

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

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Speaker*

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MANITOBA LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
Thirty-Eighth Legislature

Member	Constituency	Political Affiliation
AGLUGUB, Cris	The Maples	N.D.P.
ALLAN, Nancy, Hon.	St. Vital	N.D.P.
ALTEMEYER, Rob	Wolseley	N.D.P.
ASHTON, Steve, Hon.	Thompson	N.D.P.
BJORNSON, Peter, Hon.	Gimli	N.D.P.
BRICK, Marilyn	St. Norbert	N.D.P.
CALDWELL, Drew	Brandon East	N.D.P.
CHOMIAK, Dave, Hon.	Kildonan	N.D.P.
CULLEN, Cliff	Turtle Mountain	P.C.
CUMMINGS, Glen	Ste. Rose	P.C.
DERKACH, Leonard	Russell	P.C.
DEWAR, Gregory	Selkirk	N.D.P.
DOER, Gary, Hon.	Concordia	N.D.P.
DRIEDGER, Myrna	Charleswood	P.C.
DYCK, Peter	Pembina	P.C.
EICHLER, Ralph	Lakeside	P.C.
FAURSCHOU, David	Portage la Prairie	P.C.
GERRARD, Jon, Hon.	River Heights	Lib.
GOERTZEN, Kelvin	Steinbach	P.C.
HAWRANIK, Gerald	Lac du Bonnet	P.C.
HICKES, George, Hon.	Point Douglas	N.D.P.
IRVIN-ROSS, Kerri	Fort Garry	N.D.P.
JENNISSEN, Gerard	Flin Flon	N.D.P.
JHA, Bidhu	Radisson	N.D.P.
KORZENIOWSKI, Bonnie	St. James	N.D.P.
LAMOUREUX, Kevin	Inkster	Lib.
LATHLIN, Oscar, Hon.	The Pas	N.D.P.
LEMIEUX, Ron, Hon.	La Verendrye	N.D.P.
LOEWEN, John	Fort Whyte	P.C.
MACKINTOSH, Gord, Hon.	St. Johns	N.D.P.
MAGUIRE, Larry	Arthur-Virden	P.C.
MALOWAY, Jim	Elmwood	N.D.P.
MARTINDALE, Doug	Burrows	N.D.P.
McGIFFORD, Diane, Hon.	Lord Roberts	N.D.P.
MELNICK, Christine, Hon.	Riel	N.D.P.
MITCHELSON, Bonnie	River East	P.C.
MURRAY, Stuart	Kirkfield Park	P.C.
NEVAKSHONOFF, Tom	Interlake	N.D.P.
OSWALD, Theresa, Hon.	Seine River	N.D.P.
PENNER, Jack	Emerson	P.C.
REID, Daryl	Transcona	N.D.P.
REIMER, Jack	Southdale	P.C.
ROBINSON, Eric, Hon.	Rupertsland	N.D.P.
ROCAN, Denis	Carman	P.C.
RONDEAU, Jim, Hon.	Assiniboia	N.D.P.
ROWAT, Leanne	Minnedosa	P.C.
SALE, Tim, Hon.	Fort Rouge	N.D.P.
SANTOS, Conrad	Wellington	N.D.P.
SCHELLENBERG, Harry	Rossmere	N.D.P.
SCHULER, Ron	Springfield	P.C.
SELINGER, Greg, Hon.	St. Boniface	N.D.P.
SMITH, Scott, Hon.	Brandon West	N.D.P.
STEFANSON, Heather	Tuxedo	P.C.
STRUTHERS, Stan, Hon.	Dauphin-Roblin	N.D.P.
SWAN, Andrew	Minto	N.D.P.
TAILLIEU, Mavis	Morris	P.C.
WOWCHUK, Rosann, Hon.	Swan River	N.D.P.

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Wednesday, December 8, 2004

The House met at 1:30 p.m.

PRAYERS

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

PETITIONS

Mr. David Faurschou (Portage la Prairie): Mr. Speaker, I ask for leave to introduce a petition for the honourable Member for Charleswood (Mrs. Driedger).

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

Pension Benefits

Mr. David Faurschou (Portage la Prairie): Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, I wish to present the following petition.

These are the reasons for this petition:

Pension benefits for thousands of Manitoba health care workers are being cut because the government has refused to support the front-line health care workers in their desire to maintain their existing Healthcare Employees' Pension Plan (HEPP).

The government is doubling the early retirement penalty to 6 percent a year from 3 percent.

There will be no cost-of-living benefits for retirees in the foreseeable future, which means that inflation will erode retirees' pension cheques over time.

The government's refusal to support the existing pension plan will have a negative impact on hundreds of front-line health care workers.

The government is demonstrating a lack of respect for front-line health care workers by its decision to allow administrative costs in the regional health authorities to skyrocket by millions of dollars.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To request the provincial government to consider redirecting administrative cost savings to front-line health care workers.

To request the provincial government to treat front-line health care workers with the respect they deserve, and to consider supporting the health care employees' pension plan by not cutting pension benefits.

Signed by Hanna Stromecki, Zofia Szewc, Shannon Milsom and others.

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

* (13:35)

Highway 200

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

These are the reasons for this petition:

Highway 200 is paved from Winnipeg to the Canada-U.S. border except for approximately a 10-kilometre section between highways 205 and 305 which remains unpaved. School buses, farm equipment, emergency vehicles and local traffic must travel on Highway 200 which is dangerous, if not completely impassable, during wet spring weather and other times of heavy rainfall.

Due to unsafe conditions, many drivers look to alternate routes around this section when possible and time permits. The condition of the gravel road can cause serious damage to all vehicles.

Insufficient traffic counts are not truly reflective of the traffic volumes because users tend to find another route to avoid this section. Traffic counts done after spring seeding, during wet weather or during school recess are not indicative of traffic flows.

Maintenance costs for unpaved highways are high and ongoing. It would be cost-effective to pave this section.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To request that the Minister of Transportation and Government Services (Mr. Lemieux) consider paving Highway 200 between highways 205 and 305 to ensure a smooth, safe and uninterrupted use of Highway 200.

Signed by E. Alarie, Alice Alarie, Raymond Alarie and others.

Addictions Foundation of Manitoba

Mr. Jack Reimer (Southdale): Mr. Speaker, I wish to present the following petition to the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba.

These are the reasons for this petition:

The Addictions Foundation of Manitoba (AFM) provides intervention, rehabilitation, prevention, education and public information services on addictions for the citizens of Manitoba.

Manitoba's provincial Budget 2004 cut funding to the AFM by \$150,000 and required the organization to absorb a \$450,000 wage settlement.

In order to operate within its budget, the AFM was forced to close 14 treatment beds in its primary care unit and eliminate 10 nursing positions.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To request the Minister of Health to ensure that his attempts to balance his department's finances are not at the expense of the health and well-being of vulnerable Manitobans suffering from addiction.

To urge the Minister of Health to consider monitoring the waiting lists for addiction treatment and to consider ensuring that timely treatment for Manitobans with addictions is not compromised by the provincial government's decision to cut the AFM's annual budget.

Signed by Erin Toews, Felix Dryden, Dennis Vandal and others.

Minimum Sitting Days for Legislative Assembly

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

The background to this petition is as follows:

The Manitoba Legislature sat for only 37 days in 2003, and 2004 is not much better.

Manitobans expect their government to be accountable, and the number of sitting days has a direct impact on the issue of public accountability.

Manitobans expect their elected officials to be provided the opportunity to be able to hold the government accountable.

The Legislative Assembly provides the best forum for all MLAs to debate and ask questions of the government, and it is critical that all MLAs be provided the time needed in order for them to cover constituent and party duties.

Establishing a minimum number of sitting days could prevent the government of the day from limiting the rights of opposition members from being able to ask questions.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To request the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba to consider recognizing the need to sit for a minimum of 80 days in any given calendar year.

Signed by Jason Olaes, Derek Olaes and Leonardo Reyes.

Physician Shortage—Westman Area

Mr. Glen Cummings (Ste. Rose): Mr. Speaker, I wish to present the following petition.

These are the reasons for this petition:

The Westman region serving Brandon and the surrounding area will be without an on-call pediatrician for 20 days between November 10 and December 31, 2004.

As a result of the severe shortage of pediatricians to serve the Westman area, Brandon

and area women with high-risk pregnancies as well as critically ill children are being forced, at even greater risk, to travel to Winnipeg for urgent medical attention.

The chiefs of the departments of Obstetrics and Gynecology, Family Practice and Anesthesia at the Brandon Regional Health Centre have publicly voiced their concern regarding the potentially disastrous consequences of this shortage.

Brandon physicians were shocked and angered by the lack of communication and foresight on the part of the government related to retention of a local pediatrician.

The Minister of Health has stated that Brandon has to put its best foot forward and recruit its own doctors.

Doctors have warned that if the current situation is prolonged, it may result in further loss of services or the departure of other specialists who find the situation unmanageable.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To strongly urge the Minister of Health to consider taking charge and ensuring that he will improve the long-term planning efforts to develop a lasting solution to the chronic problem of pediatrician and other specialist shortages in Brandon.

To strongly urge the Minister of Health to treat this as the crisis that it is and consider consulting with front-line workers, particularly doctors, to find solutions.

To strongly urge the Minister of Health and the Premier of Manitoba to consider ending highway medicine now.

Signed by Susan Mervyn, Roger Morris and Janine Simpson.

* (13:40)

Mr. Larry Maguire (Arthur-Virden): Mr. Speaker, I wish to present the following petition to the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba.

These are the reasons for this petition:

The Westman region serving Brandon and the surrounding area will be without an on-call pediatrician for 20 days between November 10 and December 31, 2004.

As a result of the severe shortage of pediatricians to serve the Westman area, Brandon and area women with high-risk pregnancies as well as critically ill children are being forced, at even greater risk, to travel to Winnipeg for urgent medical attention.

The chiefs of the departments of Obstetrics and Gynecology, Family Practice and Anesthesia at the Brandon Regional Health Centre have publicly voiced their concern regarding the potentially disastrous consequences of the shortage.

Brandon physicians were shocked and angered by the lack of communication and foresight on the part of the government related to retention of local pediatricians.

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Doctors have warned that if the current situation is prolonged, it may result in further loss of services or the departure of other specialists who find the situation unmanageable.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

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To strongly urge the Minister of Health to treat this as the crisis that it is and consider consulting with front-line workers, particularly doctors, to find solutions.

To strongly urge the Minister of Health and the Premier of Manitoba to consider ending highway medicine now.

Signed by Jonathan Waines, Margaret McConnell, Gail Longmuir and others.

TABLING OF REPORTS

Hon. Scott Smith (Minister charged with the administration of The Manitoba Lotteries Corporation Act): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to table the Manitoba Lotteries Corporation Second Quarter Report for the six months ended September 30, 2004.

MINISTERIAL STATEMENTS

Canadian Aboriginal Music Awards

Hon. Eric Robinson (Minister of Culture, Heritage and Tourism): Yes, Mr. Speaker, I have a statement for the House.

Prior to today's Question Period, I held a luncheon in the dining room to honour and recognize some talented artists from the Manitoba sound recording industry. Our guests today included this year's Canadian Aboriginal Music Award winners and nominees, special award recipients and Aboriginal artists currently participating in MARIA's new Aboriginal Music Program.

The Canadian Aboriginal Festival held November 26 to 28, 2004, in Toronto included the 6th Annual Canadian Aboriginal Music Awards. Manitoba was well represented with 17 nominees in 19 categories. Manitoba's artists walked away with nine awards, which included two special awards, with Errol Ranville receiving the Lifetime Contribution to Aboriginal Music Award and Ness Michaels receiving the 2004 Music Industry Award. Both these gentlemen are here with us today.

Other CAMA award winners with us today are Clint Dutiaume, who won for Best Fiddle Album; Danny Schur for Best Producer; Team Rezofficial for best Rap and Hip Hop Album and Burnt Project 1, who brought home the Galaxy Rising Stars Award. Eagle and Hawk, who won three awards for Best Songwriter, Best Rock Album and Best Song, could not be here today due to prior commitments.

I would also like to acknowledge the CAMA Award nominees for this year. This year's nominees included: Heritage, Billy Joe Green, Longhouse Volume 1 and Spirit of the Nations, Jessie Green, Rayne Delaronde, Jig Band and Garry Lepine, and Edward Gamblin.

* (13:45)

Mr. Speaker, in addition to the CAMA Award winners and nominees, we have with us Aboriginal singers, songwriters and musicians who took part in MARIA's Aboriginal Music Program. These artists were showcased during the festival. They performed in the Skydome, at the Music Café, as well as on the main stage. MARIA also hosted a special evening to release a new compilation CD that features all of the artists from the Aboriginal Music Program. The response was overwhelming.

The new Aboriginal Music Program provides a structured developmental process designed to give artists a full range of professional training to further their music career and music career aspirations. This program is the only one of its kind in Canada, and following what we heard from others in Toronto, it is the envy of many in this country.

Mr. Speaker, successful programs like these are grounded in the dedicated efforts of the people who work to support our sound industry on a daily basis. I would like to acknowledge the staff of MARIA, executive director Sam Baardman, Aboriginal music co-ordinator Errol Ranville and Sarah Stasiuk. I would also like to recognize Manitoba Film and Sound CEO Carole Vivier and sound program manager Kevin Walters.

Mr. Speaker, breaking new ground is nothing new for Manitoba when it comes to cultural industry development. The success and growth we are now experiencing within Manitoba's Aboriginal music sector is something all Manitobans can be proud of as we look forward to the wealth of untapped potential that lies before us. I would like to thank all honourable members for this opportunity to recognize and acknowledge these talented and dedicated members of the Manitoba sound recording industry. Thank you.

Mrs. Mavis Taillieu (Morris): Mr. Speaker, I would also like to put a few comments on the record and join the Minister of Culture, Heritage and Tourism in congratulating Manitoba's Aboriginal music award winners. I would also like to thank the minister for including me in the awards luncheon that he hosted at the Legislature today.

This is a little bit like déjà vu for me because I did already congratulate all these winners the day after they won the award here in the Legislature, on

the Monday, but I would like to go on and do that again seeing as they are here today.

The annual Canadian Aboriginal Award ceremony and celebration took place in Toronto in late November, I think it was 26 to 28, and it was an excellent time to showcase some of Canada's finest musical talent.

Our province had many nominees for awards, which is a testament to Manitoba's outstanding talent. I was certainly proud to be at the luncheon today and meet several of the artists. Manitoba should feel proud for their accomplishments and appreciate and acknowledge their very hard work. I would like to name some of the people: Errol Ranville, who received a lifetime award, Ness Michaels, who I sat with at lunch today, Eagle and Hawk, Heritage, Clint Dutiaume, Billy Joe Green, Danny Schur, Longhouse Volume 1, Spirit of the Nations, Rayne Delaronde, the Jig Band, Garry Lepine, Edward Gamblin, and Team Rezoofficial.

At the ceremony Errol Ranville was honoured with a Lifetime Contribution to Aboriginal Music Award for his role in founding the C-Weed Band and for his active participation in the Aboriginal music industry over the last 30 years.

Also Ness Michaels received a music industry award for his contribution to the Aboriginal music industry, including founding Winnipeg's Sunshine Records, and strongly supporting the industry for more than three decades.

New to the Aboriginal music scene is the band, Burnt, who received the Rising Stars award for the promise and potential they have demonstrated thus far. Winnipeg's Eagle and Hawk brought home three awards, Best Song Writer, Best Rock Album and Best Song Single. Clint Dutiaume received the award for Best Fiddle Album. Best Producer and engineer went to Danny Schur and Team Rezoofficial won Best Rap and Hip Hop Album. Congratulations to each of these individuals and their music groups.

Mr. Speaker, the Canadian Aboriginal Music Award acknowledges and honours Aboriginal people who teach, promote and perform Aboriginal music. The Aboriginal Music Award ceremony recognizes the talent and cultural significance and the need to celebrate excellence in Aboriginal music. Contributing to our society through one's culture and art

is valuable, not only because it develops and promotes the abilities of Manitoba's musicians, but because it engages and celebrates our province's cultural diversity.

* (13:50)

Mr. Speaker, it is important to recognize the hard work of each nominee, as well as the success of those candidates who returned with an award. In congratulating Manitoba's Aboriginal musicians, we also acknowledge the many hours of dedicated hard work and the contributions they make to our cultural province.

I would also like to congratulate and commend Manitoba Film and Sound and MARIA for their fine support of the Aboriginal community. Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

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

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

Mr. Gerrard: Mr. Speaker, I rise to offer congratulations on behalf of the Liberal Party of Manitoba and our caucus to the winners and to the nominees from Manitoba at the Canadian Aboriginal Music Award ceremonies held recently in Toronto.

I want to congratulate particularly those who won awards, Errol Ranville, Ness Michaels, Clint Dutiaume, Danny Schur, Team Rezoofficial, Burnt Project 1 and Eagle and Hawk, as well as the many nominees. The success of Manitoba artists speaks volumes about the importance of Manitoba artists in Manitoba and indeed in Canada when it comes to music. I think we, as Manitobans, should all be very proud of the contributions that Manitoba artists have made and indeed in their success in the recent awards.

