and move forward.

With regard to mining, the minister spoke earlier about the challenges in the north and I totally agree that there are some very serious challenges. Mining is the second-largest primary industry in Manitoba. It employs 6,400 people and accounts for 4 percent of our GDP and makes up 12.5 percent of our total annual exports and is the lifeblood to our northern economy.

*(15:30)

It's riparian industries, like mining, for predicted economic downturn, should be a top priority for this government. I think that industry was really looking for some type of light at the end of the tunnel, something that would indicate to them that they were being looked at and being respected for what they do.

I know that they've been appealing to the Province for a reduction in its taxes, and I'm encouraging the minister to continue those discussions and to see what can be done to continue keeping those industries within Manitoba and keeping them strong.

Exploration companies were planning to spend a hundred million dollars in Manitoba this year, and I think that there needs to be some certainty given to this industry so that those types of things can be continued, Madam Deputy Speaker.

In the Throne Speech, there was a mention of something that wasn't mentioned before, and that was the Northern Manitoba Sector Council. That was a council that was actually created over a year ago, and I think that what they provide as a mandate and a focus is very much what is required to make things happen in regard to providing skills and training for northerners. I believe that the industry is really needing this government's support in addressing the skill shortages that are so prevalent in those areas.

In speaking to the Northern Manitoba Sector Council a few months ago, they'd indicated that there's an urgent need for industry to create a strong partnership with the education system. So I'm hopeful that those types of programs, like the UCN mining program and others such as that, do come forward and do provide what is needed in skills shortages and do address the needs for northern Manitoba in that industry.

I also know that Manitoba Hydro, HudBay, Inco and Tolko are all part of the private-sector partners in that, and I do believe that, with federal dollars coming from Western Diversification for special projects, this initiative can actually provide some really positive outcomes.

My understanding is that there are probably in excess of 600 trades required in northern Manitoba, and I think that what this government needs to do is to ensure that the sector council is provided the supports that they need. I believe that this government has a great opportunity to provide the supports, both for the private industries that are in northern Manitoba, but also for the education sectors that are willing and able to provide much-needed skill development that is there.

With regard to highways, I know that the minister has indicated that there's going to be money put forward. I know that, in speaking to some people in some municipal councils, there was some concern that there was in excess of—and this is their number, and they said this came from the department—there was in excess of \$6 million left in this last fiscal budget. So I think that we have to make sure that initiatives and projects that are committed to actually do get done, Madam Deputy Speaker.

We have Highway 340 that would be more than willing to look at the \$6 million that was so-called left behind and would've been a great project to complete. It would've addressed, not only what PPCLI is looking at as a major infrastructure need for their soldiers, but also for a number of other highways, like 355 that needs a turning lane. Highway 10, I know there are some complications in completing that, but we really do need to see a long-term strategy that does address highway needs throughout the province.

I'm going to close now. I wanted to get into some of the other issues in my area, but I believe that my time is done. But I just want to say that I believe that the government had an opportunity to show strong leadership in the economic crisis that we're facing, and they did very little to assure Manitobans that they have their hand on the rudder and that they actually do know what they're doing with regard to the future of Manitoba and our financial challenges.

In closing, I encourage the government to work harder. There is much to do, but they seem to be going backward not forward. I really would like to see this government take a leadership stand and show the rest of this country that they do have the

gumption to be a have province, not a have-not province as we've been seeing over the last few years. Thank you.

Hon. Eric Robison (Minister of Culture, Heritage, Tourism and Sport): Allow me first of all to, like other speakers have done, acknowledge our table officers and the Chair, the Speaker of the House and the work that he has to do to allow us to carry on with the business for the good of the people of the province of Manitoba. Also our pages. I know that it's a very difficult task to ensure that all members are satisfied with what goes on inside this Chamber. Certainly, I want to convey my thank-yous to the table officers and the staff, including the Sergeant-at-Arms and others that are a part of this. Also the folks at Hansard. Indeed, their work is very difficult in what they have to do to ensure that our Legislature remains functioning each and every day as we come in here to make laws and make decisions that we feel are for the betterment of our people in the province of Manitoba.

I also want to say at the outset, Madam Deputy Speaker, that it is with the deepest regret that I look at an empty chair right in front of me where we lost not only a great person, but indeed a great legislator. A person that had a kind heart and had a lot of good things to say about people regardless of their opinions on certain issues. I dearly miss this person as all members in this Chamber do.

He was an MLA for a number of years since 1990 when he was first elected in September of that year and won every subsequent election since then until his untimely passing a very short while ago.

Oscar and I go back to the early '80s as young leaders in my capacity as a representative of the then Four Nations Confederacy, the forerunner to the Assembly of Manitoba Chiefs, as one of the vice-presidents and he, in his capacity of a leader in his own community as head of the Swampy Cree Tribal Council and also his other capacities.

He later moved on, of course, to the Department of Indian Affairs in an administrative role. I know he did a good job there, not only here in the province of Manitoba, but in the work that he had to do in the Northwest Territories and elsewhere that his job took him.

In 1985, he became the Chief of the Opaskwayak Cree Nation. I know he did a commendable job there because his commitment was always for economic development and educational

opportunities, both at the post-secondary level and also at the elementary and secondary levels.

He was truly a person that I could say had vision. In my dealings with him each and every day, not only in this Chamber, but prior to us becoming involved at the provincial level as representatives of our constituents, he for The Pas and myself for Rupertsland, we had several times, several moments to reflect back on our lives and the different experiences that we endeared and to talk about the things that most enlightened us.

I think that his biggest pride in his life was, in recent years, his granddaughter. I know he spent many hours with his granddaughter, and he spoke highly of his children, spoke highly of his extended family and his immediate family. I know he was very proud of the ones that are going to be laying the foundation in the years ahead. Of that I'm speaking of our young people and our children.

*(15:40)

I remember being in several difficult meetings with him with leaders in our province on complicated issues and he always had a way of being thoughtful on a lot of issues. I deeply respected his ability to do that, because sometimes my mindset is a little different than other people on some of these other issues.

Indeed, I think that, to sum up Oscar's life, it would have to be that he was a man who was honest; he was genuine and he was thoughtful. He was also caring toward people, no matter who they were and what they did in life. Even though there was sometimes disrespect thrown his way by members of the media—things about his attendance, things that sometimes were beyond his own doing—he was sometimes, unfortunately, portrayed as being lazy.