I would like to mention also that Manitoba and Winnipeg is in the running for the Canadian Music Hall of Fame. I think we all need to work very hard to try and bring the Canadian Music Hall of Fame here to Winnipeg and to Manitoba. In doing so, I think one of the things that we need to try and do is to make sure that Aboriginal artists from Manitoba have a very prominent place in the Canadian Music Hall of Fame when we succeed in getting it here in Winnipeg, in Manitoba.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

Bill 11—The Provincial Court Amendment Act (Justices of the Peace)

Hon. Dave Chomiak (Acting Minister of Justice and Attorney General): Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the Minister of Finance (Mr. Selinger), that Bill 11, The Provincial Court Amendment Act (Justices of the Peace); Loi modifiant la Loi sur la Cour provinciale (juges de paix), be now read a first time.

Mr. Speaker: It has been moved by the honourable Minister of Energy, Science and Technology, seconded by the honourable Minister of Finance, that Bill 11, The Provincial Court Amendment Act, be now read a first time.

Mr. Chomiak: Mr. Speaker, this bill creates three classes of justices of the peace and provides for their employment, compensation and responsibilities.

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

Introduction of Guests

Mr. Speaker: Prior to Oral Questions, I would like to draw the attention of all honourable members to the public gallery where we have with us this year's Canadian Aboriginal Music Award, CAMA, winners, including special award winners Errol Ranville, Ness Michaels and members of Burnt Project 1. Also the CAMA nominees, Aboriginal artists in MARIA's new Aboriginal Music Program and featured on the newly released CD, and staff from MARIA and Manitoba Film and Sound. These people are the guests of the honourable Minister of Culture, Heritage and Tourism (Mr. Robinson).

Also in the public gallery we have with us from the Neepawa Area Collegiate 42 Grade 9 students under the direction of Mr. Alex Martin and Mrs. Michelle Young. This school is located in the constituency of the honourable member for Ste. Rose (Mr. Cummings).

Also in the public gallery we have with us today Mr. Jesse Hamonic. Mr. Hamonic is a University of Manitoba student and is the guest of the honourable member for Steinbach (Mr. Goertzen).

Also in the public gallery we have Abe and Marina Guerrero and Danny Causon. These visitors

are the guests of the honourable member for The Maples (Mr. Aglugub).

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

* (13:55)

ORAL QUESTIONS

Public Safety Government Initiatives

Mr. Glen Cummings (Ste. Rose): Sadly, Mr. Speaker, we have just experienced the 33rd homicide in this city last night, a new record for this city, all under the watch of this government. While gangs have established and prospered, repeatedly this government says that they are promising safer communities. We have seen little result, and with the evidence we saw last night, I ask the Acting Premier (Ms. Wowchuk) does she believe that this government has delivered safer communities.

Hon. Dave Chomiak (Acting Minister of Justice and Attorney General): First and foremost, because of the tragedy that occurred in the community last night, I am sure that all members extend their sympathy and condolences on the great loss to the families involved with this specific incident.

Mr. Speaker, the incident in question that was raised by the member just now is, of course, an ongoing investigation, et cetera. It would not, I think, serve anyone's purposes to discuss the specifics of the particular incident or incidents on behalf of the families and all of those involved, in terms of an ongoing and continuing investigation.

Mr. Cummings: Mr. Speaker, it goes without saying that we are seeing a number of tragic events unfolding and, obviously, there are families and loved ones who are suffering greatly as a result of the murder and mayhem that we are seeing on our streets.

Last night there were miles of neighbourhood streets that were shut down. People were told to lock themselves in their homes while a stand-off unfolded, unfortunately. I ask the minister is this the type of safer communities that he had in mind.

Mr. Chomiak: Mr. Speaker, it strikes me as very ironic and perhaps sad that this very session of the

Legislature, two days ago, members opposite, to a person, voted against adding 40 police officers to the province of Manitoba to help protect. Those were not merely words, those were actual deeds, and every member of the opposition benches, Liberals and Conservatives, to a person, stood up and said we vote against additional police officers. Their voting actions speak louder than their words today.

Mr. Cummings: Mr. Speaker, I think it speaks volumes when the Acting Minister of Justice stands up and points fingers and wants to accuse somebody else of not doing their job, when under this government we have just seen a record number of homicides.

Can this acting minister look his neighbours in the eye and tell them he has made their community safer when his record is an absolute disaster, and innocent families were told to hide behind their locked doors?

Mr. Chomiak: Just two days ago in this Chamber, for political purposes, members tried to raise an issue and were found so wrong even members of their own political party criticized them for making politics out of issues of crime. Having said that, we do not stand second when we increased the RCMP budget by 26 percent while members opposite voted against it. Mr. Speaker, 67% additional funding to the Prosecutions branch; members opposite voted against it. Finally, just this week, 40 additional police officers to serve Manitobans on a daily basis, and members opposite voted not in favour. They voted against it. Their actions speak louder than their words.

* (14:00)

Public Safety Government Initiatives

Mr. Gerald Hawranik (Lac du Bonnet): Mr. Speaker, 33 homicides in the city of Winnipeg; historic highs, unprecedented levels in the city of Winnipeg, unprecedented in history. It is the dubious record of the NDP and the legacy of the Minister of Justice (Mr. Mackintosh). The NDP were elected on a promise of delivering safer communities. Promises obviously mean nothing to the NDP since they failed to deliver on those promises.

I ask the Minister of Justice why has he not delivered meaningful change to curb the escalating violence and homicides in the city of Winnipeg. Why

has he not delivered on his promise to make our communities safer?

Hon. Dave Chomiak (Acting Minister of Justice and Attorney General): Mr. Speaker, it is very evident that when it comes to dealing with safer communities and safer citizens—[interjection]

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Mr. Chomiak: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Safer communities means more action in the communities with respect to safe locations, with respect to Lighthouse programs. It means expanded Prosecutions branches, it means expanded police activities. All of those activities, enhanced funding to domestic violence; all put in place by this government, all voted against by the very same people who are talking right now.

Mr. Hawranik: Mr. Speaker, the NDP's record on safety speaks for itself; 33 homicides in the city of Winnipeg. Last night whole neighbourhoods were under lock and key. Families were told not to leave their homes. Manitobans were told not to venture into The Maples area for hours last night. There was an armed stand-off. It was a war zone.

People are afraid. They are afraid for their safety and for their lives. I ask the Minister of Justice why has he not stood up for the victims and delivered on his election promise for safer communities.

Mr. Chomiak: Mr. Speaker, those same men and women in the community, the police officers, the police men and women, who were undertaking those activities on behalf of their fellow citizens last night, welcome the fact that we are now providing and growing their ranks by 40 police officers, something that is unprecedented. Those same men and women who put their lives on the line every day welcome that particular initiative. I think it is tragic that members of the opposition are so bent on criticizing every single activity that they cannot see the advantage of hiring additional police officers and oppose that very initiative.

Mr. Hawranik: Mr. Speaker, unprecedented levels of homicides, unprecedented levels of crime require unprecedented levels of policing, and he has to deliver more policing. Due to the inaction of this Minister of Justice, again Winnipeg will be the murder capital of Canada. It is a record belonging to

the NDP, and the Minister of Justice will be forever remembered in Manitoba for his incompetence and lack of action. We need action, not more press conferences and photo ops from the minister.

I ask the Minister of Justice why has he abandoned Manitobans. Why has he failed to protect Manitobans from criminals? Mr. Speaker, when will he finally deliver on his election promise for safer communities?

Mr. Chomiak: Mr. Speaker, aside from all the community initiatives that have been put in place to try to deal with the very sources of crime, besides the tough gang-busting legislation that is for the first time in this country been put in place by this Minister of Justice, the member himself made the statement that what is needed is unprecedented policing. The member opposite and all the members of the opposition voted against unprecedented policing. You cannot have it all ways. You cannot say one thing and vote another way. The people of Manitoba know, they know, what the members' record was like and they know members voted against additional policing in the province of Manitoba.

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

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

Public Safety Government Initiatives

Mrs. Bonnie Mitchelson (River East): Mr. Speaker, the police are doing their job. It is this government that is not doing their job.

Mr. Speaker, for every victim of a violent crime, for every victim of murder, and there were 33 murders in the city of Winnipeg this year, there is a family, there are friends and there is a community that mourn those senseless deaths.

I want to ask the Minister of Justice (Mr. Mackintosh) to stand up today and tell the families and the friends and Manitobans about the 33 people, and I will just list the 33 people that were murdered this year under this government's watch: Shawn Stephan Moore, Veronica Cropp, James Ronald Hanson, Denis Vandal, Stephanie Buboire, Brent Jones—

Mr. Speaker: Order. The honourable member's time has expired.

Hon. Dave Chomiak (Acting Minister of Justice and Attorney General): Mr. Speaker, I would like all members of the House, and I know the member was a member of the previous government that for 11 lean years did not take much social activity or work in the community. I am well aware of that. Having said that, I want members opposite to know that it is not just the 40 police officers that members voted against. Members voted against the increasing of the Prosecutions branch.

In voting against our last budget, members opposite voted against the unparalleled support to victims of domestic violence. A recent study found a drop of 62 percent between 1974 and 2001 with respect to domestic violence. This year we announced a seven-point plan, all dealing with victims, all geared not just at the crime itself, but in all those surrounding particular aspects of it.

Mrs. Mitchelson: Mr. Speaker, 33 murders in Winnipeg this year under this government's watch. I would like to continue: Ernest Anderson, Brent P. Jones, Shawn Murray Baptiste, Sophie Jaworski, Baby Amelia, Margaret Besteck, Douglas Fischer, Cynthia Lafleur, Jankow Milas, Patsy Keanna-Lynn Desmarais, Sterling Blair Moar, David Keno, Sandra Chubauty, Sirak Okbazion, Wilson Martinez, Brian Alexander Wellard, Brad Tait, Jeff Gibson, Trevor Sinclair, Gordon Catcheway, Kevin Wandowich, David Lagimodiere, Michael Helgason, Terrence Anderson, Leslie Robert Tait, Clarence Fontaine, Joe, Raja Singh-Brar.

What does this minister say to the families of those who were murdered?

Mr. Chomiak: Mr. Speaker, I can say to all victims of crime in the province of Manitoba that we have worked diligently to put in place support programs. We have worked diligently to put in place domestic violence programs, expand prosecutions. I think the proof is in the fact that members opposite, who daily love to bring statistics to the Legislature, voted against one of the most significant measures ever. They voted just this week. They had a chance to put 40 additional police officers on the street and they voted against it.

It is shameful, Mr. Speaker. It is shameful that members of the opposition who every day come to

this Legislature and say, "do more, spend more money," then voted against the very initiatives that would help protect people on the streets.

Mrs. Mitchelson: Mr. Speaker, those answers were a disgrace and did a disservice to the families and the loved ones that have been left behind.

Mr. Speaker, each of the victims and their families are entitled to and deserve a moment of silence for their senseless deaths. I would like to ask all members of this House to stand for 33 seconds to observe the 33 murders we have seen in Winnipeg this year under this government's watch.

*(14:10)

Mr. Speaker: We will have to ask leave of the House because that is not part of our Question Period process. As the honourable member has requested members, we will have to ask leave because we cannot just—

Hon. Steve Ashton (Deputy Government House Leader): Mr. Speaker, I am the Deputy House Leader. I know there were discussions with the House leaders in terms of today. I am not sure if this was raised. We often have recognition of statements made by members usually either prior or after Question Period. I think we would be quite prepared to entertain this after Question Period, but we have had no knowledge of this. I would hope that this is intended to reflect concern about the families and is not political. Therefore, I would suggest I would be more than willing to discuss this or any other suggestion with the Opposition House Leader (Mr. Derkach) after Question Period.

Mr. Speaker: We ask all members, we will continue on with Question Period. I would encourage the House Leaders to meet and, if the House agrees, then we will do it by leave. So we will continue with Question Period.

* * *

Mr. Chomiak: As I indicated earlier, I find it extraordinary members brought a matter to this Chamber two days ago in which they were found by members of their own party to be wrong and inaccurate and attempted to make political out of something that ought not to be made political of, Mr. Speaker, that ought to be dealt with in an objective way.

Mr. Speaker, now today members have brought forward a number of matters. I only say to members opposite that we will give our support and recognition to all those families as we have done in the past. I find it very perplexing and very curious that this week they had a chance to vote in favour of an additional 40 police officers, and every member of the opposition voted against it, stood up and voted against those initiatives. I think their actions speak louder than their words today.

Public Safety Government Initiatives

Mr. Ron Schuler (Springfield): Mr. Speaker, 33 murders in this city is an all-time record. We have carnage in our streets and asking for respect is not political. As a husband and a father of three children, can the Doer government tell this House what family feels safe today in the city of Winnipeg?

Hon. Dave Chomiak (Acting Minister of Justice and Attorney General): Mr. Speaker, the gang-fortified bills legislation, the gang initiatives put in place by this government are unprecedented.

Secondly, the increase in Prosecutions budget of 67 percent pales members opposite's record when they were in office. The increase to victims, support groups and domestic violence has more than doubled and, most importantly, support to the men and women on the front lines.

How would you feel on the front lines, Mr. Speaker, if you knew the opposition parties voted against increasing your ranks, increasing your support, putting more police officers on the street to help you out? I wonder how people feel about members opposite voting against that initiative to make people and to provide for safety in the city of Winnipeg and outside of the city of Winnipeg. I might urge members opposite there are issues to do with outside as well.

Mr. Schuler: Mr. Speaker, pathetic spin is not going to help those 33 murdered and their families today, and all what we hear is pathetic spin. What we are looking for is for a plan. My heart goes out to the Raja Singh Brar family, his wife and his two young children, who today are now a widow and fatherless children. How does the government explain what happened yesterday besides this senseless and

useless spin that we hear here today? How do they respond to those?

Mr. Chomiak: Mr. Speaker, I think the member ought to talk to the Member for Lac du Bonnet (Mr. Hawranik), who just said in his statement that he thought the present state required unprecedented policing services. The Member for Lac du Bonnet, a member of his own party, and now the member has finally got up on a question and contradicted his own member of caucus.

Mr. Speaker, I only suggest the Member for Springfield go through his very record. He and his fellow members voted against putting additional police on the street in Winnipeg and Manitoba. That is something they are going to have to explain to their constituents.

Mr. Schuler: Mr. Speaker, this government should read today's papers and read about the carnage that took place on the streets of Manitoba, not just in the city of Winnipeg, but outside of the street, what all happened in our communities inside of Winnipeg and outside of Winnipeg. His plans are failing. What they have proposed is failing, and what the 33 families want is some real action.

People are scared. People do not know where to go. They were told to lock down their houses, lock down their families. People want to go out with their children. It is Christmastime. Our people are being mowed down, and there is carnage in our streets. When are they going to come up with a plan, and when are they going to deal with the violence? There are 33 murders, a historical number for this city. Do something. Do something.

Mr. Chomiak: Mr. Speaker, when voters elect governments, they expect voters to act. We have increased the RCMP by 26 percent, the Prosecutions branch funding by 67 percent.

Mr. Speaker, just this week in this Legislature, we came to this Legislature, said to all parties, "Will you support us in putting 40 additional men and women on the streets to help protect the citizens of Manitoba?" It was very clear.

Members on this side voted yes. The Member for Springfield and all members opposite, despite what the Member for Lac du Bonnet (Mr. Hawranik) said, saying we needed unprecedented police

officers, voted against it. You cannot say one thing and do something else. Even the Member for Springfield ought to realize that.

Public Safety Government Initiatives

Mr. Jack Reimer (Southdale): Mr. Speaker, all too often over the last while, we have seen every morning when we get our morning paper or we listen to the radio some more violence in the city here in Winnipeg and actually throughout Manitoba. There is an unprecedented amount of murders here in Winnipeg. We have seen people that are not safe on the streets. We have seen young people being beat up on the streets. We hear of seniors that are scared to go out. They have to lock their door. They are adding security to their homes. There is a sense of unsafety and not being safe in their communities. They are not being safe.

Mr. Speaker, I want to ask the Minister of Justice or the designate, why do the people in Winnipeg have to have this type of fear at this time of season when they should be out enjoying and visiting and having fun with all their relatives and neighbours. They are afraid to go downtown. They are afraid in their homes. Their programs are not working. Their programs are not working.

Hon. Dave Chomiak (Acting Minister of Justice and Attorney General): Mr. Speaker, I think that the people of Manitoba are aware of the fact that there have been put in place more initiatives in the past five years to deal with crime, and victims and domestic violence than the combined 11 lean years of the Conservative government.

Having said that, we had a chance this week for all members to stand up and for all Manitobans to make the record clear, for all members to vote. All I know is, Mr. Speaker, this government committed to put 40 additional police officers on the streets to help protect Manitobans. The member opposite, together with all of the members of the opposition, did not abstain. They did not stand away. They voted against it. They said do not put 40 extra police officers on the streets. What kind of message is that to Manitobans?

Mr. Reimer: Mr. Speaker, let me be very clear about this. The City of Winnipeg police, the police throughout all Manitoba, are doing their job. They

are doing their job. They do not have the tools to enforce the law. They do not have the tools. That is right. The legislation that this government can bring in, they do not enforce. You have a catch and release with people on parole, and this is something that is happening throughout all of Manitoba.

Mr. Speaker, the police are doing their job. They need the tools. This government has not given them the tools. They can talk about all the numbers, but it is not happening. You have young girls being beat up in the Portage mall. They need programs. They need legislation that has teeth.

* (14:20)

Mr. Chomiak: Mr. Speaker, one of the main tools that we can provide the men and women of the police services with their support, not only is our gang legislation, domestic violence and victims' support, but the main tool is the men and women who are out there working on our behalf day and night.

You know what? Members opposite voted against the very tools that members opposite talk about, 40 men and women on the street, and members opposite said, "We do not want an additional 40 men and women on the street. We vote against it. We are against additional police officers. We vote against it." That is what they said. They can twist it and say all they want, but they are responsible for voting against putting an additional 40 men and women on the streets. I am afraid their record has caught up with them.

Mr. Reimer: Mr. Speaker, this member can stand up and rate and berate this side of the House with what we do in our votes, and they can clap and applaud that way because that is their mentality, but I will tell you there are people in the city of Winnipeg who do not feel safe going downtown. There are people in the suburbs who do not feel safe. There are seniors in their apartment blocks and in their homes who do not feel safe. There are 33 new murders in this city. The government here is responsible. They are not doing their job. They are not bringing in legislation that has some sort of teeth to it, that has some sort of enforcement the police can do their job with. This government has to be accountable. They are not doing the job.

Mr. Chomiak: Two responses, Mr. Speaker. I note that the Winnipeg Police Service issued a survey

talking about safety in the city and indicated that 94 percent of all Winnipeggers felt safe walking in their neighbourhoods during the day, up from 91 percent in 2000. That was the Winnipeg Police Service. Not only do members opposite condemn the stats of the Winnipeg Police Service, but they give a slap in the face to the police services of Manitoba by voting against additional police officers in Winnipeg and police officers in rural Manitoba.

How do the men and women of those police forces feel about members opposite denying them the additional men and women to do their jobs? I think it is deplorable.

Winnipeg Police Service Resources

Mr. Leonard Derkach (Russell): Mr. Speaker, twisting the facts and being frivolous with this kind of an issue does no one any good. I know—

Mr. Speaker: Order. I need to be able to hear the questions and the answers. The honourable member is only a few feet away from me and I cannot even hear him. I ask the co-operation of all honourable members.

Mr. Derkach: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I know personally, as does my community, the fear, the horror and the deep sorrow that is being felt by the people in The Maples today, because two years ago a gunman took the life of an officer and left a community living in fear and horror. Twenty police officers is not enough. If we need to put 40 on the street to make this community safe, then get out there, put 40 police officers. We will support that. But a meagre measure does not address the problem, and today we have people living in fear.

I ask this government when it will move to address the problem and put enough officers on the street so that, indeed, people can feel safe in this city.

Hon. Dave Chomiak (Acting Minister of Justice and Attorney General): I want to get this perfectly factual, Mr. Speaker. The member for Lac du Bonnet (Mr. Hawranik) said you need unprecedented police. The Member for Springfield (Mr. Schuler), we are not sure what he said. Now the Member for Russell is saying they did not want to vote for an additional 40 police officers because that was not enough, even though when the member was a member of Cabinet,

they did not even have the full complement of RCMP officers in the province. They underfunded it, even though he sat around a Cabinet table for 11 years and underfunded the RCMP. Do I have that correct, Mr. Speaker?

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Speaker: Order. I want to remind all honourable members, questions and answers should be put through the Chair.

Mr. Derkach: Mr. Speaker, in those days that the member refers to, we did not have—

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Mr. Derkach: Mr. Speaker, I am sorry, it is no laughing matter. I do not think the people of The Maples think this is a laughing matter. Never in the history have we had this level of homicides in the city. This is a serious situation that requires serious solutions.

I am asking this government today to step up to the plate and put enough officers on the street so that once again, this city can feel safe and the people in our communities can feel free to walk around in their communities without the fear of having been gunned down by gunmen in the city.

Mr. Chomiak: Mr. Speaker, the member indicated that things were different then. I know things were different then. They underfunded the RCMP and they cut back on programs. We know that gangs entered Manitoba when they were in office. We know that.

Since then, we put in place, we have expanded Prosecutions division by 67 percent. We have doubled domestic violence aid and programs which we all recognize particularly this week. Most important, what I do not understand is why the member said, "Put police officers on the street," the same week that he voted against additional police officers being put on the street, Mr. Speaker. It makes no sense.

Mr. Derkach: Mr. Speaker, what makes no sense is the answers of this minister. That makes absolutely no sense to us. It makes no sense to the people in The

Maples. It makes no sense to the families of the people who lost their loved ones, because this government will not put the resources in place to ensure that this city is safe, that our communities are safe, that people are safe.

Mr. Speaker, we are approaching the Christmas season, a time when families get together. What are we seeing? Families losing their loved ones because the government will not put the resources in place to ensure that we have a safe city. When will this government put the resources in place to ensure the safety of people on the streets and in the city of Winnipeg?

Mr. Chomiak: Mr. Speaker, as I recall, the 67% increase in Prosecutions branch in our budgets was voted against by members opposite. The doubling of domestic violence programs was voted against by members opposite. Just this week, an additional 40 men and women to be placed on the streets of Winnipeg and outside of Winnipeg to help protect other citizens was voted against by members opposite.

Mr. Speaker, you cannot stand up and say we did not do anything for 11 years. We know you put those programs in place. We know you are putting extra police officers on the street, but do something about it. Wait, they had a chance; they voted against it. They should be ashamed of their voting record. They should be ashamed to have to face their constituents and the men and women on the line who put their lives on the line every day to protect all of us.

Immigration Family Reunification

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Inkster): Mr. Speaker, my question is to the Minister of Immigration. Hundreds of potential family support nominees are not able to come to Manitoba because the occupation appears to be on the restricted occupations list. Will the minister allow nurses, doctors and others to come to Manitoba under the family support stream?

Hon. Nancy Allan (Minister of Labour and Immigration): Mr. Speaker, we are going to do today, I guess, Immigration 101 for the MLA for Inkster. This is very important.

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Ms. Allan: The Manitoba government has a Provincial Nominee Program, and that is a bilateral agreement with the federal Liberal government. That bilateral agreement is signed off on by the Minister of Immigration and the federal Liberal Minister of Immigration. That is what governs—

* (14:30)

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Mr. Lamoureux: Mr. Speaker, to the same minister. There are Manitobans that have brothers, sisters, nephews, nieces that live abroad who want to be able to immigrate to Manitoba. Will the minister exempt the family support stream from having to comply with the restricted occupations list?

Ms. Allan: Mr. Speaker, that bilateral agreement is signed off on by the Manitoba government and the federal Liberal government. It governs our Provincial Nominee Program. We have no legislative authority to manage a federal immigration stream around family sponsorship.

It is very important, Mr. Speaker, that the MLA for Inkster understands that sponsorship and family support are two very, very, very different words and need very—[interjection] They do. I cannot believe they are laughing. If you need a briefing on this in my office at any time, so that they understand these programs better, I would be more than happy to offer that to members opposite.

Mr. Lamoureux: Mr. Speaker, this particular minister fails when it comes to Immigration 101. She does not understand the concept of immigration. I have never heard such bafflegab from a minister who clearly demonstrates she does not understand the importance of this program. She does not know how to implement the program that is going to benefit all Manitobans. If you want to achieve 10 000, they had better replace this minister. She has no idea what she is talking about.

Mr. Speaker, this minister changed it to six different streams. All we are asking for is for her to exempt one of the classifications. If she does not understand the concept, do the right thing and resign your position so we will get a minister that does understand it. We are talking about immigrants that could contribute positively through family reunification. The minister does have the authority. Does

the minister herself support the idea of exemption? Do you support?

Ms. Allan: Once again, Mr. Speaker, I really would encourage the MLA for Inkster to have a meeting in our office so he understands the very important difference between the federal family sponsorship program that we have no legislative authority to deliver in this province because of a bilateral agreement with the federal government.

He needs a meeting, Mr. Speaker. He needs a meeting. He can get a meeting in my office or maybe with a staffperson in the federal minister's office. If he is going to have that meeting in Ottawa, I suggest he does not choose a strip bar.

Disabilities Issues Office Update

Ms. Kerri Irvin-Ross (Fort Garry): Mr. Speaker, December 3, we celebrated United Nations Day of Persons with—

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Point of Order

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

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Inkster): Yes, Mr. Speaker. I am not too sure in terms of what it is that I heard through the Minister of Immigration (Ms. Allan), but I think she made reference to having strippers come to the province of Manitoba. If that is what it is that she is hoping to be able to achieve, I think that she should try to somewhat clarify. Ottawa has been clear in terms of their position on that issue. Shame.

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Speaker: Order. I remind all honourable members that a point of order should point out to the Speaker a breach of a rule or a departure from Manitoba practice, and not to use points of order for debate.

Is the honourable Member for Springfield up on the same point of order?

Mr. Ron Schuler (Springfield): Yes, Mr. Speaker.

All members in this House are honourable members and to somehow indicate that one of the

members of this House is going to go to Ottawa and should stay out of strip bars, or maybe that is what an honourable member does, I think, was out of order, and you, Mr. Speaker, should rule on this.

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Speaker: Order. Once again, I remind all honourable members a point of order should be raised to point out to the Speaker a departure of the rules or Manitoba practice, not to be used for debate. On the point of order raised by the honourable Member for Inkster, it is not a point of order. It is a dispute over the facts.

Point of Order

Hon. Steve Ashton (Deputy Government House Leader): On a new point of order, Mr. Speaker, I believe the Minister of Labour actually was going to rise to withdraw those comments. I know the minister is referring to developments in Ottawa where we do have various accusations that the Minister of Immigration nationally has been helping in giving ministerial permits to employees at strip clubs. It is certainly something that members may have heard, and I do believe the minister was attempting to rise when you did rule on that point of order. So I was raising this as a point of order, and I know the Minister of Labour may have some comments.

Mr. Speaker: Before I recognize the honourable Minister of Labour and Immigration, I want to point out to all members of the House how important it is for the Speaker to be able to hear the members who have the floor. It is very crucial when members get up to raise a point of order, and I have heard part of it and I have not heard all of it because of the disruption that is happening on the floor. I think this should give us all a good reminder how important it is to be able to hear the questions and the answers. I think it is very important.

Hon. Nancy Allan (Minister of Labour and Immigration): Because of the noise in the Chamber, anybody who took my comments out of context, of course, I would apologize in regard to any of those comments. But I am serious, Mr. Speaker.

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Speaker: Order. When members are withdrawing a comment that they have made and

they wish to withdraw, it is to unequivocally withdraw it without explanation.

I accept the honourable minister's withdrawal, and that should end the matter.

* * *

Mr. Speaker: The honourable Member for Fort Garry has the floor.

Ms. Irvin-Ross: Mr. Speaker, on December 3, we celebrated United Nations Day of Persons with Disabilities. Can the Minister of Family Services and Housing comment on the recent changes to the Disabilities Issues Office?

Hon. Christine Melnick (Minister of Family Services and Housing): Mr. Speaker, last Friday I attended a number of events in celebration of the United Nations Day of Persons with Disabilities, and one of the events that I attended was the first anniversary of the Disabilities Issues Office.

It is the first office of its kind in the history of this province, and I can tell you the staff are very dedicated and are working very well with our department, among others, to raise concerns around accessibility within government and throughout government buildings. Jim Derksen, who had been the first executive director, had retired this summer. We all know him as an international activist in the Disabilities Issues Office, so I was also able to announce the appointment of David Martin to the new position, who, of course, is internationally known and is the past executive director of Ten Ten Sinclair. I would like to welcome David Martin to the Disabilities Issues Office.

Public Safety Government Initiatives

Mr. Gerald Hawranik (Lac du Bonnet): Crime has blossomed under this government. There have been unprecedented levels of crime and that requires unprecedented levels of policing. Twenty officers is clearly not enough. Thirty-three homicides. Let us make no mistake about it: thirty-three homicides. That is the record of the NDP; that is the record of the Justice Minister (Mr. Mackintosh).

I ask the Minister of Justice what will he say to the families of these victims. Thirty-three men,

women and children in this province who have lost their lives, 33 families who have lost their loved ones; their parents, their children, their friends. What will the minister say to the victims and their families? Will he be able to tell them with a straight face that he has created a safer community and he has fulfilled his election promises?

* (14:40)

Hon. Dave Chomiak (Acting Minister of Justice and Attorney General): Mr. Speaker, I sense a touch of backpedalling on the part of members opposite who now, if I understand the Member for Lac du Bonnet correctly, even though when they were in office they did not spend the full budget on RCMP, even though they cut the budget, now they say, "You need an unprecedented number of police, but we voted against your increasing the number of police by 40 because you are not doing enough."

Now do I understand that correctly, that that is now the Conservative position that they voted against an additional 40 men and women on the streets of Manitoba because that was not enough? Or is it a case that they have been caught up in trying to be overly political, and politicizing issues in order to try to garner attention? Which way is it? One way or the other.

Mr. Speaker: The time for Oral Questions has expired.

Point of Order

Mr. Speaker: The honourable Official Opposition House Leader, on a point of order?

Mr. Leonard Derkach (Official Opposition House Leader): Mr. Speaker, on a point of order on a very serious matter.

Mr. Speaker, what we witnessed here today was something that is bothering me, and I think it is bothering members of the House. I have witnessed in the past where members have stood up on members' statements, ministerial statements, and have asked that we join them in a minute of silence. We have done that without having to ask leave of the House. Today a member stood in her place and she used her question time, which is 50 seconds, and asked that we spend 33 seconds in silence in recognition of our respect to the families of the people who have lost

their lives senselessly in this province. What I heard was, first of all, that all of a sudden there had to be leave to do that when, in other cases, we have not ever had to ask for leave to do that. Secondly, that the Deputy Government House Leader (Mr. Ashton) stood in his place and used up that time to indicate something about negotiations on a minute of silence.

Mr. Speaker, is this what we have deteriorated to in this Legislature, that we cannot pay the proper respect to people by giving them 33 seconds, a second for each person that was slain? I hesitated to rise on this point of order, but this is, in fact, a very serious precedent if, in fact, now the opposition has to go cap in hand and ask for leave for a minute of silence to just offer some gesture of respect to people who have, because of nothing they did, because of the senseless approach by others, lost their lives, and their families have been left without a father, a brother, a friend, or whoever that might have been.

So, Mr. Speaker, I rise on that point of order because I think whatever approach has taken such a very ugly precedent for us in this Chamber, and that is why I have to raise this issue.

Mr. Speaker: The honourable Deputy Government House Leader, on the same point of order?

Hon. Steve Ashton (Deputy Government House Leader): Mr. Speaker, on the same point of order, I would note, first of all, that despite the comments I made in Question Period, there has been no contact by the Opposition House Leader either prior to or afterwards. I would say that, having served in this Legislature for some time, I think one thing that everybody understands is that Question Period can be very heated discussion and debate. It is a very political time period.

Whenever I have seen in this House respect paid through moments of silence, it is usually done outside of the context of the very real and important day-to-day partisan politics of the time. I think it was quite obvious, certainly to members on this side of the House, that what members opposite were doing in this particular case was a very political statement. I would suggest that the fact that it was done without any discussion at all clearly indicates it was a political statement. I, for one, when I have stood in this Chamber, as we did only a matter of days ago to recognize the victims of the Montréal massacre of 15 years ago, it is done in terms of respect, not in the

heat of Question Period, not after a series of questions on the political issue of the day.

Mr. Speaker, as someone who has seen tragedy in my own community in terms of murder. I have seen close friends of our family killed in senseless acts, and by the way, not this year, not even in the last five years. I am talking about over a number of years, Mr. Speaker.

When I think of what the family of the most recent victim is going through, and I do not want to comment on the circumstances, but I think it is very apparent the double difficulty they are dealing with. Mr. Speaker, I think it would be beyond disrespectful to take an opportunity as we often do for a moment of silence, in this case, to have it tied in with some political statement. Members opposite are perfectly entitled if they wish to make a political statement about the concern they expressed in Question Period, but I think it is disrespectful to the families in the height of the passion of Question Period, after a series of very political statements, to politicize that.

I would say, Mr. Speaker, not only does the Opposition House Leader (Mr. Derkach) not have a point of order, he clearly had no intention of achieving the support of all members of this House. It is again an extension of this political statement. That is his right, but members on this side are not going to play cheap politics with the tragedy that we saw involving one Winnipeg, one Manitoba family, yesterday. I will pay my respect to the family as a member of this Legislature, as an individual, but not in the context of this kind of cheap politics.

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Speaker: Order. The honourable Member for River East, on the same point of order.

Mrs. Bonnie Mitchelson (River East): Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, and I just heard comments from the other side of the House, I think it was from the Deputy Premier (Ms. Wowchuk) saying, "Leave the families alone." Well I do not intend to leave the families alone. When families—*[interjection]*

There are 33 victims of murder in the city of Winnipeg this year, and if I, as a member of the Legislature, cannot stand in my place and use my time to ask all members to stand and to respect the families, the loved ones, and the community that has

been left behind, it is a very sad day in this Legislature.

Mr. Speaker, I have sat on both sides of the House. I have been a minister responsible for—

An Honourable Member: We are not killing anybody, Bonnie.