I resent that because not many people have the deep understanding that they didn't know enough about the man to make a decision on their own about what he really stood for in life.

So I will continue and my government colleagues will continue to work very seriously on the vision that he had and, in my capacity as the acting Minister of Aboriginal and Northern Affairs in the time ahead, to continue working on the vision that he had in improving the lives of Aboriginal people generally and for the people that live in northern Manitoba.

We're absolutely committed to that. I know that the Member for Thompson (Mr. Ashton), the Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs, spoke in detail about his relationship with Oscar. I can only say that my relationship has always been a positive one with Oscar. I respected him for his guidance and his understanding on certain things that I didn't fully understand or comprehend. I know that his legacy will carry on long after any of us are here.

So I just wanted to pay tribute in my own way, Madam Deputy Speaker, about this person that all of us are going to miss in the time to come. We've had every opportunity, of course, to convey our sincere condolences to his immediate family and his extended family at the funeral and also in the tribute that we had here in the Manitoba Legislature.

On the Throne Speech, I'm very proud to stand here again in support of the government's Throne Speech. We're absolutely committed to fulfilling one of the dreams of my brother, Oscar, and that is the University College of the North.

In the coming years, new additions and upgrades are going to be happening at the UCN campuses in The Pas and Thompson. A new building is going to be added to the UCN at the campuses in those two cities. A new UCN training program for the mining sector will also be established in Flin Flon and also the construction that's happening at Red River College where the new heavy equipment training facility is under way. This new facility will help train new Aboriginal and Métis students for various upcoming projects in Manitoba in the next 10 to 15 years, including Wuskwatim, Keeyask, Conawapa and highway projects, such as the permanent east-side road that we've been talking about.

I mentioned these right at the outset because these were things that Oscar was absolutely committed to. He wanted to see post-secondary education and training opportunities for Aboriginal people. Our government's absolutely committed to ensuring that these things unfold the way they should unfold in the time ahead.

With respect to the Premier's Economic Advisory Council, there's going to be a new emphasis placed on training programs, as recommended by the Premier's Economic Advisory Council on the summit, on the Aboriginal business development front and increasing the Aboriginal work force as well.

We're also responding to the summit in the Northern Essential Skills initiative that is going to be launched later this year. When you read the Throne Speech, of course, you'll notice that there is some emphasis on that as well. The initiative will provide industry-based training to Aboriginal people in northern residence, prior to entering the apprentice stream, and we're absolutely committed to that as well.

You would have read, too, that the new Northern Manitoba Sector Council was created to address the unprecedented situation in northern Manitoba, where the number of job openings now exceeds the number of people available to fill them. The new refocused mandate of the Northern Development Strategy will be able to initiate new strategies for training and community development. A new Métis Economic Development Fund will be set up to work with the Métis people of this province, and that will be done in partnership with the Manitoba Métis Federation.

Our investments include, of course, advancing the construction of major projects in all regions of our province. In northern Manitoba, of course, the projects will include new upgrades to Highway 6 and Highway 10, and improved roads for single-access communities, including what I just described earlier; the new UCN building in Thompson and an expansion of the UCN facilities in The Pas, including a new wellness centre—something, again, that Oscar was deeply committed to prior to his passing; new affordable housing in The Pas and Thompson, certainly something that we're committed to as well; new affordable housing in the Eastman area, which also has a growing population of not only Aboriginal people but, indeed, people that have moved to that part of our province; and a redevelopment of the Pine Falls Health Centre, the emergency unit at the Bethesda Hospital and upgrades to the Ste. Anne hospital. These are all things that we're planning on further describing in greater detail, Madam Deputy Speaker.

Something that I'm very proud of is the great work that the dialysis services that have been provided in Island Lake, particularly on the Garden Hill Reserve. We're obviously on target to meet the promise that was made in the 2007 election of building one in the Berens River area, and also in Hodgson and Gimli, to serve the residents that, unfortunately, require that kind of medical help.

Also, the construction of the east-side road. The construction of an east-side, all-weather road is a

major project that'll provide remote communities with the kind of access of goods and skills and services that most citizens of the province take for granted.

Now, I've heard members opposite describe and be critical of our government in taking a position on an east-side transmission line. What we fail to fully understand is that the east-side transmission line was opposed by the people that make a livelihood off the land, including trappers, the fisher people and the ones that are employed by the natural environment of the outdoors. We spoke with these people through a series of community meetings that were held a few years ago, and 100 percent of the communities said that they had no desire to build a transmission line down the east side of Lake Winnipeg, thus the decision was made.

What we have to understand is, through the area that an all-weather road is going to be constructed, starting in Hollow Water to Bloodvein and to Berens River, in fact, the road is already cut out because it accommodates the winter road requirements that we have every winter season. So there is going to be no additional damage to the land that the all-weather road is going to be constructed on. So that is something we should make clear for all members to understand.

* (15:50)

Those that have not taken the opportunity of travelling on the east side of Lake Winnipeg, particularly, on a winter road, and I want to welcome people to the opportunity of travelling on that winter road. I know, one time, a few years ago, the Member for Transcona (Mr. Reid) and I, and the Member for Thompson (Mr. Ashton), went to, I believe it was York Landing, and had a look at the winter road. From there, the Member for Transcona developed a better understanding of the winter road networks that we rely on, those of us that come from northern Manitoba, in order to get our supplies in there for the year. I also commend many of my colleagues on this side of the House that have taken the opportunity since they've been elected to have a look at the winter road and what that—and I know the Member for Thompson and I have probably travelled on the winter road systems in the province of Manitoba more than anybody else here, because that is how we get to visit our constituents, and also that is how we get to go to many of these communities.

A major opportunity, indeed, of the development and construction of an all-weather road on the east

side will provide jobs and training that will bridge into the construction projects slated for the coming decade as well. These are things that we certainly want to afford our people the opportunity of doing. Now, as part of the east-side road, how that will work is the model of the Manitoba Floodway Authority to develop relationships and partnerships with the communities on the east side for the construction of the all-weather road is what will take place. In our initial meetings, the Minister of Infrastructure and Transportation (Mr. Lemieux) and I and others and the Minister of Conservation (Mr. Struthers), in our initial dialogue with the leaders of those communities are absolutely committed, as we are, to ensuring that this occurs. That will only happen with their direct involvement right from the outset, and I'm convinced that we've done the necessary pre-work that is necessary to ensure that their participation is there right from the beginning.