Mrs. Mitchelson: Mr. Speaker, I would hope that you would call the Member for Kildonan (Mr. Chomiak) to order—

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Mrs. Mitchelson: —for the disrespect that he is showing at a time when we should be respecting the families and the loved ones that have been left behind. If I was prepared to give up my 50 seconds in Question Period to show that kind of respect, I do not know why the government would not want to do that.

Mr. Speaker, I have never asked for leave when I have stood in my place and asked for a moment of silence before, and I know many members on the government side today have not asked for leave. I think, if you will check back through the records, you will find that moments of silence have been asked for in other venues other than ministerial statements in this Legislature—*[interjection]*

I cannot understand why the members of the government are trying to shout me down when I have the floor and am trying to explain the intent of what I was trying to do. It is them that should be ashamed today when they use the kind of activity that they used during Question Period. It just shows the vulnerability of this government and their inability to deal with safety and security and issues of violence in our province. If they have something to hide, if they are embarrassed about it, maybe rightly so, but I was standing in respect for the families asking for a moment of silence—*[interjection]*—and, again, the Deputy Premier continues. I hope that she will stand on this point of order and put her thoughts on the record because she is sitting in her seat continually. I would ask that the Deputy Premier get up, put her thoughts on the record, put her comments on the record, and maybe then you will be able to rule on this point of order.

* (14:50)

Mr. Speaker: The honourable member for River Heights on the same point of order.

Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights): Mr. Speaker, I think it is worthwhile, as the MLA for River Heights and the Liberal leader, to put some comments on this point of order. As the third party, often called independent members, it is very frequent that we do not get a lot of advance notice about, particular events that are happening, and as recently as this Monday we had a minute of silence because there were 14 women who were killed December 6 of 1989, and my House leader informs me that there was not any particular notice through the House leaders to him that this was going to be happening. Yet, when the minister rose and suggested that there be a minute of silence, this seemed a very reasonable thing to us. We rose, as did the other members of this Legislature, to observe a minute of silence.

It is a little bit different, perhaps, to be doing this during Question Period, and I think, Mr. Speaker, that it would be wise of you to consider this carefully and to come back with recommendations to the Legislature in terms of the time that is being used in Question Period and what your thoughts as Speaker are on the appropriateness or inappropriateness of this. But, certainly, it should not be predicated on the question of notice because there are many instances where the government has acted, as I said, as recently as Monday, without necessarily providing notice to us. I do not know if they provided notice on Monday to the members of the Conservative Party, for example.

So I think that the issue here is the use of a member's time during Question Period. It is not an issue of whether or not there was prior notice. It is an issue of whether or not it is appropriate to have 33 seconds of silence for the victims of murders in Winnipeg during the past year. I think that, quite frankly, it is a reasonable thing for members in this Chamber as, indeed, the Acting Government Whip, I think, said that he felt it was reasonable to do this. He only questioned the time issue. We, certainly, on our side felt that this was reasonable and we rose to provide 33 seconds of silence in memory of the 33 victims who have been killed in Winnipeg this year, Mr. Speaker.

So what I would say to you is that it is not, you know, as the Acting Government House Leader has said, it is not a question of whether or not this is an

appropriate thing to do, it is only a question of when. I think that the Speaker should consider this very carefully in terms of the use of a member's time during Question Period. Certainly, it is not an issue of notice. Certainly, it is not an issue of whether it is appropriate. It is appropriate to have 33 seconds of silence, but the only question is the use of time in Question Period and that, Mr. Speaker, we look forward to receiving your advice.

Mr. Speaker: A point of order is a very serious matter. I am going to take this under advisement and I will come back with a ruling.

* * *

Mr. Speaker: The honourable Official Opposition House Leader, on a new point of order.

Mr. Leonard Derkach (Official Opposition House Leader): No, Mr. Speaker. Are we into Routine Proceedings?

Mr. Speaker: No, I have Orders of the Day. We still have to do Members' Statements and grievances yet.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

Sisler High School

Mr. Doug Martindale (Burrows): Mr. Speaker, I want to congratulate Sisler High School for being chosen Canada's top comprehensive high school by *Maclean's* magazine in its August 23, 2004, edition.

It is easy to see why Sisler High School was given this distinction. The school offers a number of distinct programs that appeal to its students. The school offers several choir and dance programs, technology courses for women interested in construction and university-level courses in physics, calculus and Latin. Most recently, 39 Sisler students won the Canada FIRST Robotics competition in 2003. The school also boasts an impressive arts and music program and even a cricket team.

The *Maclean's* distinction is only one, Mr. Speaker. Sisler has received six Prime Minister's awards for teaching excellence, with one teacher, Mr. Chris Bandfield, receiving the Lieutenant-Governor's teacher of the year award for co-ordinating and developing Refugees & Exiles, an innovative course that teaches students the hardships

of refugee living by having them live like a refugee for a 24-hour period. The school's students have also had the honour of entertaining the Queen and have worked with Royal Winnipeg Ballet.

Every year on December 6, Mr. Speaker, a memorial is held to remember the 14 women who were murdered at l'École polytechnique, because they were women, in a meaningful ceremony with candlelighting, speeches and music.

It is the hard work and dedication of the teaching, administrative staff and principal that makes Sisler Canada's most comprehensive school. The vision, leadership and support shown by the principal of Sisler, Mr. George Heshka, helps encourage teachers to offer Sisler's students engaging and challenging areas to pursue and to excel in. Sisler High School truly offers its staff and students something to be proud of.

Finally, I want to add that our son Nathan and daughter Tanissa are both proud to be graduates of Sisler High School.

Hanukkah

Mrs. Mavis Taillieu (Morris): Mr. Speaker, Hanukkah is a very important date for the Jewish community, and I rise today to acknowledge the observance of this holiday.

For more than 2000 years, the Jewish people from around the world have been brought together by the warmth, joy, friendship and family of this eight-day holiday that commemorates the victory of the Jewish people over Antiochus of Syria and the subsequent rededication of the Temple of Jerusalem.

One of Hanukkah's traditions is to light a candle on the menorah, one of the oldest symbols of Jewish culture. Many years ago, when the Jewish people tried to light a candle to rededicate the Temple of Jerusalem, they found that there was only enough oil to last one day. Miraculously however, the oil lasted for eight days. Today, the light of eight candles of the menorah symbolize the miracle, and recall the greatness of growth, triumph of light over darkness and the victory of good over evil.

What truly makes our province great is the people of Manitoba. Our communities, towns and cities across our province are filled with people from a variety of cultural, religious and ethnic back-

grounds, each offering their own unique customs and traditions. It is a great test of a mature province that we can recognize all faiths and share in the richness and heritage of the multicultural society of our province.

On behalf of all members, I would like to wish our Jewish community, and the Jewish community around the world, a very happy Hanukkah and the best during the holiday season. Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

Selkirk Royals

Mr. Gregory Dewar (Selkirk): Mr. Speaker, it is a pleasure to rise today to pay tribute to the Selkirk Royals varsity girls' volleyball team who recently won the Manitoba High Schools AAA Provincial Volleyball Championship.

The Selkirk Royals are deserving champions. They were ranked number one heading into the playoffs, then they swept the Glenlawn Lions in three straight sets in the championship match. This victory means a lot to the community of Selkirk, as the varsity girls' first provincial volleyball championship.

As a graduate of Selkirk Comprehensive High School, I have personal pride in this achievement. I, along with many of the citizens of Selkirk, am very proud, not only of the effort the girls gave, but also the strength of their character, Mr. Speaker.

To honour the team for their tremendous accomplishment, I would like to read their names into the record: Carla Clemons, Rachele Northwood, Lisa Grimolfson, Kayla Nielson, Nicole Koropas, Jaimie Yuzdepski, Jenna Illchuck, Kayla Fidler, Kathleen Vitt, Jill Sawatzky, tournament All Star, Tracee Tesch, tournament All Star, Marlee Bragg, tournament MVP.

They were coached by Rick Scott and his assistants Robin Bolin and Kristy Fewchuk.

On behalf of all members and a very grateful community, I congratulate the Selkirk Royals girls' volleyball team on their impressive victory. Thank you.

Russell Lady Trojans

Mr. Leonard Derkach (Russell): I, too, rise on a member's statement regarding a provincial championship, and this one is the AA Provincial

Girls' Volleyball Championship that was won by the Major Pratt Lady Trojans two weeks ago. I have to say that, once again, it was a very thrilling competition because most of the teams that participated were very high calibre. At the end of the day, the Russell Lady Trojans played against the Souris team who were seeded number one, and it was, indeed, a very exciting game. It went to three sets. At the end of the day, the Russell Lady Trojans were victorious.

* (15:00)

Mr. Speaker, Ms. Barbara Birch and her team have had an excellent season where they have gone virtually undefeated through most of their tournaments and have proven that they are, once again, great champions. Many of the young ladies on this team will be moving on to the provincial team that is going to be formed in the summer. Some of them have already participated at that level and, indeed, many of the participants from Major Pratt in that western side of the province do find their way to our university varsity volleyball teams. As a matter of fact, a couple have even gone into the United States and played on scholarships in that area. Once again, a good year for the Lady Trojans in Russell. Instead of reading all their names, I will table their names for the record so that, indeed, they can be recorded in Hansard. Congratulations not only to all of the participants of this AA provincial championship, but most importantly to the Major Pratt Lady Trojans.

Aiyawin Corporation

Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights): Mr. Speaker, the Aiyawin scandal that my party brought to the attention of this House some time ago has been all over the media this week, including on the front page of the *Free Press* today. Although \$1.1 million of taxpayer money may have gone missing due to this government's ineptitude, the Minister of Family Services and Housing's (Ms. Melnick) own departmental review is scathing, to say the least. It demands that Aiyawin immediately repay the missing money, money that should have been used to make sure low-income and elderly Aboriginal people had safe places to live. Instead, it was spent with no accountability and no prior approval from MHRC over a two-year period.

The minister dithers, saying she does not want people out on the street. What an entirely ridiculous statement. Continued dithering by the minister is the

one thing that may put those in Aiyawin housing at risk. Putting Aiyawin under interim management will provide the best protection for Aiyawin's residents. Does the minister really think the public will buy her vacuous reasoning? If she is so concerned about Aiyawin's tenants, why has she not moved to immediately install interim management while this mess is sorted out?

I table today a petition signed by many who live in Aiyawin Corporation housing asking the government to take over as interim managers. Indeed, some of these people, I believe, may live in the minister's riding. Mr. Speaker, what kind of a message does this minister's inaction send to other organizations like Aiyawin that receive public money? The message she is sending is that it is okay to spend taxpayers' money without approval. Go ahead. She will give you a second chance and a couple of weeks to clean out the rest of the cupboards before she does anything, if she does anything at all. The situation at Aiyawin has been botched from the beginning by this minister and her government. The taxpayers of this province, and especially low-income, Aboriginal people of Manitoba, deserve answers, and they deserve them now.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Meegwetch.

* (15:00)

ORDERS OF THE DAY

GOVERNMENT BUSINESS

Hon. Steve Ashton (Deputy Government House Leader): On Orders of the Day, and this is by agreement with the opposition, I would like to call Bill 10 for a second reading. I would also like to request you canvass the House to see if there is unanimous consent to do an Opposition Day motion in the House this afternoon.

Mr. Speaker: Bill 10 has been called for a second reading. Also, is there unanimous consent to deal with an Opposition Day motion in the House this afternoon? *[Agreed]*

DEBATE ON SECOND READINGS

Bill 10—The Pension Benefits Amendment Act

Hon. Nancy Allan (Minister of Labour and Immigration): Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by

the Minister of Advanced Education (Ms. McGifford), that Bill 10, The Pension Benefits Amendment Act, be now read a second time and be referred to a committee of this House.

Motion presented.

Ms. Allan: Mr. Speaker, I am very pleased to introduce Bill 10, which proposes to amend The Pension Benefits Act. This bill incorporates the consensus recommendations of the Pension Commission of Manitoba and provides additional flexibility to Manitobans wishing to access their pension funds. The bill represents the most extensive amendments to the act in 20 years.

In 2002, we asked the Manitoba Pension Commission to launch a comprehensive review of The Pension Benefits Act because we wanted to ensure Manitobans have a modern pension system that is suited to today's realities, such as an aging population, people changing jobs more often, and individuals with more interests and expertise in managing their own retirement finances.

The report of the commission was based on consultations with the general public, workers, employers, plan administrators, financial institutions and pension professionals. All the views expressed were seriously considered by the government in the development of the new legislation. The overriding objectives of the bill are to modernize the act and give Manitobans more choices and flexibility in planning their retirement. In modernizing the act, the bill would update its provisions in recognition of the many developments that have occurred, particularly in the area of family law, over the past two decades. It would also harmonize key areas of pension law with laws across Canada.

On the issue of increasing flexibility, the amendments represent a very balanced approach. Increased flexibility for members and pensioners is balanced with the need to ensure that a lifetime income is available for all Manitobans. Increased flexibility is also balanced with the need to respect the rights of spouses and common-law partners. The balanced approach we have taken has already resulted in the bill's provisions garnering significant support.

Today the bill was described as a "home run" and "a good package of improvements" in the

Winnipeg Free Press. This week I also learned that the Manitoba Association of Women and the Law supports the balanced position we have taken on unlocking. The Canadian Federation of Independent Business expressed support for this bill's provisions that encourage seniors to work longer if they wish. It said that provision might encourage more seniors to continue working and help train younger employees. Much of the media attention on this bill has been focussed on its unlocking provisions. These are an important component of the bill, but this bill is also about many more critical issues, many of which also address the desire for more flexibility and for more options in retirement planning.

The amendments generally can be described in terms of four key areas: providing flexibility, clarifying requirements for the management of pension plans, clarification of the treatment of pensions as family assets and pension preservation. The proposed changes also provide for greater harmonization with the legislation of other Canadian jurisdictions and modernize the language of the act.

Given the importance of pensions to Manitobans, the requirement for mandatory participation in pension plans is retained as recommended by the Pension Commission. A provision clarifies that pension standards in the act are minimum standards. While a pension plan may provide better benefits to members and their spouse or common-law partner, the act will clearly state that no person will be able to contract out of or waive a pension standard except as provided for in the act. This amendment formally recognizes this prohibition.

* (15:10)

In keeping with the recommendations of the Pension Commission, the act will provide for immediate and full vesting of pension benefits. This will apply to all active members who became entitled to receive a basic pension benefit under a pension plan.

Vested benefits are those to which an employee has unconditional entitlement under the plan as a result of satisfying age and service requirements. Currently, pre-1985 benefits are vested upon completing 10 years of service with an employer or plan membership. Post-1985 benefits vest upon completing two years of service or membership. There are, currently, provisions throughout the act

that provide for benefits to be vested on termination of membership, death, retirement and plan termination. This amendment to the act consolidates the vesting provisions into one section with immediate vesting applicable in each case.

As recommended by the commission, an amendment would provide for basic pension benefits and ancillary benefits for which the member has full entitlement to be immediately fully locked in to provide a pension at retirement. Locking in will preserve the plan's original purpose and promise of providing lifetime retirement benefits. Locked-in benefits are vested benefits which cannot be withdrawn as cash.

Currently, pre-1985 benefits are locked in upon completion of 10 years' service or membership and attainment of age 45 and post-1985 benefits upon completion of two years of service or membership. A provision will prevent excessive reduction of pension on early retirement of a member. The act will clearly specify that the pension cannot be less than the actuarial value of the pension that would have been payable at the normal retirement age of their pension plan.

A further provision will clarify that a plan member is only responsible for up to 50 percent of the cost of their pension in defined pension benefit plans. The employer would be responsible for any cost over this amount. Any excess contributions by members and interest resulting from the 50% test would be at the member's option, paid to the member as a lump sum, transferred directly to the member's registered retirement savings plan or registered retirement income fund, if permitted under the plan, used to purchase more pension under the plan. This right to transfer to an RRSP or an RRIF provides more flexibility to the member.

A number of proposed amendments recognize that members and retirees are seeking greater flexibility in dealing with pension assets. This government has given careful consideration to the issue of locked-in pension accounts. During the consultations, we heard a wide range of opinions. We heard from those who were adamantly opposed to the loosening of unlocking rules. We also heard from those who wanted no restrictions whatsoever on unlocking. Our approach to this issue has been to find some middle ground that balances the desire for greater flexibility in accessing funds from pension

accounts with the responsibility to honour the pension promise, the promise of a lifetime income for retirees and their spouses or common-law partners.

Our approach also balances the desire for flexibility with the rights of spouses or common-law partners with the need for creditor protection, with the need for informed decision making and with the need to respect The Family Maintenance Act. Our amendment will allow for a one-time transfer of up to 50 percent of the balance held in individual locked-in retirement benefit plans, LIFs or LRIFs to a RRIF that is not locked in. However, in recognition that the spouse or common-law partner of the owner of the plan has rights with respect to the funds, the transfer will only be allowed where the spouse or common-law partner provides informed consent.

A withdrawal of monies would be subject to enforcement action against the plan owner by the Maintenance Enforcement Program. This recognizes that individuals in default of maintenance payments should not be able to avoid their obligation to support their family while accessing these funds. In addition, the withdrawal of funds will be subject to any right to a credit split by a former spouse or common-law partner. It is also important that the decision to make a one-time transfer is an informed decision. The amendment also, therefore, requires that the plan member be provided with prescribed information about the implications of that critical decision.

A provision will clarify that the monies held in the unlocked RRIF will have the same status as monies held in a pension plan or a locked-in retirement savings or benefit plan in terms of being creditor proof. These funds will be exempt from seizure and attachment except where the monies are subject to maintenance enforcement by the Maintenance Enforcement Program or are needed to satisfy a division of property under The Family Property Act.

Another amendment will allow pension plans to offer flexible pension plan benefits. A flex plan allows members to choose to make extra tax-deductible contributions that do not reduce the amount that they may contribute to an RRSP for the purpose of increasing benefits. In recognition that there are plan members and retirees who have permanently left Canada, the commission's recommendation that non-residents of Canada be permitted

to unlock and withdraw their pension, LIRA, LIF or LRIF monies will be implemented.

Recognizing emerging trends and changes in employment relationships in the province, an amendment will be provided for phased-in early retirement. This will provide greater flexibility for Manitoba workplaces to retain experienced staff in an effort to ensure smooth employee transitions. Where the employee and employer agree, a provision will allow the employee to receive partial payment of benefits while continuing to work reduced hours and continuing to earn a pension. This provision recognizes the benefit of the expertise of these valued employees to the workplace.

A further change will implement a commission recommendation in the area of surplus funds. That is when plan assets exceed liabilities in pension plans. The amendment will permit plan members, plan beneficiaries and the employer to reach an agreement regarding the distribution of surplus under a pension plan. Any proposal respecting surplus developed by the employer would require the consent of bargaining agents representing their members and the consent of 67 percent of workers not represented by bargaining agents. In addition, the consent of beneficiaries under the plan will be required.

Another amendment clarifies when an employer, in consultation with organizations representing workers, will be able to form a multi-unit pension plan. These plans consist of multi-employers contributing to the plan or could involve members of a number of unions and associations employed by the same employer. A number of significant provisions will give members and retirees a greater say in administration of their pension plans.

An amendment will implement the commission's recommendation that every pension plan must have an administrator. In many cases, this will be a pension committee. The committee will be required to have representatives of both active and non-active members such as retirees on the committee. The committee will have all the powers that relate to the administration of the pension plan. Provisions relating to multi-unit pension plans will require the board of trustees of a plan to include a member who represents the interest of non-active members.

Pension plans required to have a pension committee must include at least two committee members selected by the workers and beneficiaries. These provisions will ensure that the views of plan members and retirees are heard. An amendment will clarify the legal responsibility that pension plan administrators undertake with respect to the investment of pension funds.

Administrators will be permitted to consider non-financial criteria, provided any such decision does not put pension funds in jeopardy. Any such investment would continue to be subject to the duty of administrators to exercise prudence and diligence when investing pension assets.

A number of provisions have been amended to significantly improve the protection of spousal and common-law partner pension rights. One proposed change will clearly spell out requirements for informed spousal partner consent for waivers of spousal partner entitlements under the act or relating to the withdrawal of pension funds.

A further amendment will clarify that a spouse or common-law partner will be permitted to waive an entitlement to a pension on the death of a member before or after the member's death. This would permit the member to designate children or others as beneficiaries of the pension funds. In order to harmonize joint pension requirements with those in all other Canadian jurisdictions, the act will provide that a joint 60% pension must be paid to the cohabitating spouse or common-law partner on the retired member's death. There would be no reduction in pension to the member on the death of a spouse or partner.

* (15:20)

To ensure that spouses and/or common-law partners resident elsewhere in Canada can affect a split of their spouse or partner's Manitoba pension, an amendment will recognize court orders from other Canadian jurisdictions for the division of a pension between separated spouses and/or partners and allow them to trigger a credit split. An amendment will ensure that separated common-law partners who are eligible for credit-splitting under the act do not meet the cohabitation criteria in The Family Property Act will be able to trigger credit-splitting by applying for a court order to divide their partner's pension. Necessary consequential amendments will also be

made to The Family Maintenance Act, The Garnishment Act and the Human Rights Code.

In closing, these amendments are a very positive step in our government's efforts to create an environment whereby pension plans, pensioners and plan members are given greater flexibility in dealing with pension issues, while at the same time ensuring the right of Manitobans respecting pensions will be preserved and protected. The proposed amendments reflect the realities of the modern-day workplace as well as the many financial options open to seniors today.

These changes promote clarity and consistency in the application of pension principles and truly represent a balance in approach. Mr. Speaker, I commend this bill for approval by this House.

Mr. Jack Reimer (Southdale): Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the Member for Pembina (Mr. Dyck), that the debate be now adjourned.

Motion agreed to.

Mr. Speaker: As previously agreed, we will now move on to the Opposition Day motion.

OPPOSITION DAY MOTION

Mr. Leonard Derkach (Russell): Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the member from Lac du Bonnet,

WHEREAS the Doer government has demonstrated its inability to deal with the serious issues affecting Manitobans; and

WHEREAS the departments of Health, Family Services and Housing, Justice, Education and Agriculture have proven to be in absolute chaos; and

WHEREAS the Department of Health continues to mismanage its finances and the administrative costs of Manitoba's regional health authorities are allowed to skyrocket; and

WHEREAS rural Manitoba is suffering from chronic doctor shortages, hospital closures and cuts to mental health programs; and

WHEREAS the number of homicides in Winnipeg has reached an all-time high of 33; and

WHEREAS the safety of all Manitobans is being compromised by the catch-and-release justice policies of the Doer government; and

WHEREAS the Doer government has abandoned Manitobans struggling through the BSE crisis, by not increasing slaughter capacity in the province or providing producers with cash advances; and

WHEREAS the Doer government has abandoned Manitobans by not committing to the complete removal of the education tax from residential property and farmland by 2007; and

WHEREAS school overcrowding continues to be a problem in Manitoba and the Doer government has delayed construction on new schools because of a "glitch"; and

WHEREAS the Doer government has chosen to deal with school overcrowding through press releases, which promise new schools that are not being built; and

WHEREAS the Doer government has ignored recommendations made by Manitoba's Children's Advocate, despite having knowledge that children have been forced to spend the night in a jail cell; and

WHEREAS the Doer government has failed all Manitobans by not providing accountability and transparency into the financial mismanagement at Hydra House; and

WHEREAS the Doer government has failed vulnerable Manitobans in the care of Hydra House by not dealing with allegations when they first arose in 2000; and

WHEREAS the number of kids in hotels has risen significantly under the Doer government despite the Minister of Family Services' statement that the number was vastly reduced from those under the Filmon government; and

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba condemn the Doer government and its ministers for failing to live up to the election promises they made to Manitobans and for abandoning vulnerable Manitobans affected

by cuts to health care, the BSE crisis, the chaos in the Department of Family Services and Housing; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba urge the Premier to apologize for misleading Manitobans and for not implementing the promises he made during the last election campaign; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba urge the government to immediately abandon its self-congratulatory advertising campaigns and redirect those funds to Manitobans in need.

Mr. Speaker: It has been moved by the honourable Member for Russell (Mr. Derkach), seconded by the honourable Member for Lac du Bonnet (Mr. Hawranik),

WHEREAS the Doer government has demonstrated its inability to deal with the serious issues affecting Manitobans; and

WHEREAS the departments of Health, Family Services and Housing, Justice, Education and Agriculture have proven to be in absolute chaos; and

WHEREAS the Department of Health continues to mismanage its finances and administrative costs of Manitoba—dispense?

Some Honourable Members: Dispense.

Mr. Speaker: Dispense.

Mr. Derkach: Mr. Speaker, we rise today on this Opposition Day motion with some regret because what we are doing is trying to illustrate the ineptness and the unwillingness of this government to address the urgent and the important needs that we have in our communities. This government has now been in government for five years, and during these five years we have seen an increasingly deteriorating situation in our justice system, our education system, and our health care system. In addition to that, we have seen this government not address in any effective way those desperate needs of Manitobans who are suffering through the BSE crisis.

Mr. Conrad Santos, Deputy Speaker, in the Chair

The government will always stand in its place and point its finger at what happened two mandates ago or it will point to the federal government or it will sometimes even point to innocent residents of this province who have nothing to do with the Legislature, but when it wants to congratulate itself, it takes out great big ads in newspapers, on the radio, on television to simply pat itself on the back. The abuse of taxpayer money cannot be underscored enough. When we look at our health care system that is not addressing the needs of Manitobans, when we see hospitals that are being closed because the government is unwilling to put the resources in and to put the needed doctors in place, when we see a justice system where people are being killed on the streets of our city, of our major city, and all the government can do is point to its Throne Speech.

I have always said that when there are urgent or serious issues at play, very serious measures have to be put in place to deal with them. I go back to the flood of 1997. When the flood occurred in this province, Mr. Deputy Speaker, it was an extreme situation. That extreme situation required extreme measures, and the government moved very quickly. It moved in a matter of days to ensure the safety of people, the safety of individual property and to ensure that we did not lose a single life during that extreme event.

Well, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I say that we have an extreme event occurring on the streets of our city today. Yesterday, when this motion was filed, and that was at five o'clock yesterday afternoon, the count of homicides in this province was 32. This was in the city. Before we arose this morning, before all of us got out of our beds this morning, that number had risen to 33. How much longer are we going to tolerate this kind of situation? How many more deaths is it going to take this government to act? How many more families are going to be left without a brother, a sister, a father, a mother, a loved one, before this government acts?

* (15:30)

Mr. Deputy Speaker, when we are isolated from all of these events by this Chamber, it does not affect us as it affects the people in the communities. I wonder if anybody from the Premier's office, if anybody from the Minister of Justice's office, or anybody from government, has gone out to the community in Maples today to hold hands with those

families who have lost a loved one, with those families who are living in terror, in fear, because of what is happening on their streets? Has anyone gone out there today to console those families and to ensure that those families feel safe once again to open their doors and to walk out on their streets?

Mr. Deputy Speaker, the justice system in this province is in absolute chaos. We have a catch-and-release program in this government, of criminals. The police go out there, they do their job, they apprehend those who are guilty, those who are repeat offenders, and before they put them behind bars the government's policy is that you let them out the back door. They are out on the streets offending, re-offending, recommitting crimes.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, we cannot talk about what happened last night, but the big question in my mind on what happened last night is, was this a repeat offender. We do not know that yet, but in days to come we will know. But even if it is not, the case is so serious, the matter is at such a level, that somebody needs to pay very serious attention to this. It is the government's responsibility. The government can only point to one fact, and that is that, oh, the Conservatives voted against the Throne Speech. Well, we did vote against the Throne Speech. I am proud to have voted against meagre measures, whether they are on BSE, whether they are on taxation, whether they are on police.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, the resources that are required out there are not, simply, identified in a Throne Speech. The resources are available to the government, a half-a-billion dollars in increased revenue, a half-a-billion dollars they can use to put people out on the streets, to make sure the families, elders, children, feel safe in our city and in our communities. This is not rocket science. It is simply allowing, enabling people who are in the position of authority, who are in the position of police, to hire the necessary resources to ensure that the gangs, that those gunmen, are dealt with accordingly.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I do know what it is going to take to get this government to wake up, but in every single instance, the government has somebody else to blame—in every single instance. The only other record that is worse than this government's was that of Howard Pawley's. This government's record on safety of communities, on personal safety, is the worst in Canada. It is the worst in this country, and

yet they have no answers, they have no solutions, they have no plan.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I go from there to talk about something that is near and dear to the people in rural Manitoba, and that is the issue of agriculture and where it is at. We have asked constantly for a plan from this government on what they are doing to address those serious issues in rural Manitoba, as they deal with the BSE crisis, the livestock industry, the disastrous situation we have with the frost in Manitoba, in the western part of the province, and, yes, in the southeastern part of the province, what they are doing about the fact that communities today are dying because of some of the events that have occurred over the last two years. The government has no plan.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, we ask this minister to come forward and put her money on the table for a new slaughter facility in this province. What is it, 18 months now, almost two years since this has happened? We still do not have a slaughter facility. Abattoirs across this province have called on this minister to allow money to flow to them so that they can increase their facilities, so that they can enhance their facilities to meet federal standards. Is there one example where this minister has said, "Look, I have done this"? All she does in her place is talk about what she would do, why the federal government is to blame, why the farmers are to blame, but she does not take the responsibility herself. Neither does the Premier (Mr. Doer).

Mr. Deputy Speaker, she talks about Rancher's Choice. Well, that is one group. We could build three plants in this province, but \$11 million is not going to do it. She knows it. A half billion dollars is sitting in their back pockets, but they will not allow this industry to thrive.

You know what is going to happen. It is the same thing that happened under the former minister, Bill Uruski, where we lost the cattle industry and we lost the slaughter industry. Today, we are going to do it again.

An Honourable Member: Look what you lost.

Mr. Derkach: Yes, I ask the minister to take a look at the years when we lost the industry. It was that government's program where they were going to support the cow-calf program instead of the feedlot

program that destroyed the cattle industry in this province. Alberta took it. They took our feeders. Behind the feeders went our barley and behind the barley went our kids. Today, we have no slaughter capacity in this province.

I see my beacon is flashing. I am going to conclude my remarks by saying that this is a disastrous situation in this province. That is why we were compelled today to call for an Opposition Day where we could call this government to account.

Mr. Speaker in the Chair

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Mr. Derkach: I have only raised two issues in my remarks.

Mr. Speaker: Before recognizing the honourable member, I would just like to inform the House that I forgot to mention that the motion is in order.

Mr. Gerald Hawranik (Lac du Bonnet): Mr. Speaker, I am very pleased to second the motion. I can say one thing, that there is one word in that motion that really, really describes what the government has been doing in the last year, not since the Throne Speech but during the last year in particular. It really adequately describes what has been happening in the government, and that is the word "chaos." I think that even members opposite would agree that a number of their departments are, in fact, in chaos.

I would like to pay particular emphasis, particular attention, to Justice within that opposition motion. It did not just start when they introduced the Throne Speech, but it has started at least in the last year, if not the last two years, in terms of the lack of direction, the lack of attention and the lack of detail by the Justice Minister to his department. Just to move forward, I can tell you since the Throne Speech in particular I think there was an admission by this government that justice is not important. There was no emphasis at all in the Throne Speech. Out of 60 minutes of Throne Speech delivery by the Lieutenant-Governor, less than 60 seconds was on justice. That tells me something about the priority of this government in terms of justice, and how they want to deal with justice issues within the province.

We have unprecedented levels of crime in this province, and in particular 33 homicides at this point

and still counting in the city of Winnipeg. The year is not over yet, Mr. Speaker, 33 homicides, unprecedented levels. Those levels are higher, or as high, as the combined total of the cities of Ottawa, Québec City and Calgary. Three cities, if you add their population it is 2.5 times higher than the city of Winnipeg. We have higher numbers of homicides within the city of Winnipeg than within all of those three cities combined. That speaks volumes to the attention that the Justice Minister has given to his department and the resources that he has given to the police.

The lack of attention in the Throne Speech to justice was astounding. I am not sure whether the Justice Minister will continue it along those lines, but I can tell you that after asking questions in Question Period over the last couple of weeks, his answers are astounding. He looks tired. He answers with very little enthusiasm. He does not seem to have any answers. He has no imagination. He does not know how to deal with the issues that are out there. There are unprecedented levels of crime, as I say, in the city of Winnipeg, and he has no answers. That is not only astounding but that is alarming to, I believe, all of Manitoba.

* (15:40)

Manitobans expect their Justice Minister to have answers. They expect the Justice Minister to take action. They expect the Justice Minister to do something when an issue arises, and if he is not doing anything, if he is standing back and letting it happen, if he is burying his head in the sand, I believe that Manitobans will take notice and they will hold the Justice Minister to account.

The Throne Speech mentioned, even in those 60 seconds, that there were up to 20 City of Winnipeg police officers to be hired from the provincial revenues, from revenues that are generated from casino revenues, and those are the Province's casinos.

My concern, Mr. Speaker, is that up to 20 police officers are going to be funded from casino revenues, and that is assuming casino revenues are increasing. With the smoking ban, with all the other factors that are at play out there in terms of the economy going downhill, I would suspect that casino revenues will not increase. If that happens, will the Justice Minister still hire up to 20 police officers for the city of Winnipeg?

He points to that. Every time we talk about 33 homicides in the city of Winnipeg, Mr. Speaker, he points to another 20 officers in the city of Winnipeg. But I can tell you that is less than 2 percent of the complement in the city of Winnipeg. If that is his response to 33 homicides in the city of Winnipeg, it is a sorry response, that is sorry solution, a very sorry solution, to what is happening in the city of Winnipeg.

We need more than 20 police officers. We have highlighted that every time this has come up. We have said there needs to be more police resources out there. Twenty police officers are not going to do it. How can you vote for a Throne Speech that only adds an additional 20 police officers in the city of Winnipeg? We need more than that, Mr. Speaker. That is just a drop in the bucket and that gives little comfort to Manitobans in terms of how this Justice Minister is dealing with the problem and how he is trying to deal with it for the city of Winnipeg.