Success of the floodway's project, Aboriginal set-aside program, will ensure that economic benefits from the road construction are shared by local residents. I call on all members in this Chamber, Madam Deputy Speaker, to work with us to address these long-standing issues including what we have to do here in calling upon the federal government, whichever way that shapes up in the next little while, to ensure that the federal government also makes an investment in to the province of Manitoba so that we can welcome the people that live on the east side of our province as part of the community of Manitoba.

With new power sales to Minnesota and Wisconsin, with respect to one of our economic drivers, with Manitoba Hydro, we will continue to move forward with building new hydro-electric infrastructure in northern Manitoba. This will be done in partnership with First Nations. No longer will we revisit the past of doing things and telling Aboriginal people about them later. We want to involve Aboriginal people right at the outset before proceeding. We've demonstrated this already, and we've taken a leadership role in ensuring that Aboriginal people, First Nations, are a part of any and all discussions relating to hydro development in northern Manitoba. These business and partnership arrangements are being made today with full participation of First Nations people.

The revenues from hydro exports will continue to help our province, benefiting them from having the lowest electricity rates in Canada and probably

the world. I was also happy this afternoon in joining with the Minister of Conservation in talking about the protection of our future. This afternoon, our government introduced the historic legislation which aims to protect our forests and provincial parks with The East Side Traditional Lands, Planning and Special Protected Areas Act, Bill 6. I really want to commend the Minister of Conservation on the hard work that he has done. I believe that this is something that we should all be proud of in the province of Manitoba and also about the logging that's going to be banned on a go-forward basis in provincial parks.

Co-operation with industry stakeholders will introduce a plan to phase out existing logging that has been taking place in our parks for many decades. On the east side, of course, the Minister of Conservation this afternoon talked about the new resources that will be invested to support the bid for a UNESCO World Heritage designation in that part of our province, the development of a sustainable ecotourism initiative in our province as well, and new legislation, that I just talked about, to give legal recognition to the planning and protection of First Nations traditional lands on the east side of Lake Winnipeg.

I know that we have a lot of work to do, Madam Deputy Speaker, with respect to issues that come up in the House periodically with respect to—suicide prevention is one—some of the social and socio-economic problems that continue to exist and plague our communities, and we're targetting obviously not only communities like Island Lake which is often in the news, but Shamattawa as well. There's some work going in there now to ensure that there is some attention paid to the community in working with the leadership and in trying to address the issue of suicides which, unfortunately, plague Aboriginal communities and have for the last 30, 40 years that I remember; something that we've been continuing to work on. Sometimes it is very frustrating to deal with these issues.

Currently, we have a Youth Advisory Council from the Island Lake area made up of representatives from Wasagamack, Red Sucker Lake, St. Theresa Point and Garden Hill, and what we're doing with the youth council from that region, which recommends to our government on the areas that we should be focussing on, is sport, recreation, arts and cultural programming, for the youth, by the youth. So we're absolutely committed to doing that and we're working with them right now. Our staff are working

with the young people in identifying Community Places, the northern Youth Empowerment initiative and Community Services Council applications that they're currently working on.

One exciting thing that has developed recently upon the recommendations of the youth council is an east-side hockey league with three divisions. One would be located on the lower east side of our province which would involve the communities of Poplar River, Pauingassi, Little Grand Rapids, Berens River and Bloodvein, and all the way down to Hollow Water. That would be one division. Your second division then would be in the Island Lake area with the four Island Lake communities that I just talked about: Wasagamack, Red Sucker Lake, St. Theresa Point and Garden Hill. Then we would have a northern division which would be Gods River, O-Pipon-Na-Piwin Cree Nation and God's Lake Narrows. So we absolutely are excited about this recommendation that was given to the Minister of Healthy Living (Ms. Irvin-Ross), the Minister of Health (Ms. Oswald) and the Minister of Justice (Mr. Chomiak) in a recent meeting that we had with the youth from the Island Lake region. We listened intently with the recommendations that were put forth by our young people and, Madam Deputy Speaker, indeed there's a lot of work to do.

There are more speakers on our side of the House that want to talk about this very exciting, exciting Throne Speech that I look forward to the support of all members in this Chamber as we carry on with the work that has to be done on behalf of our citizens in the province of Manitoba.

So, with that, Madam Deputy Speaker, allow me to thank you and Mr. Speaker and the tribute that was paid to my good friend and colleague, friend and brother, Oscar Lathlin. I think that he was very deserving of the recognition. Unfortunately, we don't care to say good things about each other when we're still alive, and then we wind up paying tribute to one another after we're long gone. Thank you for the opportunity to address the Throne Speech again.

* (16:00)

Mr. Ron Schuler (Springfield): Madam Deputy Speaker, I, too, wish to put a few comments on the record in regard to what is referred to as a Throne Speech which, by all accounts, and from what we've heard from the public and seen in the media, has been the very little, next-to-nothing Throne Speech.

Before I begin I would, however, like to again thank the people of Springfield and East St. Paul for the right and the privilege to represent them in this magnificent Chamber, the Manitoba Legislative Assembly. I never take it for granted that I am privileged to have the responsibility and the privilege to be here and speak on their behalf. That's why I make sure that I spend as much time as possible travelling the highways and byways of my community.

Many exciting projects are taking place. We've got all kinds of projects for seniors. We have sports projects under way. We've got our local high school, Springfield Collegiate, is looking at revamping its sports track outside—a lot of very exciting things taking place. It shows a very vibrant and dynamic community.

I've had the opportunity to spend Remembrance Day in the Rural Municipality of Springfield. It was held at the Oakbank Baptist Church. It was basically a standing-room-only event. I know the Legion No. 215 in East St. Paul also had a very successful Remembrance Day ceremony this year. In fact, they have moved it now to a church as well, first of all because it allows for the veterans to come and go with ease because they don't have to climb stairs and also because of space.

Many people are coming out and upholding the responsibility to remember what those who came before us sacrificed, so that we could have these freedoms and, in fact, for those who are currently sacrificing, so that we may have the rights and responsibilities, the freedoms that we have today.

I am very excited about the projects and the kinds of things that are taking place in our schools. I can say to this House I know that the sports programs in both Springfield and East St. Paul are just outstanding. I've got children involved in those sports programs and am pleased to say that the programs are exceeding my expectations.

We've got outstanding coaches. I hope I can indulge this Chamber if I can just say, so far as my daughter's team, I would really like to thank Danny Mazzon and the efforts that he does coaching my daughter's soccer team. He's doing an outstanding job, and I'd like to thank him on behalf of all Manitobans because he symbolizes what's so great about this province and about our communities. He's someone who is willing to stand up and, on a volunteer basis, spend a lot of time coaching the

daughters of all of us who have children on that team.

I would also like to thank my son's coach, Jerald Brasko who is, as I like to call him, the winningest coach we have in East St. Paul. He does just an amazing job and spends an awful lot of selfless time coaching the boys and tends to usually win the city championship with his team.

So to the two of them and to all the other coaches whom we won't have the opportunity to thank because there are so many, I'd like to thank all the coaches, whether it's in soccer or hockey or basketball or volleyball or ringette. I know I'm going to leave some names out and I apologize for that. For all of the men and women who put so much effort into coaching our children, I would like to thank them on behalf of this Chamber.

I also would like to take the opportunity to thank the table officers of this Chamber who make sure that everything runs efficiently. I guess you could say, if I may, that they make sure that the trains run on time, that the doors are always unlocked at the right time and everything seems to be working.

I've been to a lot of weddings where the microphones tend not to work. In fact, I'm convinced that microphones are set up to fail at weddings. I think we should hire legislative staff out, because the microphones always seem to be working here very well. We should just hire our staff out to all these weddings where the microphones never seem to work.

So, you know, we take for granted all these little things that take place. We just take it for granted, assume that these things are going to work. We would like to thank all of those who make this Chamber run as efficiently as it does, who make this building run as effectively as it does, and to our pages—those that are here today and for the others who aren't—we would like to thank them for their time and patience as well.

I should never give a speech in this House without thanking the two individuals who spend an awful lot of time on my behalf, and more importantly, on behalf of the people of Springfield and East St. Paul. Gayle Dowler, who is my constituency assistant and has been there since 1999. She's just an incredibly dynamic individual. In fact, now, when she's asked to sign petitions or to comment on an issue in the community, she won't, because she is now viewed as being the

spokesperson for myself if I'm not there. She takes her role very responsibly, and I know that a lot of individuals go and seek her advice because she is incredibly wise in the way she hands out advice. I am blessed to have someone the calibre of Gayle Dowler to work for me.

Also, I would like to thank Gladys Hayward Williams, who, because we now have this new program where we have a legislative assistant, I was very fortunate, very blessed, to be able to hire her. She's just been outstanding. I'd like to thank both Gayle and Gladys for the hours and the time and the effort they put in on behalf of the people of Springfield and East St. Paul, and I'd like to thank the Springfield PC association for all their work and efforts.

I won't list names because we seem to have an incredibly punitive government. They seem to take out retribution on anybody who isn't of their belief so they would prefer to remain nameless. They don't want to be facing some kind of retribution from this NDP government, but I'd like to thank them for their efforts on behalf of myself and the constituency of Springfield.

Mr. Bidhu Jha, Acting Speaker, in the Chair

On to the Throne Speech which was very disappointing. It was very disappointing because if you go back and look at the budget debate of April of 2008, you will see that there were a lot of speeches given, and I asked if staff would run off the speech that I had given last April in which I, amongst many members of this Chamber, spoke about the coming storm, the crisis that was going to be facing us.

We knew that there were problems in the economy. Already then there were warnings, albeit not nearly as dire as it ended up being. In fact, normally what happens is you have those who tend to go a little bit too extreme in saying, you know, it's going to be just a calamity. It's going to be a disaster. It's going to be awful. In fact, they were wrong in the sense that it was mild what they were predicting. They were talking about \$10 billion or \$14 billion that would have to be used to bail out, and now we're looking at amounts that are staggering, just staggering amounts of money that are being flowed by government to try to prop up financial institutions, individuals, companies, and the like.

The government of the day, this Premier, the Member for Concordia (Mr. Doer) was well aware, and if he wasn't aware, it was brought to his attention

that there were storm clouds coming. There was a problem facing the province of Manitoba, and I believe in the speech that I gave, I compared this government to the Douglas Campbell government back in the '50s. I had the opportunity to find back newspaper articles, and I quoted them for the House. I quoted Gurney Evans, who was the opposition PC Finance critic who said, his comments were about a government at that time that had gotten content, that had become so stale that it could not find its way forward and actually was visionless, was not responsive to the needs of its people. It was a Douglas Campbell government and that's what we have today.

We have a don't-worry, be-happy government in the form of this NDP government that has really lost its way. It can't see what the next step should be. We've heard the Premier say, don't worry, be happy. He's indicated that just by doing nothing is probably the best way to weather the storm. We know why he's indicated that is because, so far as we know, the federal welfare cheque is still going to keep coming. So as long as 40 percent of our budget is taken care of by the federal government, and it doesn't look like that will be threatened, in that case, then, the Premier, his Finance Minister and his government are pleased.

* (16:10)

But that's not good enough for Manitobans, because I would just say to this House, it looks like the market has taken another downturn today. Now, when you say, well, the market, the last time I checked was down some 810 points, nobody even recoils at that anymore. It's like, oh, it's only 800 points, well, that's not too bad. You know, if we'd have suggested that kind of thing years ago, people would have thought you were shrill and over the top and the fluctuations of the market are just sort of like a running opinion poll of where people think the economy is going.

It is a very, very unstable time for the world economically, and the government of Manitoba has not prepared itself for this coming storm. They did not put aside the kind of cushion that it should have. It didn't pay down debt like it could have and should have. It didn't provide the tax relief that it could have and should have. Instead, what they did is they went on a spending spree at which I would suggest most Manitobans look and say, but where's the benefit. What have you done with all that money because

there doesn't seem to be a lot to show for it, lots of spin.

We will concede on this House that we probably have, since Bill Clinton style of spin, we have not seen a government so efficient at spinning, and what's brilliant about it is spinning the same thing over and over and over again. I'm glad to see that the—I think he's the former minister of energy, science and technology, the Member for Assiniboia (Mr. Rondeau), I can remember he got up in this House one time and spoke about the wind—

An Honourable Member: He still is the minister. Did you forget?