The Justice Minister tied 20 police officers to casino revenue within the province. There is no guarantee that casino revenues are going to increase. Does that mean, then, if casino revenues do not go up, that, in fact, he is not going to hire any officers? I ask the Minister of Justice (Mr. Mackintosh): Is that a solution, to gamble on justice, to gamble on safety, to gamble on the safety of Manitobans, and to expect that revenues will be increased so that more officers will be hired?

I suspect that that is not the proper way to go, Mr. Speaker, that, in fact, there has to be a stable stream of funding for those officers, and those officers have to be on the street. More resources have to be given to police. Unprecedented levels of crime demand it. Unprecedented and historically high levels of homicides in the city of Winnipeg demand it as well.

Mr. Speaker, Manitoba is clearly a have-not province due to the mismanagement of the province's finances, by both the Premier (Mr. Doer) and the Finance Minister, and clearly this province is a have-not province with respect to justice as well. It is a have-not province with respect to personal safety. Personal safety is an issue in the city of Winnipeg, as it is throughout the province. People are concerned about their safety, considering what has happened in the city of Winnipeg over the last year, considering what happened last night in The Maples.

When we have armed stand-offs with police, we have miles and miles of streets that are cordoned off. We have people who are told to stay in their homes, to lock their doors, to keep their children inside. We are told not to come into the area, because of the danger to other Manitobans. It was a war zone out there.

The response that we heard today in question period was inadequate. All they do is they point to their 20 officers, up to 20 officers that they will hire in the city of Winnipeg, not a commitment of 20 officers, but up to 20 officers. Clearly, that is not an adequate response. That is not something that Manitobans have been waiting to hear. There needs to be a greater deployment of police resources to make sure that more Manitobans are not murdered, that the homicide rates, in fact, go down over the years.

I note that this is going to be the legacy of this government. It is going to be the legacy of this Justice Minister, just as it was the legacy of Howard Pawley in 1987, when the previous record was established with 30 homicides in the city of Winnipeg, and the previous Justice Minister who was responsible at that time.

Now, this government has promised safer communities, Mr. Speaker. They promised it in 1999 and they promised it in 2003, all during election campaigns. My question to the Minister of Justice (Mr. Mackintosh) has been throughout these last two weeks how does that jive with his promise of safer communities. How does that correspond with 33 homicides in the city of Winnipeg? How does that correspond with people's lack of feeling safe within their own community, having to lock their docks, having to lock their homes up to feel safe? How does that correspond with the minister's promise? I asked the minister, point blank, a number of times, within this week and last week, as to how he has made the community safer. There was no answer. The Justice Minister has responded with absolute nonsense. He has not answered the question.

I am going to be asking him further questions. Maybe not in Question Period, but between now and the time we are back in session, again, in March of next year, I intend on asking him those questions, and I intend to ask him those questions all of next session. I hope that he has got better answers. I hope that he comes forward with new solutions. I hope

that he comes forward with new ideas. I hope he has the courage to stand up and be counted and to stand up for justice in this province and to stand up for safety, not only for Manitobans, but for Winnipeggers, and to work at trying to reduce crime in the city instead of just tinker with it. That is all he has been doing. He has been tinkering with the Justice Department. He has not brought any real change into the Justice Department which would give anyone any confidence that what he is doing was working. He stands up and talks about different initiatives, but I asked the Justice Minister have those initiatives worked. Obviously not. Thirty-three homicides, and that speaks for itself.

Hon. Rosann Wowchuk (Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Initiatives): I am pleased to have the opportunity to put a few comments on the record with regard to the motion that has been forward by the opposition on their Opposition Day. Indeed, I want to address some of the comments that have been made, and particularly today, given the questions that were raised here in the House. I want to show my respect and offer my condolences to the people who were the subject of Question Period. Well, we cannot talk about this, but the specific family, I want to show my respect for them.

On that particular issue, when we talk about justice, I found the questions and comments today very strange, especially when, on one hand, we heard opposition members saying that we need more support for the police officers for crime prevention, and then they say that they voted against the budget because there were not enough police officers in the budget, that there were only 40 and we need more. I cannot believe that they would go out into the community and say we voted against 40 police officers for you to help in the city of Winnipeg, to put more people on the streets because that is not enough. Not enough. That is 20 for the city of Winnipeg, 20 for rural Manitoba.

I know that the City of Winnipeg would want to have more police officers on the street, and I know that people of Winnipeg look at the record, because I had an opportunity to read some statistics this morning. Unfortunately, I do not have them with me here right now, but I looked back at the record of the opposition when they were in government. They do not like us to look back to when they were in government, but in reality they did not fund a full complement of police officers, and they reduced the

number of police officers during the time when there was a high crime rate. They also do not want to recognize that it was under their administration that the gangs got started here in Winnipeg. They try to push that off onto someone else, and then they voted against supports that we had put in place to help victims. Legislation that has been brought forward by the Minister of Justice (Mr. Mackintosh) to strengthen the way that we can deal with gang members has been voted against by members opposite, and voting against this budget is, indeed, a disappointment.

*(15:50)

But the bigger disappointment for me, Mr. Speaker, is the fact that this opposition group has voted against the land education tax refund. I cannot believe that they would vote to a 33% cut in education tax when farm groups, in fact, Keystone Agriculture Producers congratulated us for what we had done in this area. When we tell them that we are reducing 33 percent now, and we will go to 50 percent, they say that it is not enough. Can you imagine, as if they did anything? In fact, as much as they would like to hide from it, it was under Conservative government that portioning on farmland went up. They talk the talk, but they do not walk the walk.

They do not, and have not addressed the issue of education taxes on farmland. It is this administration that has taken the first step, and we are moving forward to 50% reduction, Mr. Speaker, and that is quite amazing. Then we have criticism from members opposite that we are letting people know about the tax reduction and advertising on how they should get that money. I guess they do not think that farmers should be informed about a new program that has been put in place for them.

When I look at the Tory record, Mr. Speaker, there was not benefit for farmers under their administration. The program that we have brought in is worth \$13 million, and will increase to \$19.5 million to go into the hands of farmers in this province. I am proud of that step we have taken. I have a letter from Keystone Agricultural Producers, who have congratulated us on taking this step, saying that this is what they have been asking for. I am surprised that the members opposite will not recognize that Keystone Agricultural Producers recognizes this as a right move and, instead, continue to criticize us on that.

Mr. Speaker, with regard to the members opposite talking about other issues, certainly, there is a very serious challenge in rural Manitoba, whether it be the drought, then heavy rains, then a frost, as well as the challenges that we face because of BSE, and then the tariff that has been applied to the pork producers. Those are very significant issues.

With regard to the pork tariff, it was this government that immediately hired a lawyer to work on this issue in Washington for us, and with the support of pork producers they were very happy we did that. We have put in place a task force to deal with this, and jointly with the pork producers looking at how we can address this issue.

But, Mr. Speaker, with regard to listening to producers, I can tell you that it was under Manitoba's leadership that we negotiated and got the federal government to put a cash advance for 2004 CAIS. We did try to get it for 2003; we could not convince the federal government of that. But Manitoba convinced the federal government to put a cash advance in on CAIS, 2004, and farmers are getting money that they would not be getting until next year, a cash advance on their—

An Honourable Member: They are getting bills to pay them back immediately.

Ms. Wowchuk: The member opposite says they are getting bills to pay it back. I think the member has been a farmer long enough to know that when you get a cash advance, when you sell your product you do pay it back, Mr. Speaker. If he is implying that a cash advance is not to be paid back, then he is trying to mislead the public on that.

Mr. Speaker, with regard to slaughter capacity, it is this government that has worked very closely with many groups of people, particularly with Rancher's Choice, and trying to increase slaughter capacity. There are many other groups who are looking at this. Our government is working with them, and I hope that there will be a success in getting slaughter capacity increased in this province. Certainly, Rancher's Choice is one of them, but I really wished that the members opposite would be sincere in their commitment to increase slaughter capacity.

The member opposite put on the record yesterday the historical livestock slaughter in Manitoba. When we left office, Mr. Speaker, we left

office in 1988, and there had been a tremendous decrease in slaughter capacity up till then. But, when the Conservatives came into power, it absolutely collapsed.

I would ask the member opposite to talk to the MP from the Interlake, Mr. James Bezan, and ask Mr. James Bezan about what he says about what happened to the slaughter industry. He was very involved with the cattle industry at that time, and he says, and I can tell you these numbers. If I was the member opposite, I would be ashamed to table these numbers because it is their government. When they came into office, slaughter capacity was 180. The number of slaughtered animals was 183 268. When they left in 2000, we were down to 17 000. That is a decrease of over 100 000. Now they talk about what happened under the NDP administration.

Well, Mr. Speaker, if they were so concerned about it, and they were in office for 10 years, why did they not turn it around?

An Honourable Member: Should have, could have, would have.

Ms. Wowchuk: They should have, they could have, they would have. They did nothing. They let the industry go down to nothing in this province and then they say, "Oh, the NDP is back in power. They should fix it." Well, we are working with the industry. We are working with producers and we will increase slaughter capacity in this province.

I only wish the member opposite would get on board rather than saying, last year Jack Penner—I am sorry. Mr. Speaker, I apologize. The Member for Emerson (Mr. Penner) last year said investing in processing was not a good idea, but when the province announced additional funding for Rancher's Choice this month he said he fired off a press release saying it was a year and a half too late. Well, one year, it was not enough, should not do it. Now, it is not enough. You cannot play it both ways. So that is why this resolution here put forward by the members opposite is—

Mr. Speaker: Order. The member's time has expired.

Mr. Jack Penner (Emerson): Mr. Speaker, I want to also put a few remarks on the record on the Opposition Day motion that we just tabled in the

House. I want to delve right into the slaughter numbers that the minister put on record, and I want to remind the people of Manitoba that in 1977 there were 559 000 head of cattle slaughtered in this province. That was the year that Ed Schreyer left government. There were 559 000 head of cattle slaughtered in the province, and by 1988, just 11 years later, when the current NDP government left office, there were 181 000 cattle slaughtered in this province.

They had then already said no to the Burns plant in Brandon, when they wanted to retool their plant. They had said no to the Brandon plant, as they did to Canada Packers, and Swifts, and Burns, in Winnipeg. The NDP said, "No, we will not help you retool." So the Burns plant had already issued the notice of closure when the Conservative government was elected in 1988. The last year of operation of the Burns plant was in 1990, and that year the slaughter fell to 55 000 head. We have not seen, since the NDP government was elected, any real action taken to try and rebuild the slaughter industry that the Howard Pawley government let slide under its administration and that is fair ball, Mr. Speaker. That was their policy decision. We have to live with that now.

We want to say this to the people of Manitoba, and we will be very clear about it. We have recognized that since all the slaughter capacity was closed by the NDP governments, the borders and the markets opened up in the U.S. to Canadian cattle. Many of our cattle were exported at a premium price to the United States, because of the low dollars that were prevalent. The cattle industry did relatively well under that process.

*(16:00)

However, what also did happen was that the Americans built those slaughter plants that we had let slide. Since we let the Crow benefit go, we have now a cost of production advantage in this province that no other province has, simply because of the huge cost now of shipping feed grain out of Manitoba into Alberta and/or Ontario, and so, for that matter, we have a competitive advantage in Manitoba to rebuild the slaughter industry in this province.

I say to you that, since the border closed, Mr. Speaker, it has become ever more evident that the huge mistakes that were made in not underpinning

the slaughter industry to let them rebuild was, indeed, a tragedy. This government, this NDP administration, will have to live with that one for a long time. I have encouraged, as my colleagues have encouraged, the current government, by virtue of putting before them an economic strategy that would see the rebuilding of this industry. We could do it now. The timing is right. The opportunities are there. We can not only build the slaughtering industry; we will build on top of that a feedlot industry that will employ a lot of people and retain the economic benefits of that livestock industry in this province. That is what I have said, and I maintain that.

I know the honourable Minister of Agriculture (Ms. Wowchuk) likes to quote me, and two articles that the *Farmers' Independent Weekly* has cited in its editorial, and if she would read the entire statement that was made in those editorial statements, I stand by those. I said, and I quote, "I would ask that the industry be careful,"—this was when the BSE crisis struck—"to do the proper market analysis to see whether there are markets for the products that we can still sell out of this product, such as the old cows that the minister wants to build a plant for, and we agree with that, but there needs to be a proper market analysis done." That is what I said in that statement.

We should not jump into this without doing a proper business plan, a market analysis to ensure that the investments we were going to make were, in fact, the right choice and that we should do that. I believe governments have done that. I believe that Rancher's Choice has made big strides in doing that, searching out markets, as others have. They now tell me that they believe there are adequate markets available. I have said since then it is time that government make a true commitment and allow the industry to be rebuilt in this province. That means stop using airy-fairy stories to protect yourself, Madam Minister. That means that you put your money where your mouth is and get on with the job of getting that industry built.

Secondly, I believe we have an opportunity to build a large industry in this province. It could be one or two or three or four plants that would process the 30-month-and-under stock that we have traditionally, over the last decade, shipped south of the border because we had no industry left after the NDP government left. So we shipped them across the border south. The markets were such that we actually probably broke even on that one, or even gained a bit

by exporting them. However, today we are made aware that those opportunities might no longer be there.

It is time we rebuilt that industry in this province. It is time that the government of Manitoba sat down with the people that are interested in rebuilding it here

An Honourable Member: We have been meeting with them.

Mr. Penner: No, you have not been meeting with them. I have met with a number of them. They tell me that you have no interest in this at all.

Therefore, I say to you, Mr. Speaker, this minister and her government owe the people of Manitoba an apology because they have misled the people. Not only have they misled them in saying that there is no interest in rebuilding the industry in this province; they have also misled them with the huge advertising campaign they ran when they advertised they had put \$180 million in the pockets of farmers in Manitoba to fight the BSE crisis. What a misleading of the facts that was. Everybody will tell you that. Every farmer will angrily say they misled the people of Manitoba.

Those cattle producers that suffered know how little money each of them got. Some of them are saying they got less than 80 cents a head for our cattle. From all the programs that the government has announced, out of the \$180 million, the farmer got less than a dollar a head, on average. If the minister says that is the kind of program they put in place, then let her say that. However, the farmers do not believe what she says.

Now, I want to say one other thing about the current government. I believe what we have heard today and what we saw this morning, the 33 people killed on the streets of Winnipeg, is clearly an indication of how irresponsibly this government has dealt with the justice issues. They constantly say we are going to put more police officers on the street. What they have in fact done is they have put more police officers out there all right. They hired 28 agricultural police to police the agricultural community. One of them visited our farm the other day, and he said, "You can no longer operate your fuel tanks."

Madam Minister, Mr. Speaker, I say this to you: We have a state-of-the-art storage system on our farm. We just rebuilt it two years ago. It is without question as safe as you can get it. You know what the problem is? Your policeman says we cannot register those fuel storage tanks because there is not a serial number on them. That means that we are going to have to spend thousands of dollars at the hands of the agricultural Gestapo that this minister has put in place. I say to you many farmers today are saying we are being treated like the Ukraine that our forefathers left many years ago. The reason they left it is because of exactly the same policing efforts that are being put in place today by this NDP administration.

It is interesting also, and I should table these pictures for you, Mr. Speaker. I will. One, this trailer rig that I am going to table for you today has been used for many years by farmers. This is a state-of-the-art—

Mr. Speaker: Order. The honourable member's time has expired.

Hon. Steve Ashton (Minister of Water Stewardship): I just want to indicate that I was very disturbed by the comments made by the member before. It is one thing to get up in this House, but to talk about employees of the Department of Agriculture being agricultural Gestapo is offensive. This is the same member who has described The Water Protection Act as Soviet-style central planning. That is a quote that was in the *Farmers' Independent Weekly*.

When we are trying to protect Manitoba's water, or when our dedicated staff in the Department of Agriculture are doing nothing more than asking this member or anybody else to follow the rules and regulations that are in place, they should not have to put up with those kinds of inflammatory comments.

I say that I really think that the Conservative Party should ask that member to apologize, because that was an insult to every employee of the Department of Agriculture. I just want to indicate that when we have an Opposition Day motion, it is here to debate issues of the day, but I think what we are seeing from members opposite, particularly the Member for Emerson (Mr. Penner), is just how out of touch they are with Manitoba. I know I said in the Throne Speech, Mr. Speaker, that they are Bush-

Harper Conservatives, but I do not think Stephen Harper would come up with the same kind of outdated inflammatory rhetoric that we heard from that member, that we have heard from other members in similar debates. So I would suggest they tone down the rhetoric, maybe bring up the substance.

You know, it is interesting that the member took shots at the Minister of Agriculture (Ms. Wowchuk) about putting money where your mouth is. Well, Mr. Speaker, we are the money party when it comes to solving the agriculture issues out there. They are the mouth party, full of outdated rhetoric. I say to members opposite again, because I take real offence when they bring Ukraine into this, because to talk about a Department of Agriculture employee doing their job and compare it to the vote-rigging and the anti-democratic activities in Ukraine does a disservice to the people of Ukraine and to all of us in this House who stood in support of them in their fight for democracy.

So, Mr. Speaker, I want to note for the record that this opposition party, when they have their opportunity to discuss the issues of the day, are bringing forward outdated rhetoric. Let us get on with important issues like dealing with The Water Protection Act, Bill 22. It is not Soviet-style central planning for the member from Emerson. It is there to protect the people of Manitoba's water. I look forward to them debating the real issues, not the outdated right-wing rhetoric we see from them time and time again. They are out of touch with Manitobans, and they prove it each and every day they stand in this House.