An Honourable Member: Get with the program. Science, Technology, Energy and Mines.

Mr. Schuler: Oh, he's still the same minister. It's hard to tell over there; they tend to shuffle them. So I'm glad that he is still there, so I can point this out to him. There was supposed to be a huge wind tower go up at The Forks, and I can remember the spin and the media and all the rest of it. There were pictures on the front pages of the papers. Where is that? I suspect it's probably almost time to reintroduce that announcement again.

In fact, he can now introduce it because it's almost been a year if not longer. The Member for Assiniboia can now introduce it, re-introduce it as a new idea again because it's already a year old. That's what we get, issue after issue after issue. In fact, anybody who is a student of political science, of political history has to admit it is probably one of the most brilliant spin moves. It's of historical proportions. This government announces another wind farm with a company that is, by and large, bankrupt and somehow still got a bang for its buck, still seemed to have sold it out there. Some media are starting to get tired of this kind of stuff, but it's just amazing, just amazing that this government gets away with making a non-announcement, nothing signed with a company that's bankrupt and somehow still thinks it's got a good news story.

That's what we have seen out of this government, but that does not drive a good economy. This Premier should be focussed. He should not be distracted. Rather, he should be focussed on the province and what's at hand and we haven't seen that.

This has been a dismal Throne Speech. I don't know if you can rate bad, but out of the Throne Speeches that I have seen come forward since 1999, this is one of the worst. Out of the bad lot this is one

of the worst Throne Speeches simply because of the troubling times we live in.

Just as a side note, I would encourage the members of the New Democratic Party to call their MPs and call them off from destabilizing the national government. It might be some advice to give them because we probably at this point in time do not need the separatists out of Québec running the country, but we know that when it comes to some parties, when it comes to power, some people will do just about anything and everything, even at the cost of the nation, and again I encourage the Manitoba New Democrats to stand up for Manitoba and western Canada and not for separatist ideals and encourage them to back down off of this terribly harebrained scheme that seems to be coming at us.

We are living in some unbelievably troubling times. We actually were hoping that, out of this government, we would see leadership; we would see some dynamic ideas and solutions. We'd actually see a government that is still in touch with what's going on, and they haven't.

Mr. Daryl Reid, Acting Speaker, in the Chair

The amendment to the Throne Speech is the right one, the one put forward by the Leader of the Opposition (Mr. McFadyen). I would encourage all members of this House to support that amendment and, perhaps, we could get the government to submit something that would be a much, much, more responsive Throne Speech to what's going on in Manitoba.

I appreciate the time of this House. Thank you, Mr. Acting Speaker.

Hon. Jim Rondeau (Minister of Science, Technology, Energy and Mines): It is truly a pleasure to stand and put a few words on the Throne Speech, especially following the Member for Springfield (Mr. Schuler).

First, I'd like to say thank you to the pages, the table officers, all the MLAs here, because I think it's long hours; it's lots of hard work. I really think that all of us in this Chamber do try our best on behalf of all members of the province.

I really think that it's a wonderful profession. I think that most people are very dedicated and work very, very hard, and I think politicians do really care about the province, no matter what side of the House they do represent.

I do wish to talk a little bit about the economy. I wish to talk about where we're going, et cetera. I'm glad the Member for Springfield brought about power, because the things that you have to do is you have to have a vision in society. You have to know where you're going. What you want to do is see where we've gone from and where we're going to.

Under the former government, we were second-last in the country for energy efficiency, second-last. Right now, we're tied for first. So I'm pleased to see that we have a lot of energy efficiency going through on Power Smart. We, as a government, are working forward on low-income energy efficiency where what we're doing is getting the poorest people who are paying the highest energy bills—we're working with multiple partners to make it so that their house becomes more efficient, they save money, save on greenhouse gases and, in fact, allow us to sell more power down south, east and, hopefully, west of us.

Mr. Speaker in the Chair

So what we're trying to do is we have great energy efficiency. Again, we've gone from a very low mark to the best in the country, again tied with B.C., and we continue to move forward on energy efficiency.

Now this creates jobs. It creates jobs in renovation; it creates jobs in the two, new, geothermal, manufacturing plants. It creates jobs in the window and door industry which we're renowned for. It creates jobs in the insulation and it creates jobs in just the renovation industry, so this is really a good program.

We've got BUILD that's operating. Here in Winnipeg, we've got Centennial neighbourhood. It's rolled out to other parts of the province, including the Island Lake communities, et cetera. It's nice to hear that the groups that are trying to do this are trying to work to build towards 10 to 12 houses per week that are being renovated. I think that's a good commentary to what we want to do as this government.

No. 2, wind. It's nice to see the member opposite talk about wind. I'm glad to explain to him. We had a non-partisan tour to St. Leon; I know members from both sides of the House went. There is a wind farm out there; it was one of the largest in Canada at the time. I'm pleased to see that we worked through issues. We got an announcement from Hydro about a new wind farm.

I know the member opposite said it was a bankrupt company. I hope he learns that, often, you can have an energy subsidiary or other companies that are within the envelope of the larger company. Some can be very fiscally strong, and some can have difficulty. I would encourage him to come to the sod turning when it happens and see the new windmills being built. It's good for the economy, good for the farmers and the landholders, et cetera.

But part of the process of building the wind farms—and I know the member opposite doesn't know much on energy and wind farms—because part of it is you set up a monitoring tower, exactly what we did. We set up monitoring towers on First Nations, throughout lots of the communities in northern Manitoba, lots of communities in the Interlake and southern Manitoba.

* (16:20)

We found out, with the data, where the wind was the most efficient. Now, what we're doing is, after you take that and you do a transmission study, then you build the wind farms, and that's exactly what we're doing, Mr. Speaker. We've done more and more studies. We've got more and more data as the consistency, the strength of the wind, and we're going to continue to build out the wind. That's good for our economy.

Also, the members opposite were making fun of other initiatives. Here's an example. We now have two geothermal manufacturing plants in our province. We train the vast majority of installers. We have gone to almost 6,000 installations of geothermal heat. I know that even here in our own caucus we've had three or four people who have installed it. I'm pleased to see that more and more people are adopting a very efficient thing.

This is a technology that Manitoba companies are exporting to China; a manufactured good that goes to China. Manufactured goods go to the Middle-East. It's really nice that we are exporting manufactured goods and our expertise around the world. I'm pleased to see that.

Also, we're building new dams. The former Conservative government talked a lot about energy. They talked a lot about things. We build dams, we construct them and because of that we are generating profits. We have a good, positive future. I know the members opposite may yell about it, but the history shows that we build the dams and they mothball them. In fact, when they were in government they

talked about how important it was to build coal-fired electrical plants. That's the choice. Coal-fired plants, that's dark, dingy, Conservative times. What we believe is we believe in clean, green, renewable energy and I'm proud to be that government.

When we talked about tax relief. We'll talk about it. First, under small business and medium-sized businesses, which is the vast majority of all businesses in Manitoba. Under the former Conservative government, they considered 200—there was a small business threshold of 250,000, that's moved to 450,000. The tax rate used to be 9 percent in most of the '80s. Now it's going down to 1 percent. That's from the highest in the country to the lowest in the country. The Conservatives, who pretend to be friends of business, friends of the small businessman, actually were the highest taxed in the country. So they may blow smoke but, Mr. Speaker, we delivered good tax relief to small and medium-sized businesses.

The other thing. When we talk about income tax, we have cut the rate for the lowest income bracket. We've increased the threshold for middle income bracket and that saved Manitobans \$22 million.

We've also taken the corporate tax rate, which was 17 percent in 1999, and I'm pleased, Mr. Speaker, we've moved it to 12 percent. So under your government, it was the highest, now we're moving toward downward consistently.

I know the members opposite may chirp but, Mr. Speaker, the corporate capital tax rate, we're reducing it. The members opposite did nothing. We're reducing it. That helps the mining companies. That helps the large corporations so we're continuing to do that.

When I talk about the economy, most of what we talk about is people. I'm pleased that we've committed to 4,000 new apprentices over the next four years. I'm pleased that we've established a Northern Sector Council. As Minister responsible for Science, Technology, Energy and Mines, a lot of what people were talking about is a skilled work force, one that will be able to take these projects and build them. Take the infrastructure and build it. So I'm glad that the Northern Sector Council is operating. I'm very pleased that I was around the Minister of Competitiveness, Training and Trade (Mr. Swan) when he made a \$4.5-million announcement on investments in northern and Aboriginal training in Manitoba's north.

So we are continuing to move forward on this. I'm pleased to see that when the former government was there, when the former government was in power, what did they do to the north? They ignored the north. They took money from infrastructure in the north. I'm pleased to see that we're working to develop it.

Now let's talk about pensions. The members opposite don't understand pensions. They were not favourable to giving breaks to companies on their pension relief. Now we have gone championing this, where we're allowing an extension to make sure that the pensions have legitimate capital so that they do have regulations that allow business to be flexible, to ensure that the pensions are *[inaudible]*, to ensure that the companies exist, and also to make sure that we continue to work with them so that there are no shortfalls based on short-term valuations, that we have legitimate support for workers, companies and the province.

Now, when the members opposite talk about they don't see the investment, well, I wanted to talk a little bit about our CentrePort ventures. One, we think that it's important to work with the private sector, with the public sector, and so we're working with the Winnipeg Airports Authority and other partners to move forward on CentrePort. That's a really important thing, because in the 1880s, 1890s, Manitoba was the centre for transportation, and we think it can be there again.

Also, there are a number of new hotels. I noticed that I found three hotels in west Winnipeg that have been built in the last year, and it's nice to see it. New housing units. Again, it's nice to see that originally we didn't know that there were enough housing lots. I'm glad to see that all available housing lots are full. Our biggest crisis is making sure that we have housing units, more affordable housing, more housing for people, and I'm pleased to see that, as part of our infrastructure buy, we're doing that. I'm also pleased to see that the housing business and construction business in Manitoba is still very good.

I'm pleased to see the investments we've made in the university and college system. As a person who has had a lot of involvement with university and colleges, I'm pleased to see that these institutions are doing well, they're funded well and people are attending. I know that under the former government, they didn't believe in investing in education, they didn't believe in investing in the infrastructure education, and I know that they often punished

students, because they continued to boost tuition, remove bursaries and remove access programs. We believe that education is the great equalizer. It provides the support. It provides incentives in the future. I'm sad that the Member for Brandon doesn't believe in education, votes against it on a consistent basis.

I'm also pleased that today, myself and the Minister of Competitiveness, Training and Trade (Mr. Swan) went to EDS. It's a company that just came here. They've committed to expanding to 650 workers. We saw this beautiful facility, and it was really nice to see that we're bringing businesses to Winnipeg. Now I know that the members opposite don't understand how to do that, but we do.

We've also invested in R&D. I'm pleased that we had the announcement where we would take the Manitoba Health Research Council, and we expanded from \$1.9 million to \$6 million. I'm pleased I was able to make that announcement because it's investing in research, technology, medical health, which will help the quality of life and life in Manitoba. So that was very nice.

Simple, other investments, in things like the Composites Innovation Centre, the Advanced Manufacturing Initiative, working with small business to build and invest. And just a small example, the Composites Innovation Centre was an investment that we worked with, with the federal government, and businesses. They invested in technology, new age materials. That worked to create jobs in Boeing. So in 1999, there were about 450 people employed in Boeing. Now I'm pleased to say there are 1,600 employees. They're a level tier one engineering and manufacturing for the new Boeing plane. What's nice about that, Mr. Speaker, is they've run out of room. They have no more room to expand. So it's nice to see that companies are growing, things are happening, and that's under our investment.

So when we talk about our companies, we talk about our capital budget, I'm very pleased that we're spending \$4.7 billion in four years, capital plan, which we'll invest in schools, hospitals, highways, universities, college. And you know what, Mr. Speaker, we're investing in people. We're investing in the future. Because we believe, with key investments, we can make a difference. We believe that our government should govern for the many, not for the few. We believe that we want to have a rising tide, raise all ships, and we believe that with greater education we have a greater prosperity and a better

future. That's what our government believes, and I'm pleased to support our Speech from the Throne and our investments in this province.

* (16:30)

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

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

Some Honourable Members: Agreed.

Some Honourable Members: No.

Voice Vote

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

Some Honourable Members: Yea.

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

Some Honourable Members: Nay.

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

Formal Vote

Mr. Gerald Hawranik (Official Opposition House Leader): Mr. Speaker, a recorded vote.