* (16:10)

Mr. Glen Cummings (Ste. Rose): Mr. Speaker, for information, was the House Leader up on a point of order, or was he burning his speech?

Mr. Speaker: I recognized the honourable Minister for Water Stewardship (Mr. Ashton) to speak to the Opposition Day motion.

Mr. Cummings: Mr. Speaker, I would have spoken to the point of order, if that was where the member from Thompson was at. It is amazing that we have an opportunity to debate some of the shortcomings of the government, and we had a speech, as we just did, or a lecture, as we just did, from the Minister of

Water Stewardship. He takes umbrage at the fact that some inflammatory language may have been used in reference to some of the activities that his government was undertaking.

As a former Environment Minister and Natural Resources Minister, I have certainly taken my share of inflammatory language from across the way when the roles were reversed. I do not think that they ever accused me of doing anything in the nature of a Gestapo, but they certainly were always accusing our administration of not protecting the environment. There is a difference between putting legislation in place and then putting around them regulatory requirements that may not be the best way of protecting the environment, because, Mr. Speaker, it strikes me that it is about time this province started to go back to some of the fundamental beliefs around sustainable development.

I have not heard those words come out of the mouths of any of the current Cabinet ministers, and it is starting to become very troublesome. One of the economic opportunities outside of the boundary of the perimeter of the city of Winnipeg, the main economic opportunity, is very often related to consumption or use of some of our natural resources, and potentially has impact on the environment.

Mr. Speaker, whether it is the add zone or the municipalities in the surrounding area around the city of Winnipeg, or whether it is how we operate a lagoon around a slaughter plant or a potato plant, these are economic opportunities that are very significantly tied to the environment. Sound environmental regulation protects the environment and points the way to where the proprietor and/or the entrepreneur can make progress.

One of the things that I was so disappointed about with this government is that they talk a very good line around protection of the environment, but when it comes to, and I will use the phrase my colleague from Emerson used, putting their money where their mouths are, in terms of environmental protection—[interjection]

Well, I would encourage the member from Wolseley just to take a little walk and have a look at some of the lagoon systems in this province, or some of the needed lagoon systems in this province. The fact is that, if you put money into appropriate technology and infrastructure to support the industry

where it has a potential to have an impact on the environment, then you are genuinely doing something for the environment. More legislation, more regulation, but not putting any money into substantially improving what is being discharged into our environment is a dereliction of duty, and he knows it.

Mr. Speaker, one of the issues that I am sure my colleague touched on was the kill capacity in this province in terms of cattle, but the fact is this province has set a very high bar for being able to compete for the hog production in western Canada. It has been done on the basis of the fact that Manitoba is, from the point of view of location and transportation, disadvantaged.

Why can we not get this government to see if they could turn that disadvantage into an advantage for the cattle business? I have talked many times in this House about the fact that this is the only jurisdiction where the cow herd is growing. What does that tell you? We have the raw product. It also tells you we have a significant opportunity that this government has dropped the ball on.

No one should take it personally. The Minister of Agriculture (Ms. Wowchuk) from Swan River is a nice lady. I have no doubt about that, but what we are haranguing on, on this side, Mr. Speaker, is that we see the north end, if you will, of a cow heading south because there is nothing happening in terms of the cattle business. We are going to fiddle around until our cattle are heading across the line again and then we will say, "Gee, we cannot get these dumb farmers to commit to putting their cattle through a local killing plant."

We have not gone out of our way to help those local killing plants. For those who have heard me speak within this last week, this is going to be repetitive, but let me speak slowly and clearly so it is very understandable. The fact is that you need to be aggressive. Go out there and seek out the partners that would build. Seek out those who want to actively acquire additional capacity so they can ship across Canadian borders and, ultimately, international borders. They are out there. We can name them. We have named them in this House, but all we are getting right now, Mr. Speaker, is, "Well, we put all this money out there and they have not accessed it." The fact is that it has been denied. It has been denied

because either they have not taken good advice or they do not want to take advice about how they can actually make things happen in that particular area.

I will cite the kill plant at McCreary, very local to me, very successful, apparently, at this stage in its operations, but they were on the drawing board. This government said, "Well, you are on the drawing board, so we are not going to make you part of our beef-kill expansion." They proceeded with private money. They proceeded with local knowledge because they had the people with the capacity. They now have 15 men and women working full-time in a small, local slaughterhouse and they have not received any support from this government. It was not there a year ago. It was done since the BSE issue started, and they have made it work in spite of this government.

You know what their biggest problem is? They cannot get rid of the offal. That is what the big outfall is from the BSE problem. The intestines, the waste products, the brain products and the spinal cord products are waste now. They will not be used in any other way in society because of the desire to keep all that material out of the livestock food chain, certainly, out of the human food chain. They have no place to go with it. They have to pay to truck it to the Brady Landfill. Where is the minister of natural resources? There are Crown lands in that area with some of the best clay in the country. Why are they not out there establishing a burial site so we do not have to haul that material as far as we are currently hauling it? It makes no sense.

That is the kind of leadership this government should be providing. They would make those who are out there as entrepreneurs, trying to change the direction. I can name two—the plant in Neepawa, the plant in Gladstone, the existing plants in the Swan River Valley. Where are they taking their offal? There is only one Class 1, licensed landfill in this province that can take offal, and that is Brady Landfill.

When is this government going to wake up and realize that there is a role to be played by government? They should take the leadership. That is one area where they could have it fixed by now. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

*(16:20)

Hon. Theresa Oswald (Minister responsible for Healthy Living): It is my pleasure, indeed, to stand today to speak against this motion, of course. I believe the member opposite referred to it as "haranguing," and I will concur with his terminology on that.

I really have such a short time in order to speak to all the reasons why this is an unfortunate motion that we are talking about today, so I will spend the time that I have focussing in on a couple of areas that, certainly, are of the utmost interest to me and, indeed, many of them of great interest to the constituents of Seine River.

I would start, Mr. Speaker, in talking about the things that our government is doing that apparently members opposite are choosing not to recognize. In the area of healthy living, I was pleased just yesterday to stand with the Minister of Health (Mr. Sale) to speak about the implementation of our diabetes prevention strategy, which, of course, is of great interest to all Manitobans. Working to do all that we can to prevent chronic disease would, of course, be of interest, I would assume, to all members of this House.

I am pleased to talk about the fact that we are working hard with the Alliance for Prevention of Chronic Diseases to work on a Chronic Disease Prevention Initiative, which is going to work with Manitobans in their home communities to have community-led programming in order to design the kinds of prevention and promotion initiatives that we need that are tailor-made for individual communities. What the needs might be in the sunny constituency of Seine River, versus what we might find in St. Laurent, versus what we might find in Gods River are not, necessarily, a pool of the same needs. With the Chronic Disease Prevention Initiative that will be going forth, we are going to be able to have community-led individuals working on prevention.

Mr. Speaker, when we speak about healthy living, people do not care to embrace prevention and promotion, because we are not really going to see fantastic statistics on morbidity and mortality for many, many years. But what we do know, through the research of the Chronic Disease Prevention Initiative, is that within five years we can see significant results with risk factors and the things that point to eventual chronic disease. We know that with the CDPI we are going to be affecting the health

and the lives of Manitobans. That is just one thing, just one major thing that our government is doing.

I am also really proud to stand in the House today, Mr. Speaker, to talk about the fact that our stop smoking campaign, targeted at youth, has achieved the highest reduction in teen smoking in all of Canada. This is something that the members opposite, in their motion today, I would assume, are suggesting is perhaps empty or hollow. I would suggest to you that if we are going to be able to stop our young people from smoking, and if we are going to be able to prevent the chronic diseases that result from smoking, this is action. I just cannot support an opposition motion that would suggest that we are not doing what we need to do for health in Manitobans.

I am also really pleased, Mr. Speaker, in the short time that I have, to make mention of the targeted nutrition benefit that is being added to existing remote allowances and to assist northern families with the high cost of healthy foods. We are going to be talking an awful lot about our task force Healthy Kids, Healthy Futures, which, I am pleased to say, is an all-party entity. We have already started our work, and when we go out we are going to be hearing from people in northern communities about some of the difficulties and particular challenges that those families face, not only in making good, healthy choices about food, but food security. So we want to do the best that we can to put as many resources as we can to making sure that nutrition in the North improves every day.

Certainly, another area of particular interest to me and, indeed, of interest to my constituents in Seine River is issues that we are pursuing concerning seniors. Certainly, we heard today—

An Honourable Member: What about schools?

Ms. Oswald: I hear the member opposite from Southdale, a gentleman and a scholar, indeed, making inquiries about schools. I am really glad that he has. I would, certainly, say that we are very proud of our government's record on education.

What would not make me so proud, Mr. Speaker, is if I were the member opposite belonging to a group that in the entire time since I have been sitting in this House has asked nary a question about profound issues in education like special needs, like enrichment, like special programming for students in

music, and art and phys ed. I have heard questions about taxation, and I recognize that these are issues that are important to Manitobans.

My question is when are the questions going to come about those programs that are going to most directly affect our young people, early childhood development, development for children in early intervention in reading. When are those questions going to come? I am waiting and I am waiting, and it is, and it seems to be, a waiting game with the members opposite.

But, back to the issue of seniors, certainly, we heard today even more about our overhaul to The Pensions Benefits Act, Mr. Speaker, to provide our seniors with greater flexibility within the context of their pensions while, of course, balancing and respecting the rights of spouses. Members opposite had 10 years to deal with this; they did not do it. We are overhauling The Pensions Benefit Act, and we know that this is going to be of great benefit to seniors in our province.

We are expanding our programming for seniors with a focus on improving assisted living. We know that, as our senior population increases, Mr. Speaker, we are going to have to provide the right kinds of programming and the right kinds of housing. This is not the kind of situation that the members opposite speak about, that this government is not acting when it comes to seniors. I suggest to you they are wrong about that as they so often are about other things.

Certainly, I was pleased to travel with the Minister of Justice (Mr. Mackintosh) recently to Portage and to Brandon to speak about our SafetyAid program, a program that, of course, provides supports for seniors to prevent fraud, to prevent elder abuse and to make their home environment secure. We want our seniors to be able to age in place. We know seniors are staying in their homes longer, and we are working with our SafetyAid program, which has been a great success here in Winnipeg, to expand it to Portage and to expand it to Brandon.

We also want to ensure with that SafetyAid program that not only are seniors' houses more secure, indeed, we are offering safety and security materials, for low-income seniors, but we are also doing an audit of the environment to ensure that we can prevent falls, an alarming source of injury for our Manitoba seniors and, indeed, seniors across

Canada. We are going to make sure that when we do a safety audit against crime, we are going to do a safety audit against dangers in the environment. We know that this is a very important thing that we can do for seniors.

We are also entrenching in legislation our Manitoba Council on Aging, something that members opposite had opportunity to do, but it seems to have slipped their mind. There is so much to talk about concerning what we are doing, but I must speak against this motion. It is, indeed, as the member opposite suggested, a giant harangue that need not be heard. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Ralph Eichler (Lakeside): I do want to stand today and put a few words on the record. Today is definitely a sad day. We got them on the run, though; they are really upset. Today is definitely a sad day, Mr. Speaker, when we talk about 33 murders in the city of Winnipeg, and when we asked for 33 seconds of silence, this other government, the government in power, made fun of that. We find that appalling.

When the RCMP and the City of Winnipeg Police tried to capture this particular individual, they made their way out towards Warren and he got as far as Highway 227, realized that he had to turn around to get back because the government would not pave the road or look after it. So the guy would have gone on to, probably, Edmonton or somewhere else across the province, but he definitely saw the light and went back to Winnipeg.

The thing that this government does not seem to understand, Mr. Speaker, is that when they brought in the Throne Speech about 40 police officers, and they keep bringing up the fact about this side of the House voting against it, and that was with good reason, they do not seem to understand that 40 police officers are not enough. We have tried to make that very clear to that side of the House. We feel that the crime needs to be looked after and followed up on, and the police officers follow it up by nothing but more paperwork, more rhetoric from that side of the House, and we just find that 40 would not even be enough justice.

In the town of Teulon, our own RCMP is being cut, and that office has been moved to Gimli. So we are in a position where we have to wait some 40 minutes before we can get a police officer into our area. *[interjection]*

* (16:30)

Mr. Eichler: Well, maybe the member from Gimli thinks that is pretty quick, but we do not think it is.

An Honourable Member: It is pretty quick.

Mr. Eichler: I guess the detachment is there, but we are supposed to be governing for all Manitobans. That is what this government says, "We are governing for all Manitobans," and yet they do not. They think this is great service if you get 40 minutes from Gimli to Teulon. Well, we certainly do not find that acceptable, Mr. Speaker.

They go on to talk about being fair to all Manitobans. They announced in their Throne Speech a 33% tax relief for the farmers. We also voted against that in the Throne Speech and again for a very good reason. All you had to do was listen to our Tory plan to help all rural Manitobans. They do not seem to understand the fact, Mr. Speaker, that if they eliminate all tax off farmland and residential property, that money will be put into the hands of the people and they will be able to better identify where they want to spend those extra funds.

The idea of helping the farmer with 33 percent was a creative accounting mechanism on that side of the House. They said, "Well, you will apply for it, pay for it and we will put a TV ad out. We do not know what that is going to cost us yet." In fact, this side of the House has not made it clear what they are going to do about that cost. We assume it will probably come out of the Department of Agriculture's budget, but we would like to know those numbers when they are available, Mr. Speaker. *[interjection]* Probably, yes, I would not be far, in fact, probably it is closer to a million, if not more. TV advertising is not cheap.

So they are talking about a \$12-million program where they are going to spend a million dollars patting themselves on the back, wondering whether or not they have a good deal and how many people are going to apply for it. But first of all, "You pay your taxes, come and see us." Those farmers do not even have money to pay the taxes. Then they will say, "Ah, well, by the way, you did not apply for it." Our plan is clear. Our plan is simple. We say we will eliminate the tax off farmland and residential property. We will help rural Manitoba. We will help the cottage owners. We will help the people in the

city of Winnipeg. We will help those out there in need; not just a select group. That is why we voted against the Throne Speech, Mr. Speaker, so these people will be protected, and they will be heard and they will be relieved in a way that will help all of Manitobans.

Mr. Speaker, we also talked about the slaughter facilities, and the Minister of Agriculture (Ms. Wowchuk) says, "Well, you do not have a plan." Well, we did table a plan. The member from Emerson tabled it. I talked about it several times, and that side of the House just does not seem to be able to understand our plan. We do have people. We have people that we have talked to in the Treasury Board. We have people we have talked to in Ottawa, and this government continues to put the blame off on other people. It is time they stood up to the plate and took onus. They are the government. We are not the government. We are here to bring information forward to help you to be a government. You do not seem to get the picture. It is nice to be able just to say, "Oh, you guys voted against it. It is the federal problem. We cannot get any help." You know what? You cannot get help because you do not listen. That is the problem.

We have brought ideas, the federal government has met with you and it has not gone anywhere. You talk about the barn put up by Rancher's Choice for the slaughter facility within the province of Manitoba. I feel that that side of the House has used them something terribly. Sure they have made commitments, but it is with catch phrases. "Well, first of all you raise \$3.5 million." Well, Mr. Speaker, as we know, farmers do not have \$3.5 million.

So then you said, "Well, you know, you have a pretty good deal going here, and maybe the border will open, but what we will do is we will put \$2 million more up now." That is after they raised \$1.2 million and then you said, "Oh, well, that is okay, because you know, we want to make sure our investment is protected." But you have not asked for a business plan. You have not asked the necessary questions to protect your investment. What you do is put stumbling blocks in for this board of directors, for those people that are involved and the farmers that are in need that need to get rid of some of these cull cows, and cull bulls, and feeding expensive feed they could be disposing of with the other farmers where they do not have to have it, and they could get rid of it.

Mr. Speaker, with the current plan, we are not even sure whether or not Rancher's Choice will be able to go ahead. Our information is that the last stumbling block was that unless the number of cows, the number of bulls is there to satisfy that side of the House, the money is not there. Farmers cannot guarantee the number of animals that are going to be culled. I will make it very easy for the Minister of Health (Mr. Sale), a cull animal is an animal that is no longer useful in herd production. You do not know when that animal will come about. So one day you may have a very healthy cow, the next day you may not. So those animals, you cannot get a true number. We do know, however, that there are enough out there to support this industry. That we do know.

They do have a business plan that they have not been able to get into this government so they can understand what this product is all about. They had several other plans that have been brought forward with the 30 months and under. Hong Kong has brought forward box beef, where they said they will take our product. What has this government done? Nothing, absolutely nothing, they say, "Well it is a federal problem." It is not a federal problem. It is your problem. Step up to the plate. Get this slaughter facility there so our producers can do it.

The other thing that is happening, Mr. Speaker, is the fact that—[interjection] Well, thank the members for their comments over there, but we will get to them in a minute. The last couple of things I want to try and get to is the \$500,000 that is being spent on the better brand. Well, it comes to mind that in 2002 this government came out with a program called Manitoba Calling. Well, we were just about to go into an election. We spent \$200,000 on that, and all of a sudden they just quit production. Why? It was such a good deal. Listen to us. Come on back, come on back, that is what they said.