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

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

Division

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

Yeas

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

Nays

Allan, Altemeyer, Ashton, Bjornson, Blady, Braun, Brick, Caldwell, Dewar, Doer, Howard, Irvin-Ross,

Jennissen, Jha, Korzeniowski, Lemieux, Mackintosh, Marcelino, Martindale, McGifford, Melnick, Nevakshonoff, Oswald, Reid, Robinson, Rondeau, Saran, Selby, Selinger, Struthers, Swan, Wowchuk.

Madam Clerk (Patricia Chaychuk): Yeas 20, Nays 32.

Mr. Speaker: I declare the amendment lost.

* * *

Mr. Speaker: We will now proceed to speak to the main motion.

* (16:40)

Mrs. Heather Stefanson (Tuxedo): This is the first opportunity that I will have on the record to welcome our new pages here. I just want to welcome them. I know it must be frustrating at times to sit in the House and listen to us banter back and forth about various things, and probably not the easiest thing to sit through at times. Welcome to your new jobs, and I hope that you are able to get as much out of this very important position that you have as you possibly can. It's a wonderful experience, and so I wish you all the very best.

I also want to welcome our table officers back. I think the same thing goes to many of them who sit through sessions day in and day out in the Manitoba Legislature, and sit and listen to our bantering back and forth. I'm sure it's not always the most interesting of times to listen to, but I do want to thank them for everything that they do to facilitate what it is that we do, which is a very important thing, I believe, which is to help keep the government accountable to their various actions that they take out there in introducing bills and how we will come forward with where we stand on those bills. It often can be somewhat confrontational, and the debate can be somewhat heated, and so, I know, and I just want to thank them for listening and putting up with all of us.

I also want to extend my condolences to the family of the late Oscar Lathlin, the Member for The Pas, and especially to his children and grandchildren. I know what it's like to lose a father, and it's never easy. Certainly, especially, my condolences go out to his children and grandchildren.

Mr. Speaker, I, unfortunately, have found myself in the position, which I'm sure will come as a shock to many members opposite, to have to stand in opposition to this Throne Speech. I think there are many issues in the Throne Speech that we must take the government to task for. In specific, I think, many

of the things that aren't in the Throne Speech, which is unfortunate. The Premier (Mr. Doer) of the province had the opportunity this time to come forward with his vision, long-term economic vision in our province, to show what his plan is and his strategy is towards creating economic stability within our province. I think, unfortunately, he wasn't able to do that. It shows that the government is tired and out of steam, and, quite frankly, out of touch with reality and what Manitobans are looking for from their government.

I think it's unfortunate that the Premier had an opportunity here to set the tone, set the vision, to show Manitobans that he has a long-term vision for our province when, in fact, he doesn't. I think that that's what shows up in this Throne Speech. When he said it would contain an economic statement and it didn't, I think many Manitobans, including myself and members on this side of the House were concerned about the fact that there wasn't an economic statement, and, therefore, no long-term economic strategy and plan for our province, which is extremely unfortunate.

One of the things that they did do is they introduced a lot of bans on things in this legislation, and they talked about a lot more spending in the Throne Speech that will take place, but, really, it was void of any energy or any vision or any long-term plan or strategy that will show our province through the number of years to come. Those number of years, and, certainly, what we will be facing in the midst of a worldwide economic crisis that we see out there, I think it's unfortunate that the Premier didn't come up with a strategy. His strategy to date, for the last nine years, has been to tax and spend Manitobans. I think that strategy, particularly, in very difficult times right now is not a strategy or a plan for the future of our province. I think what's unfortunate is that the Premier has shown his true stripes, being his NDP orange stripes, over the last nine years, and has shown that he's not capable of putting together a plan and a strategy that would prepare us for the difficult times that we're about to face.

We've come through nine years of a fairly strong economy across Canada, across North America, and in Manitoba. What you need to do in those good economic times is prepare for the bad times that will eventually come, as we all know, in our economic cycles. The problem with the NDP is that they have continued on their tax-and-spend strategy, and, unfortunately, have left our province in a situation right now where almost 40 percent—*[interjection]*—

and I am getting to that, almost 40 percent of our provincial budget is dependent on transfer payments—some 37 percent of our provincial budget is dependent on transfer payments from the federal government.

We know with what's going on with the worldwide economic crisis, what's going on in our country right now, that we are facing difficult times. Those transfer payments will not be there for our province going forward. So when the entire vision and plan of our province is based on something that will disappear, it is very concerning for all of us as Manitobans, as to how are we properly going to be able to fund the social services that we need to protect all Manitobans, and those social services being our health-care system, the Child and Family Services, our justice system, et cetera.

How are we going to protect those that most need it if our entire plan and the entire plan of this NDP government is dependent upon federal government transfer payments? Those transfer payments will disappear. What the government should have been doing over the last nine years is reducing the dependency on another government for their revenues, and, unfortunately, they didn't. They increased it from some 27 percent, when they took office, to 37 percent now, and on the rise. When we're looking at almost 40 percent of our budget dependent on transfer payments that aren't going to be there, the only people that are going to be hurt as a result of that are those vulnerable Manitobans that are most dependent on our care.

I think it's unfortunate that we did not see any turn of events in this Throne Speech. It's much like the last—I think this is my ninth Throne Speech that I've had the opportunity to speak against. I'm hoping for the day and looking forward to the day where I will be speaking in favour of a Throne Speech in this Manitoba Legislature. But, unfortunately, this is not the day, and *[interjection]*—oh, that's getting a rousing—unfortunately, there is nothing here that I really would be able to support in terms of the long-term vision for our province.

While members opposite would love to see me vote in favour of this, I would, actually, call on them and say that, maybe, they should join us in this, and break away from their party and do the right thing for all Manitobans, who are dependent on this government's vision, or lack thereof, for their future, Mr. Speaker. Again, I am concerned about the track that we are on in this province, the track of taxing

and spending, the track of further dependency on another level of government. Those are things that are throwing us into the throes of more debt, which will be on the backs of our children and grandchildren for them to pay for the future debts of our province.

Speaking of debt, Mr. Speaker, I think it's an important thing to note that while other provinces are paying down their debt and reducing dependency on federal government transfer payments, we're going in the opposite direction. Certainly, what we have seen is that the provincial government debt, if we wanted to compare it to Saskatchewan, which members opposite like to do, I think we should note that the net debt, Manitoba's net debt of \$10.18 billion is far, far greater than Saskatchewan's, some \$4.2 billion this year. Saskatchewan has been paying down their debt. Our debt has continued to rise under this NDP government. I think that is unfortunate, and there are so many things that I would like to get into with respect to the unfortunate Throne Speech that has been delivered with no plan, no vision, no hope for the future of young people in our province.

* (16:50)

I'd like to just touch on some issues in my area, being the area of conservation, water stewardship in the city of Winnipeg. Certainly, what we have seen from this government is nothing in the way of incentives, to provide incentives to people to comply in certain areas to help create a more environmentally friendly environment in our province. We've seen lots of bans out there, but there's really not much in terms of providing incentives. I think also there have been no targets that have been set for emissions reductions. There is no plan in the way of recycling. Why is it taking so long to unveil a long-term strategy with respect to recycling initiatives in this province? Mr. Speaker, there are so many things that they could be doing with respect to the environment that they are not doing, and I think it's extremely unfortunate.

I think I would be remiss not to also mention the waste-water treatment facilities in the city of Winnipeg— how this government has completely botched that entire issue. It is unfortunate that, when there was an opportunity for members opposite, members of this government, to show up at the University of Winnipeg where there was a debate on about phosphorus and nitrogen removal from our waste-water treatment facilities, the government was nowhere to be found at that at all. They had made a

decision before that to send this issue back to the Clean Environment Commission, which we agreed with, and we called on them to do. We were happy that they listened to us there, but we thought it was unfortunate when they neglected to show up to actually hear what it was that scientists, the experts in this field and this industry, had to say. I think it's unfortunate that this is indicative of this government's sort of lack of vision, lack of plan, and inability to consult and listen to those experts out there who may know a little bit more than they do with respect to this issue, Mr. Speaker.

I think it was unfortunate that the only person that was there was a bureaucrat from the department to deliver the message at this. Even after they had sent this issue back to the Clean Environment Commission, one of their bureaucrats showed up to give a presentation at this conference and basically delivered the message that we don't care what the Clean Environment Commission comes out with. We don't care what any of you say. We're going to remove nitrogen as well, because that's the direction we're going in. I think that it's very unfortunate when they made a decision to send it back to the Clean Environment Commission, to then still send the message that we don't really care what anyone says, this is what we're doing.

So it's this top-down, dictatorship sort of approach of the government on various issues that I think is—they missed an opportunity to be there, to listen, to consult with scientists from across this country who, I tend to think, know a little bit more than this government does in this field. I would call on them to really listen out there, to consult, especially with this issue, because it could save taxpayers, it could save the City of Winnipeg, tens of millions of dollars when it comes to the waste-water treatment facilities. It could, arguably, even be hundreds of millions of dollars. I think what's unfortunate is that, rather than doing the right thing and listening to the experts out there, they're just doing their own thing. Their own thing, unfortunately, could be potentially a waste of hundreds of millions of taxpayer dollars that could be spent in many other areas, but that also could have been given back to Manitobans in the way of tax relief because, especially at a time right now when Manitobans' pockets will be hit significantly as a result of various things going on in the worldwide economy. We could be facing a recession. Now is the time to be giving back to Manitobans their hard-earned tax dollars. Unfortunately, this government,

this NDP government thinks that they know best how to spend taxpayers' money, as opposed to the taxpayers of Manitoba knowing how best to spend their money.

Mr. Speaker, I could certainly go on and on about the many things that this Throne Speech does not cover. In health care, there's very little here. There were many things missing from the Throne Speech when it came to health care. The acknowledgment of the long waits for diagnostic tests, appointments with specialists and surgeries, nothing for mental health and addictions treatment, nothing in the way of pandemic planning, and the list goes on and on and on. There's a huge infrastructure deficit within our province, none of which has been dealt with in this Throne Speech. When it comes to justice issues, really not much here at all in terms of improving the safety of Manitobans. We continue to see people being stabbed and killed on the streets in Winnipeg, and very little has been done, in terms of a long-term plan, to help deal with these issues.

Mr. Speaker, I think, unfortunately, I will have to leave it at that but again just want to reiterate my disappointment with the Premier (Mr. Doer), my disappointment in members opposite for their lack of vision, their Throne Speech that is tired and out of steam and out of touch with reality, and out of touch with Manitobans' expectations in terms of what they wanted to see from this government with respect to a long-term economic plan and vision for our province. It's unfortunate and, again, I will have vote against this Throne Speech.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Inkster): Mr. Speaker, I did want to at least get started in terms on my comments in regard to the Throne Speech, and I guess, right off the get-go, indicate that this is not actually a Throne Speech which we are prepared to support.

Having said that, I want to start off by acknowledging the efforts of whether it's the table officers, Hansard, our pages and others that, over the years, in essence, allow us to be able to do the things

that we do inside this Chamber. In essence, they make it functional for us so that we're able to represent our constituents. I truly do appreciate all that goes into making the speeches that are given inside this Chamber even possible in terms of the mechanics of it.

I also want to make tribute to Oscar Lathlin and give condolences, my personal condolences, to his family and friends. I know that each and every one of us tries to do the best we can in terms of representing our constituents and beyond. I feel comfortable in knowing that Oscar was a first-class individual that did the very best at making not only his constituency, but the broader constituency of our province, in particular, special efforts in the Aboriginal community, making life that much better for so, so many Manitobans. It's always sad when we see someone pass away that is a current MLA.

I did want to just quickly make reference to the late Neil Gaudry as an individual, even though we didn't have the same sort of pomp and ceremony for Neil, Mr. Speaker, at the time of passing, but as an individual that also did so much. I say that it was very appropriate the way in which you dealt with the passing of Mr. Lathlin in terms of having the headdress and what followed. I suspect that that will set a tradition for us into the future, and I appreciate your efforts in making that happen.

Mr. Speaker, I also want to just give very quick thanks to those individuals, whether it's my spouse, my campaign manager, all the individuals that have enabled me personally to be able to be here, and tomorrow I will get the chance to be able to get into the heart of the Throne Speech.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker, because I think you are going to be calling it 5 o'clock right away—

Mr. Speaker: Order. When this matter is again before the House, the honourable member will have 27 minutes remaining.

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

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

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