But this government has got one mandate, Mr. Speaker, and that is pat answers, blame the other guys, blame the federals, blame the opposition. The new Minister for Industry and Mines (Mr. Rondeau) says, "When are you going to give me a question? When are you going to give me a question?" Well, guess what? He says, "I got the answer. I got it already." He does not care what I ask. He does not have a clue what I ask. All he wants to know is, "I got the answer." That is what he says, "I have got the answer." What do you do? "Well, I got the answer."

That side of the House is great at saying nothing because that is what they want to do.

We just have those pat answers that we want to be able to put on the record, because we know nothing, we say nothing, we have no answers. It is a sad, sad day when we have to stand in this House and listen to the rhetoric on that side of the House. Thank you.

Hon. Tim Sale (Minister of Health): I will be very brief. I simply want to put on the record, then and now. Then, when we came to government, we had people going to the United States and other jurisdictions for radiation therapy. Now, the waiting is a week or less for most radiation therapy in Manitoba. Then, there was a Brandon hole-in-the-ground that had been promised to be filled some seven times by a previous Conservative government. Now, there is a regional resource centre there with new ERs, with new MRI, with new CT equipment, with new ultrasound equipment, with 35 surgical beds being renewed that will be opened in April. That was then. This is now.

Then, there was a Portage la Prairie hospital with no CT scanner, Mr. Speaker; today, there is a Portage la Prairie hospital with CT scan being put in place. Then, there was no CT in Steinbach; now, there is a CT in Steinbach. Then, there were no large volumes of surgeries being done in Selkirk Hospital; this year, we have allocated 1400 new surgeries to the Selkirk Hospital.

* (16:40)

Then, we did not have anything like the volume of pediatric dentistry that we have today. Then, there was no dentistry for children being done in Thompson, today 400 a year. Then, there was no pediatric dentistry surgery in Misericordia Hospital; now, there are 600 a year. Then, there was no pediatric dentistry surgery in Beausejour, and the Leader of the Opposition (Mr. Murray) opposed it even going there, speaking against moving surgeries for children into one of his own member's ridings. Today, there are 100 surgeries for children from that community being done in Beausejour.

Then, there were no MRIs outside of Winnipeg; now, there is one in Brandon performing 2500 MRI exams a year so that people from Brandon—

[interjection] Yes, there is a waiting list in Brandon now for MRIs.

Where was that waiting list when they were in power? It was in Winnipeg, because everybody from Brandon who needed an MRI had to go to Winnipeg. Then, you had a very small number of MRIs being done across the province because they only had one; now, we have almost tripled the number of MRIs in Manitoba. Then, we had a great long list that had people waiting and waiting and waiting for cardiac surgery; today, there are 61 people on the cardiac waiting list for elective surgery. Anybody who needs surgery for their heart today or this week will get it today or this week. Mr. Speaker, 61 Manitobans out of all the people who need cardiac surgery, or might need it, that is all there are on our waiting list. Almost everyone today gets cardiac surgery in Manitoba within the acceptable waiting time.

So let the members not put on the record the notion that somehow health care is being mis-managed in this province. When you go and speak to Manitobans, what they tell you is that they are overwhelmingly happy with their health care system, that 86 percent of them have a personal physician they have a relationship with for their medical care, and on and on and on.

I would simply close by pointing out that administrative costs for our health care system have fallen from 1999 to 2004, Mr. Speaker. They were about \$47 per person in Manitoba for administration when we formed government. Today they are \$41 per person. We have the third-lowest administrative costs for our hospitals in Canada. We are proud of our record. We are building on it. We will continue to do more to improve health care for Manitobans.

Mr. Ron Schuler (Springfield): An Opposition Day is an important day in the legislative process. I understand we have now five minutes. I know there is a lot that should be going on the record, and I will keep myself to my five minutes. Mr. Speaker, the motion reads, "WHEREAS the Doer government has demonstrated its inability to deal with the serious issues affecting Manitobans."

Mr. Speaker, today was one of those days where we have seen unprecedented headlines in this province, history-making headlines of a dubious nature. We have now seen where 33 murders have topped anything, have topped previous NDP

governments who have held that record. They have now topped that with the dubious distinction of the most murders in the city of Winnipeg.

You know, when you read newspapers from around the world and you hear quotes like, "intense manhunt," "heavily-armed suspect," "fearful few hours locked inside their homes," "police took unusual step of publicly telling people not to venture outside because of the gunmen," "I heard a huge bang," This is not Iraq we are talking about. This is Winnipeg. This is the kind of carnage we are seeing on our streets. In fact, where we stand today, every 11 days we have had a murder. If that is not the most shameful record a government could have, Mr. Speaker. It bodes very, very poorly for us as a province.

We all appreciate that the city of Winnipeg is the economic driver, one of the largest economic drivers of our province. It has the largest population base in the province. The city of Winnipeg is important to all of us, and it is important what happens here. The fact that under this NDP government, this Doer government, we have become not just the murder capital of the country, but we have broken unprecedented records to the point where we now have 33 murders, a record by this Doer government, Mr. Speaker, and that is very shameful.

We have had a lot of debate on what the problem is behind this. In fact, awhile ago I was watching History channel, and they have linked, in major cities, when there is an economic decline in the city, there is always a dramatic increase not just in crime rates but in murder rates, Mr. Speaker, where there is an economic problem, usually then there seems to be a vacuum filled by gangs and other less than desirable individuals. We have seen that under this Doer government the Hells Angels moved in, set up shop, set up shop right next to the Minister of Justice (Mr. Mackintosh). Unfortunately, there seems to be some kind of malaise, a decline in the city under the Doer government, and now we are seeing criminal elements coming in. We are seeing a skyrocketing criminal record the likes that we have not seen before.

The citizens of the city of Winnipeg fear, Mr. Speaker; they fear what is going on. They sit in their houses, and the police tell them, "Lock your doors; do not step out of your house." They sit in their

houses and cower in fear. Unprecedented. I am sure if you walked into The Maples today, you would find people are absolutely appalled. This, the season of lights, this, the season of joy, the season of giving, and people are sitting in their homes with the doors locked and not leaving because they are scared for their own life.

What is the problem? We have heard from the government that uses the Throne Speech to try to do some budget things, because anything they have done previously has failed, and failed miserably. What we need is a plan. It needs to be a comprehensive plan. What the government talks about is maybe, maybe hiring some more police officers if the gambling revenues come in as strong as they hope they will. So, in other words, we now have justice on the backs of gamblers, if you have not heard the most outrageous plan ever. Can you imagine that while crime is out of control, murder is rampant—every 11 days we have a murder in the city of Winnipeg—they are going to solve it on the backs of gamblers? That is how they are going to drive justice in this province.

I say shame on them. Come up with a plan and catch-and-release is a term that has been coined about this government, Mr. Speaker. That is one of the major problems that we have had in this province. This is a worthy motion, and should be supported. Because my time has run out, I will continue on another day. Thank you.

Mr. Conrad Santos, Deputy Speaker, in the Chair

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Inkster): I, too, will be brief so that we can accommodate a couple of other speakers before the actual vote. I, too, am concerned in terms of the way the government is addressing justice issues in particular. The reason why I say that, Mr. Deputy Speaker, is that it seems to me that whenever opposition raises the concern of justice, the government comes back and says, "Well, we are increasing our police services, or our police forces combined, up to 40 new officers and the opposition as a whole voted against the Throne Speech," trying to imply then that we opposed it.

Well, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I want to make it perfectly clear to the government of the day as to why it is I choose to vote against the Throne Speech, and I choose to vote against the budget. I will tell you any being, any governing body, if you spend \$7

billion-plus, I would like to think you are going to do some good things, and because I vote against the budget, or I vote against the Throne Speech, does not mean that I oppose every dollar that you are spending out of that \$7 billion-plus. I vote against it because I believe that, as a political party, you are not managing the affairs of the province any better than in the way in which we would be able to manage the affairs of the province if we were in government.

So that is the reason why I vote against the Throne Speech, and I vote against the budget, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

My concern goes to the government not answering the questions that are being raised. When we take a look at the issue today in Question Period, and use it as an example, you will see that, yes, there is a need for us to enhance our police services. But we need to go beyond that. What are some of the causes to crime? What is the government doing to try to address some of those causes? What about urban or revitalization and trying to address the whole issue of poverty and so forth. We need to start addressing those causes. If you want to help the current police force, look at our court cases, look at the number of remands that happen.

* (16:50)

The Conservatives often talk about the catch-and-release policy. This government has seen the catch-and-release policy come to a fine art, Mr. Deputy Speaker. These are things that consume a great deal of time and effort. I put those comments because I do believe that there is more that this government can do, other than just some of the press conferences, the snap photo opportunities that we have seen with this current Minister of Justice (Mr. Mackintosh), whether it was "gangs can no longer use Legal Aid as an organization"—that he put into law and has that photo-op to make him look as if the government is getting tough on crime. Gangs, as organizations, do not apply for Legal Aid. It is the individuals. So it is how they try to portray themselves.

That leads me to the last point, and that is in terms of a question I had asked previously, that is, to the degree in which this government uses public tax dollars in order to put a positive spin in terms of what it is that they are trying to do in the province.

The best example I can come up with is the most recent one that I raised in Question Period, and that is in regard to advertising of the farm tax credit. This government must think the farmers are really stupid, or they are using these ads to further try to convince Manitobans that they are soft or they are good at giving tax breaks, Mr. Deputy Speaker. It is either, or, I believe it is the latter. To that degree, I suspect that the New Democratic Party should be the ones who should be paying for the cost of that.

With those few words, I support the resolution as put forward.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: The honourable Member for Portage.

Mr. David Faurshou (Portage la Prairie): Thank you very much—

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Mistake. The honourable Minister of Education.

Hon. Peter Bjornson (Minister of Education, Citizenship and Youth): I am pleased to stand and speak against this motion.

As a history teacher, I often appreciate the opportunity to give history lessons, but I will defer to the *Manitoba Association of School Trustees Journal* for a history lesson on the issue of education.

"During most of the 1990s"—and I am quoting from the "There Is Another Way: A Different Approach to Education Reform" from the Manitoba Association of School Superintendents. "During most of the 1990s, funding for public schools is either frozen or reduced, such that by 1999, per-pupil spending was substantially less than it had been in 1992. Capital funding was also cut sharply, so that buildings began to deteriorate. To help school boards manage these budget reductions, the provincial government allowed them to require teachers to take up to eight days off without pay, and then legislated limitations on the so-called collective bargaining. By the end of the decade, Manitoba school boards and educators felt unappreciated and victimized." That is from the *Manitoba Association of School Superintendents Journal*.

Mr. Speaker in the Chair

Now, I have to admit I was really pleased to see the passion from the member from Lakeside, how he

got up and spoke very passionately. I know that he must have been very passionate in his capacity of working for the Interlake School Division, when, under his watch, teachers were locked out in his school division for eight days, denying teachers the opportunity for professional development under that piece of legislation we call Bill 22. A total of 365 school days was lost under the previous government's Bill 22.

He also talked very passionately that we are not doing enough for taxes. I am sure he was very passionate during the 1990s when the funding announcements came under the previous government, when in his own school division, Mr. Speaker, the increase in taxes was 230.9 percent from 1990 to 1999. Now, 230.9 percent in those nine years on an \$80,000 home within his school division. Under our watch, the measures we have taken have been legitimate, tax-reducing measures that in his division translate to minus 6.1 percent.

Members opposite stand in the House and say we are not doing anything on education funding, when we put in \$105 million into the base. When they put in \$15.2 in five years, we put in \$105 million, Mr. Speaker.

They say we are not doing enough for tax reform, Mr. Speaker. We have had \$96 million in tax reductions, plus the announcement in the Throne Speech for 33.3% reduction on farmland. I must take exception to my critic who stood up in this House, during his speech to the Throne Speech, and told me, a resident of the Gimli constituency, that my taxes went up 60.7 percent. The member must not realize that I pay my taxes, and I have not seen the 60.7% increase in taxes in Evergreen School Division. In fact, under our watch, taxes in Evergreen went down 13.7 percent.

The members opposite tend to look at things as half empty as opposed to half full. Well, this is a party where the glass is full in terms of real funding for education, in terms of real, meaningful tax reform for the province of Manitoba and making sustainable, affordable cuts to taxes that will not compromise the very robust education system.

Unlike members opposite, Mr. Speaker, we believe in our teachers; we believe in our students. We invest in our teachers; we invest in our students. We also have a resolution regarding capital. In the

House I have heard them accuse us of being political on this issue of where we build schools. Let me go through the capital projects from 1999 to present that were announced in Conservative ridings. Carberry Collegiate, currently in sketch-plan stage; Garden Valley, working drawings right now. Island Lakes, constructed, we built that school; Mitchell constructed. We have built that school. Christine-Lespérance, at the time it was promised and built, it was a Tory constituency. We have built that school.

An Honourable Member: Not anymore. They saw the light there.

Mr. Bjornson: That they did, Mr. Speaker. The replacement schools, clearly, five out of eight new schools were in Tory ridings, and here we have five out of eleven replacement schools that were also in Tory ridings.

Mr. Speaker, \$288 million represents an increase of \$134 million over the previous five years under the previous government, and we have impacted just about every school in this province with 600 projects, whether it is boiler replacements, whether it is roof replacements, whether it is facades, whatever the case might be, we are committed to meaningful improvements in capital in our schools, providing safe environments for the students and effective learning environments for our students.

I must stand and put these facts on the record because I really take exception to what has been said in the House by members opposite about their record on education and their record on tax reform. We are clearly making a difference, and Manitobans know, when they are saying their taxes go up 60 percent, when I am the person paying the tax bill and I know that it has gone down 13 percent, it is pretty simple math, Mr. Speaker. I appreciate the opportunity to put these comments on the record.

Mr. Faurichou: I rise this afternoon to speak in favour of the motion as presented earlier this afternoon by the honourable Member for Russell (Mr. Derkach). Mr. Speaker, I do want to set the record straight, as the honourable Member for Gimli (Mr. Bjornson) just stated in regard to education in this province. At the time, in Portage la Prairie, I was the chairman of the Portage la Prairie School Division, and there were no days lost in the education of our children in the Portage la Prairie School Division. Portage la Prairie School Division

supported a complete 200-day calendar for the students in the charge of the Portage la Prairie School Division, and that for the record is fact.

Mr. Speaker, I want to support the legislation because it tells of this government in chaos, and this government right now is spending Manitobans' hard-earned tax dollars in an effort to promote themselves. The advertising I speak of is in regard to the present-day television ads that extol the tax credit to farm families here in the province of Manitoba as it pertains to school taxes paid in 2004.

Mr. Speaker, all of the information required to inform those affected is at this government's disposal in the department's tax assessment branch. They have there the listing of all farmers' properties to which farm taxes are paid. It is a very easy, simple way of informing all those affected by it. It needs no program on the television, on the radio, in the newspaper, extending dollars that could be better spent in other fashions. I say today to the government that this is wrong and it only goes to being chalked up as self-serving, and it is a waste of Manitobans' hard-earned, taxpayer dollars.

* (17:00)

Mr. Speaker, we heard just recently of the children in poverty. The Winnipeg social council put out its scorecard regarding how Manitoba fares, and only, only one province in Canada has a greater number of children who are considered in poverty. Why does this government not consider those persons who are in poverty exempt from income tax? Why is a person considered eligible to paying income tax when their only income is, say, \$8,000? Why is the personal exemption not raised to a bar that recognizes the poverty level? This government can do that.

The other situation—

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. The hour being 5 p.m., pursuant to Rule 28(14), I must interrupt the debate to put the question on the motion of the honourable Member for Russell (Mr. Derkach).

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

Some Honourable Members: No.

Some Honourable Members: Agreed.

Voice Vote

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

Some Honourable Members: Yea.

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

Some Honourable Members: Nay.

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

Formal Vote

Mr. Leonard Derkach (Official Opposition House Leader): Mr. Speaker, the sound in this Assembly must be getting bad. I was sure that the Nays had it, so I guess we will have to ask for Yeas and Nays.

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Speaker: Order. Because of the disruption in the House, I could not hear the last sentence. I would ask the honourable member to please repeat his last sentence for the record.

Mr. Derkach: Mr. Speaker, thank you for pulling me out of the fire.

Mr. Speaker, I was simply asking for Yeas and Nays.

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

The question before the House is the motion moved by the honourable Member for Russell (Mr. Derkach). Do members wish to have the motion read? Dispense?

Some Honourable Members: Dispense.

Mr. Speaker: Dispense.

Division

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

Yeas

Cullen, Cummings, Derkach, Dyck, Eichler, Faurschou, Gerrard, Goertzen, Lamoureux, Loewen, Maguire, Mitchelson, Murray, Penner, Reimer, Rocan, Schuler, Taillieu.

Nays

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

* (17:10)

Madam Clerk (Patricia Chaychuk): Yeas 18, Nays 33.

Mr. Speaker: I declare the motion lost.

Mr. Speaker: Is it the will of the House to call it 5:30 p.m.? *[Agreed]*

The hour being 5:30 p.m., this House is adjourned and stands adjourned until 10 a.m. tomorrow (Thursday).

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Wednesday, December 8, 2004

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